



Social inclusion, social innovation, and urban governance

Making cities more equitable and inclusive is an ongoing challenge worldwide. The failure of existing institutions to recognise and address these issues can lead to the creation of new social conflicts or the exacerbation of existing social tensions (Kabeer, 2000). Yet, cities are complex and innovative problem-solving mechanisms (Cooke & Kemeny, 2017). New actors or new institutions can make progress in addressing the problems that cities face by introducing new products, services, or processes for service delivery, by developing new models to acquire and distribute resources, by forming new networks, and by creating new incentives with or without the state's involvement. People-centred or problem-driven social innovations can inspire transformation in the governance of cities (Bartels, 2020). This special issue called for research articles that capture the innovation dynamic by the civil society and NGOs, the entrepreneurs, or the governments to improve urban governance and make cities more inclusive.

Social inclusion

Social inclusion is defined as the process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for people who are disadvantaged, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights (Yang, Roig, Jimenez, Perry, & Shepherd, 2016). This multifaceted concept helps to lay out the conditions that individuals and communities face and the solutions to target the disadvantaged. Efforts to overcome social exclusion are meant to diminish the marginalization of individuals or groups within society, while promoting participation, fostering relationships, and ensuring access to resources and services (Jones, 2010).

Economically, social inclusion concerns access to resources and opportunities, such as employment, education, and training. This economic dimension ensures that everyone can lead a meaningful life, fostering a sense of dignity and allowing individuals to contribute to their communities' