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Governance in historic urban environments: A theoretical review

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Governance has become a vehicle for sustainable development policies and programs that target the social improvement of communities. The role of the state in such a model assumes that of a facilitator promoting localised partnerships and community participation. These developments are now reflected in policy implementation at a variety of levels, including the management of heritage sites. However, it is difficult to see how a governance model can succeed under current heritage management frameworks. This is particularly so where a site is an integral part of an active community, such as a historic town centre or cultural landscape. Heritage management models have traditionally separated historic and contemporary identities. This weakens the link between people and place which is considered to be a fundamental contributor to a socially cohesive and sustainable community. This paper explores some of the theoretical concepts surrounding sustainable development through governance with a particular emphasis on social sustainability. The need for institutional and procedural innovation is suggested if historic environments are to contribute fully to sustainable development. The paper concludes by presenting a framework for localised decision-making in historic urban environments.

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Introduction

Since the 1990's, governance has become a significant vehicle for policies targeting the social improvement of communities and the implementation of sustainable development programs (Chhotray and Stoker, 2009; Taylor, 2002). In particular, urban regeneration programs, including heritage-led regeneration programs, have become associated with a broader governance agenda (Colomb, 2007; Pendlebury, 2009). Critical to this agenda is the assumption that the mobilisation of 'social capital' from local networks and associations through new systems of governance positively influences democratic participation and transparency (Bull and Jones, 2006; Middleton et al., 2005). The role of the state in such a model assumes that of a facilitator promoting localised collaborative partnerships and more active community participation (Bevir and Rhodes, 2003). Governance theory is now reflected in the policies and programs of global and regional institutions, such as UNESCO and the European Union (Chhotray and Stoker 2009), as well as at a national level (Gallent 2008; ODPM 2005) and the level of individual heritage sites (DCLG, English Heritage and DCMS, 2010).

However, it is difficult to see how a governance model can succeed at heritage sites under current management frameworks. This is particularly so at more complex heritage sites, such as historic town centres and cultural landscapes, which remain largely integral to the daily activities of contemporary communities. Western models of heritage management have traditionally separated historic and contemporary identities as part of the process of establishing heritage significance. Considerable attention has been given in the literature to the ways in which national and regional identities have been selectively articulated and legitimised through heritage, and the symbolic value of heritage in giving a material reality to identity (see, for example, Graham and Howard, 2008; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Lowenthal, 1998; Smith, 2006). This process of identity construction requires the definition of a temporal framework, a historic period in time associated with customs and events that are the most symbolically representational and politically meaningful. While a foundation of Western heritage management practice, such historic

delineations can serve to weaken the link between people and place, a link which is assumed in much of the literature to be a fundamental contributor to a socially cohesive community (DCMS, 2004; Kearns and Forrest, 2000; Kennett and Forrest, 2006; Robinson, 2005).

This paper commences with a theoretical exploration of some of the concepts surrounding sustainable development through governance. Particular emphasis is given to the effectiveness of current frameworks for the delivery and assessment of social sustainability in historic urban environments. Drawing on recent policy and academic literature, the paper illustrates the need for institutional and procedural innovation if historic urban environments are to contribute fully to sustainable development. The paper concludes by presenting a theoretical framework for the implementation of more localised and democratic decision-making in historic urban environments. The framework is derived from McCann's (1983) social problem solving process as part of ongoing case study research into the sustainable management of industrial World Heritage sites. While research into the practical operation of the framework is continuing, as a theoretical conceptualisation the framework has relevance to other complex historic environments such as historic town centres and cultural landscapes.

Definitions and theoretical foundations

The dimensions of sustainable development

In recent years, the social aspects of sustainability have gained increased recognition as a fundamental component of sustainable development. This is reflected in the political and academic literature and the sustainable urban regeneration discourse (Colantonio and Dixon 2010). While there has been a shift toward a more integrated approach to economic, environmental and social issues in sustainable development policy, there is little agreement on what social sustainability is (Bramley and Power, 2009). Research on the practical outcomes of poverty eradication and urban regeneration strategies, the primary policy initiatives associated with social sustainability, is also limited (Colomb, 2007). However, despite the lack of conceptual clarity and evidence as to their effectiveness, strategies aimed at delivering greater social equity and socially inclusive urban environments have been in place since the mid-1990's in Europe (the European Commission's *Urban Community Initiatives*) and in the UK (the 1998 *New Deal for Communities* and the 2001 *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal*).

In attempting to frame a working definition, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) report *Our Common Future* suggests that social sustainability seeks to preserve the environment through economic growth and the alleviation of poverty (WCED, 1987). While practical strategies to bring this about are vague in the WCED report, *Agenda 21*, the publication stemming from the 1992 United Nations *Conference on Environment and Development*, provides a more definitive approach to social sustainability based on strategies such as security of land tenure, small business development and trade liberalisation, as well as enhanced social equity and the active participation of individuals in community activities (Johnson, 1993). However, the subsequent literature that focuses on social sustainability, as against social equity, remains ambiguous. This ambiguity is evident to a lesser degree in the associated concepts of social inclusion, social cohesion and social capital. Given the overlapping nature of these four concepts, Bramley and Power (2009) suggest that the identification of any common threads can support a better understanding of social sustainability.

Stemming from the concept of social capital most notably developed by Bourdieu (1985) and Putnam (2000), the four concepts share an underlying premise that socially sustainable communities require individuals to work together in social networks. These concepts also recognise the vested interest individuals have in society, and the collective responsibility society has to the equitable distribution of social benefits to individuals. They share a further common concern with cultural identity and values, a sense of belonging, and feelings of safety and trust that come with the positive side of social order and institutional stability. With this understanding, three dimensions of social sustainability can be detected. The first two are described by Bramley and Power as 'social equity' and the 'sustainability of community', which is referred to in the following section as social coherence. The third dimension is the satisfaction of basic human needs without which the first two dimensions would be difficult to achieve.

The first dimension, social equity, is concerned with 'access to services, facilities and opportunities' while the level of access is mediated by political processes framed within a 'distributive notion of social justice' (Bramley and Power 2009:32). For this to occur, a further condition of social equity is required, the stability and flexibility of the institutions that facilitate access. Institutional stability provides an enabling framework for long-term and holistic planning that might not otherwise occur within a decision-making process driven by political power and vested interests alone. Institutional flexibility is required because no single organization has the knowledge or resources to tackle sustainable development unilaterally.

The second dimension of social sustainability, social coherence, refers to the strength of the social networks that facilitate community cooperation, and the level of formal and informal participation in community activities. Social coherence also relates to how strongly individuals identify with a community. The argument here is that the level of an individual's identification with a particular community will affect their desire to contribute to that community which is in turn reflected in the level of social cohesion

(Bramley and Power, 2009; Forrest and Kearns, 2001). A further condition of social coherence is empowerment. For communities to actively engage in a political process there must be a realistic expectation that they can influence the outcomes of that process and, conversely, be held accountable for their actions.

The third dimension of social sustainability relates to the satisfaction of basic human needs. These are objectively measured issues, such as food, shelter and education, as well as subjective perceptions related to quality of life, such as health, well-being and safety (Landorf et al., 2008). A distinction is made between social equity, which measures the level of equality in the way resources and opportunities are distributed in a community, and the satisfaction of basic needs, which measures the level of resources and opportunities available to the community as a whole. For example, a community may be living equitably but for some reason such as drought, war or recession, may not be satisfying basic human needs. The three dimensions of social sustainability and their characteristics are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The dimensions of social sustainability

Dimension	Characteristics
Social equity	Access to services, facilities and opportunities Level of institutional stability and flexibility
Social coherence	Strength of networks, participation, identification and tolerance Level of empowerment and accountability
Needs satisfaction	Satisfaction of objective quality of life measures Satisfaction of subjective quality of life measures

Finally, consideration needs to be given to the evaluation of social sustainability. With no clear concept of what constitutes social sustainability, it is no surprise that there is little agreement on the methodologies and indicators that should be used to measure the social outcomes of sustainable development strategies (Brandon and Lombardi, 2005). Even so, the emerging approach acknowledges the undesirability of imposing indicators and evaluation methodologies from above. Significant opportunities exist for community empowerment and capacity building through the development of locally based sustainable development evaluation processes (Roberts 2006). However, there is a need for some form of overarching and universally agreed indicators if the three dimensions of sustainability (economic, environmental and social) are to be prioritized at a local level and integrated successfully into national sustainable development policies.

The principles of governance

The move from government to governance refers to the redistribution of decision-making away from centralised and hierarchical structures of government toward a more localised and collective approach. Chhotray and Stoker (2009) suggest there are various reasons why this shift has occurred including the belief that governance can provide greater flexibility in solving public problems, more effective use of resources and enhanced democratic participation. One of the practical impacts of governance has been the promotion of a more competitive, localised approach to the delivery of services otherwise provided by the state. Critics such as Bull and Jones (2006), and Swyngedouw (2005) argue this has had the effect of blurring the distinction between state institutions and civil society, allowing for the circumvention of traditional democratic channels of accountability. A further impact of governance has been an extension of community consultation and participation in decision-making. According to Lowndes and Wilson (2001), this has changed the traditional balance of power between competing interest groups, not necessarily resulting in an increased level of power for already disadvantaged groups. Finally, the promotion of governance has seen the responsibility for economic development move away from state policy interventions towards community-based frameworks (Jones, 2001). For Gallent (2008), this has resulted in a struggle to balance the devolution of responsibility to communities with the need for strategic oversight exercised by a central authority. Despite these and other criticisms, governance represents an attractive vehicle for sustainable development primarily because of its promotion of localised networks and community participation (Williams, 2006).

However, an inherent tension can be identified between the three primary principles of governance – effectiveness, legitimacy and participation (Davidson and Lockwood, 2008). In particular, where economic criteria alone are used to measure performance, effectiveness will tend to come at the expense of legitimacy and participation. There are two issues of concern here. The first is how to hold non-elected bodies accountable at the same time as ensure their legitimacy. The second issue is how to marry economic performance with environmental and social sustainability concerns. These issues are discussed briefly below in relation to each governance principle.

The first governance principle is effectiveness. Improving the effectiveness of regional development policies is one of the key motivations for contemporary participatory governance. However,

as Davidson and Lockwood (2008:645) point out, effective governance should embody 'capacities for ongoing reflection and negotiation, the production of long-term outcomes and strategic direction, productive conflict management, reconciliation of divergent spatial and temporal perspectives, and the art of cooperative dialogue'. The implication is that effectiveness is more than simply functional efficiency measured in terms of economic indicators. Effectiveness, conceived in this manner, needs to be deliberately incorporated into any new institutional design for governance.

The second governance principle is legitimacy. With the emergence of governance through networks and partnerships between public and private institutions, and voluntary organisations, ensuring their legitimacy through democratic means has become problematic (Davidson and Lockwood, 2008). The alternative is formal regional government which lacks the flexible boundaries and single agenda focus of informal agencies. Newman (2000:907) sees the legitimacy of new institutions of governance being dependent on 'their ability to break out of short-term electoral politics and how well they can establish consensus around wider regional goals'. In the context of legitimacy, the imperative to achieve and maintain economic success will generally favour arguments for efficiency over legitimacy. In an attempt to understand this dichotomy, Davidson and Lockwood (2008) consider legitimacy in terms of two constituent parts – accountability and transparency. The perception of accountability afforded by democratic processes is a key dilemma for governance. Even where the policy-making stage is subject to democratic accountability, technical experts, who increasingly contribute at this stage, are generally not held democratically accountable. This signals the need to accompany new institutions of governance with diverse and innovative accountability mechanisms. Like accountability, decision-making transparency has been an important element of democratic legitimisation. Transparency is one means to overcome declining public trust while attention to community consultation and participation are also likely to afford a legitimacy to governance that is not otherwise available through the voting process.

The third governance principle is the active participation of stakeholders in decision-making, widely supported in the sustainable development literature as essential to combating the accountability and transparency problems associated with systems of governance (see, for example, Chhotray and Stoker, 2009; Simpson, 2001; Williams, 2006). Stakeholder participation is also widely assumed to be necessary for the development of social capital (Putnam, 2000) and a valuable tool for the promotion of social inclusion and social cohesion (DCMS 2002; Bramley and Power, 2009; Forest and Kearns, 2001). Without adequate mechanisms for accountability and transparency, it is suggested that decentralised decision-making runs the risk of either being undermined by powerful actors or developing strategic options based on narrow technocratic worldviews (Davidson and Lockwood 2008:646). The three principles of governance and their characteristics are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The principles of governance

Principle	Characteristics
Effectiveness	Efficient resource use
	Effective negotiated strategic outcomes
Legitimacy	Diverse accountability mechanisms
	Decision-making transparency
Participation	Broad participation scope and influence on decision-making
	Continuous participation in implementation and evaluation

Partnerships as institutional vehicles for governance

Partnerships are one of the new institutions of governance that have featured significantly in Europe, the UK and more recently in Australia. Partnership approaches are particularly evident in urban regeneration and neighbourhood renewal projects, including so called 'heritage-led' regeneration projects, but also in the provision of public services, such as the education and health care sectors (Osborne and McLaughlin, 2002; Pendlebury et al., 2004). Partnerships can be described as collaborative relationships between government and non-government bodies, formalised by agreement and organisational structure (Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998). They are perceived to be an effective way to facilitate coordination, reduce duplication and manage uncertainty, particularly in situations that require the cooperation of multiple actors across multiple sectors and policy fields (Davidson and Lockwood, 2008; Williams, 2006).

Despite their rapid adoption during the 1990's, critics point to several essential flaws with the conceptualisation of partnerships as self-organising networks that enhance democratic participation. These include the propensity for economic goals to overshadow environmental and social goals (Davidson and Lockwood, 2008; Edwards and Onyx, 2007), the failure of partnerships to guarantee widespread democratic engagement (Bull and Jones, 2003; Davies 2002; Jones 2001), and the potential for embedded inertia and existing power structures to impose constraints on innovation and entrepreneurship (Harriss and De Renzio, 1997; Lowndes and Wilson, 2001). These criticisms all have the capacity to accentuate

social exclusion (Bull and Jones, 2006) or, alternatively, to promote 'turf wars' between strongly cohesive communities and fragment their allegiance to the broader national community (Hipp and Perrin, 2006; Kennett and Forrest, 2006). The fact that partnerships are consistently argued to be coherent with neoliberal ideology further suggests that they are being utilised to compensate for a contraction in the public sector. Much attention has been given in the academic literature to the political agenda underlying the use of partnerships as a result (see, for example, Considine and Giguere, 2008; Davies, 2002; Hastings, 1996; Lowndes and Sullivan, 2007).

Sustainable development and the historic environment

So, how is the historic urban environment exploited within the policies and programs that target the social improvement of communities? The shift in emphasis from property development to people empowerment has brought with it three significant challenges for historic areas. The first challenge is with the utilisation of historic areas in social policy and the tendency to separate the physical reality of a place from the constantly evolving process of meaning and memory making. For example, the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) publication *People and Places: Social Inclusion Policy for the Built and Historic Environment* 'aims to raise awareness of the links between social inclusion and the built environment' in the UK (DCMS, 2002). The document highlights the importance of 'tapping the economic and social potential of the historic environment', primarily through the sustainable use of heritage buildings and greater acknowledgement of cultural diversity. However, the historic environment does more than represent an interpreted past. Even broadening that past to include diverse ethnic identities and social groups does not equate to social inclusion. Heritage also affects current experiences and perceptions. For a place to have a currency of meaning, it should not only provide a geographical anchor but also allow for social identity and cultural belonging to be continuously negotiated (Smith, 2006). A significant problem then is the emphasis, in conventional heritage practice, on the conservation of heritage values which are primarily understood to be embedded in historic fabric.

The second challenge for historic environments is that community engagement initiatives are generally enacted through the process of heritage management. *People and Places* states that 'historic buildings can help build confidence in community involvement in local decision-making' and the use of partnerships at new World Heritage sites in the UK is practical evidence of this approach. This is despite the criticism noted earlier about the effectiveness of partnerships in enhancing democratic participation and power sharing. A further factor limiting community engagement is that, historically, heritage has been managed by professionals with a tendency to represent non-experts as passive recipients of rather than active participants in the heritage process (Smith, 2006). As suggested by Sullivan (2004), this professional hegemony can result in communities losing ownership and responsibility for their own heritage and, eventually, resenting the heritage experts and the heritage itself.

The third challenge for historic environments is the active use of heritage for the purposes of constructing national identity. Here, *People and Places* asserts that historic environments can 'help connect people to their culture, both past and present'. There is certainly significant national pride derived in the UK, for example, from being the 'birthplace of the industrial revolution'. While the inscription of five industrial World Heritage sites in the UK since 2000 suggests World Heritage status has been sought as a strategy for economic regeneration in otherwise deprived regions, it can also be seen as a state sanctioned legitimisation of industrial heritage as a construct of national identity. However, this has the potential to homogenise otherwise diverse local experiences and associative values.

Therefore, in addition to possibly isolating heritage places from the evolving process of contemporary identity making, and the uncertain value of partnerships in enhancing local participation in the management of heritage places, there is a tendency for social policy to appropriate local heritage for the purposes of constructing a national identity. This subsequently has the potential to limit the exploration of diverse and often traumatic local experiences in favour of more accepted expressions of national unity and innovation. Having explored the key issues surrounding the challenge of governance in historic urban environments, the following section presents a framework for the implementation of a more localised and democratic decision-making process.

A framework for decision-making in historic urban environments

Policy framing, implementation and coordination

The preceding discussion has established that governance represents an attractive, though much criticised, vehicle for sustainable development. This is based on the assumption that systems of governance can promote local collaborative networks and enhance democratic participation, both of which have been identified as conditions for sustainable development. In Europe, the UK and Australia, partnerships have emerged as an important administrative and institutional structure in the governance agenda. This is despite criticism that partnerships have been utilised primarily as vehicles for the market driven delivery of public policy rather than as agents for sustainable development. Even so, partnerships have come to affirm for many the active implementation of sustainable development policy as evidenced by enhanced political participation and power-sharing.

Also suggested previously, the shift toward new forms of governance, and specifically the use of partnerships, has received significant academic attention. In the UK in particular, partnerships have been associated with urban regeneration and social inclusion programs since 1997. While government rhetoric continues to link partnerships to enhanced political participation and local networking, Davies (2002) has argued that partnerships have in fact increased rather than decreased central government control. This has occurred as a result of increased central government control over the resources for collaboration and the absence of a culture of community activism amongst private sector organisations.

A study by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) provides further insight into the issues facing governance as a medium for sustainable development (Williams and Thomas, 2006). The study focused specifically on Wales which has a unique statutory duty to promote sustainable development. As has been widely established in the literature, there is a significant variation in the meanings attributed to the concept of sustainable development (Simpson, 2001; Williams, 2006). The JRF study found such definitional challenges had impeded practical progress toward the framing of sustainable development policy both within and between organisations. Despite this, the study found that sustainable development was broadly accepted as a framework that needed to underpin the way organisations operated.

Three key implications for policy implementation can be summarised from these findings. The first implication is that definitional ambiguities and the complexity of inter-organisational coordination are a significant challenge for any system of governance. The second implication is the need to balance a wide variety of competing issues that might otherwise constrain the effectiveness of an emerging system of governance. These include the need to balance inter-organisational cooperation with competition, operational flexibility with standardised efficiency, and democratic openness with manageable boundaries (Williams, 2006). Stemming from these two implications is the need for administrative and institutional innovation. While the literature suggests that partnerships will persist as the primary vehicle for social and development policy implementation, and urban and regional development programs will continue to be associated with a social agenda, the persistence of traditional management thinking, organisational structures and political models will limit the effectiveness of such initiatives.

A framework for the sustainable development of complex historic environments

For governance to succeed as a vehicle for sustainable development in historic urban environments, a decision-making framework is required that recognises the heritage significance of a place and provides for meaningful and extensive stakeholder engagement in relation to its management. This requires the negotiation of limits of acceptable change amongst multiple stakeholders, all of whom have varying perceptions attached to their own legitimacy, varying outcomes that they want pursued, and varying values attached to those outcomes. The following framework is based on a process developed by McCann (1983) for social problem solving and inter-organisational collaboration. A social problem is assumed to be a dynamic issue with no clear boundary or strategy for intervention. Inter-organisational collaboration is assumed to be the most effective way to deal with social problems because they are beyond the scope of any individual stakeholder to tackle on their own. Table 3 incorporates McCann's three stages of social problem solving with the various additional processes required for the sustainable development of complex historic sites.

Table 3. A framework for the sustainable development of complex heritage sites

Stages	Developmental process
Problem setting	Define the problem and identify legitimate stakeholders. Assess the heritage significance and physical condition. Define sustainable development and the key issues.
Direction setting	Agree on a shared vision and common direction for action. Define a statement of heritage significance and determine the limits of acceptable change. Agree on the essential, supportive, neutral and negative sustainability factors.
Structuring	Designate roles and responsibilities, design coordinating structures. Determine the structures for effective, legitimate and participatory management. Determine the evaluation methodology and indicators within an appropriate contextual and temporal perspective.
Implementing	Implement, monitor and evaluate performance. Evaluate performance against regional and national requirements.

Firstly, McCann's problem setting stage describes the events and interactions among stakeholders needed to reach agreement about the definition and membership of the problem domain. This 'legitimises the claims of stakeholders by building social recognition of the problem's existence' (McCann 1983:179).

The success of this stage can be constrained by limited or illegitimate stakeholder participation, politicisation of the process and differences in opinions amongst stakeholders as to the nature of the problem, and a lack of awareness of the larger context. Two elements have been added to this stage. The first element relates to an assessment of heritage significance and physical condition. This establishes the foundation for later discussions about limits of acceptable change. The second element requires the development of a common definition of sustainable development and key local sustainability issues amongst stakeholders

Secondly, McCann’s direction setting stage is described as the process of agreeing on a direction for action by stakeholders. Not only does a ‘desirable state’ need to be negotiated but what must be done to achieve that state needs to be determined. This involves setting goals, developing actions plans and enacting legislation. The process also attempts to resolve an approach to institutional accountability and transparency that will deliver satisfactory end state legitimacy. Without this, sufficient resources may not be allocated and any proposed direction for action can lack the necessary feasibility to have a lasting impact. To this stage has been added the definition of a statement of significance, based on the earlier heritage assessment, and an agreement on limits of acceptable change. Limits of acceptable change are agreed following a negotiated process that weights the key sustainability issues identified in the first stage as essential, supportive, neutral and negative for local sustainable development.

Thirdly, McCann’s structuring stage relates to the functional viability of any problem solving intervention. This concerns who assumes the roles and responsibilities defined by the direction for action. It also concerns the design of the institutional mechanisms used to manage relationships amongst stakeholders. As with the previous two stages, several factors that might impact on the quality of the structuring process are noted. These include an over-reliance on inflexible bureaucratic structures and the inequitable allocation of roles and responsibilities. This stage involves the development of a management structure for the historic environment that is effective, legitimate and participatory in addition to a methodology and indicators for evaluation.

An additional fourth implementation and review stage has been added. This develops McCann’s three stage process into a heuristic model where organisational learning, achieved through the social problem solving process, is integrated back into the system to continuously strengthen the overall approach. The expanded model is cyclical in that any problem intervention is assumed to change the original problematic situation and start the process again. The fourth stage provides for the articulation of progress toward desired ends at a planning level and the review of performance at an operational level. Such a heuristic social problem solving model provides the opportunity to implement corrective action within an already defined historic sustainable development domain and to re-define the issues and stakeholders as required. To further explain how the theoretical model might be implemented, Figure 1 illustrates the interaction between the expanded four stage model for sustainable development and the three levels of problem intervention originally defined by McCann, conceptual, planning and operational.

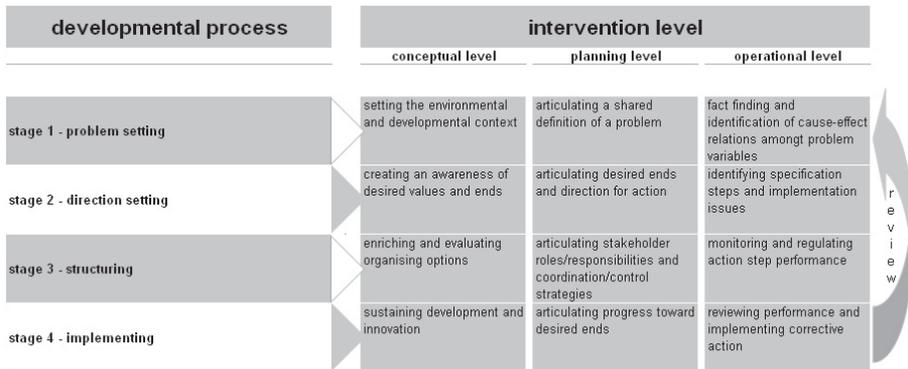


Figure 1. A heuristic model for governance in historic urban environments (adapted from McCann, 1983)

Conclusions

In relation to the sustainable management of complex historic environments, the preceding discussion invites several reflections. Firstly, the contested nature of sustainable development is likely to give rise to a variety of opinions as to what the issues are and how they should be addressed at a local level. In response to 'the influence that framing exerts on problem identification, causality, prognosis and mobilisation' noted by Williams (2006:264), enhancing the frame awareness of key stakeholders is important to fostering collective and coordinated action. Also important is managing the credibility and legitimacy of different stakeholders. For historic urban environments, achieving an effective balance between professional heritage managers and local community participation has already been highlighted as a significant issue.

Secondly, the management process will be tested by the breadth of stakeholder concerns and complexity of inter-relationships between them. The challenge for any system of governance 'is to act in a coordinated and consensual fashion, and for a plethora of actors to agree interventions over different spatial levels and timescales'. This paper assumes that historic urban environments will increasingly be managed within policy frameworks aimed at strengthening participatory governance and social cohesion at a local level. A further issue is that sustainable development is dependent on balancing development at local, regional, national and international levels over time. This is problematic given the need to balance a long-term inter-generational timeframe against short-term political or economic imperatives.

Thirdly, there are several strategic dilemmas that may constrain the effectiveness of sustainable development through governance at historic urban environments. These include the need to balance cooperation and competition. Too much of one will result in a lack of innovation and adaptability while too much of the other will result in the promotion of the interests of the more powerful stakeholders (Williams 2006). Another dilemma involves managing openness and closure in terms of stakeholder membership. A further dilemma concerns the need to balance prescribed rules and systems with the need for flexibility and adaptability. Sullivan (2004:51) describes much of contemporary heritage management as 'structured, bureaucratic and rigorous' which has the capacity to limit the adoption of sustainable development at historic sites.

Finally, adherence to traditional heritage management approaches will be tested by the need to link between organisations and policy fields. To shape effective sustainable development, management competencies will require networking skills and the ability to be informational negotiators and entrepreneurs. Conceptualising the sustainable development of complex historic environments as a social problem, therefore, highlights the need to review the skills of heritage managers as well as the relationships and structures that they operate within. As suggested at the outset, this paper proposes a theoretical model for sustainable development through governance in historic urban environments. Research into the practical operation of the framework is continuing. However, as a means to conceptualise the process, it is hoped that the framework will provide useful insights for other complex historic environments.

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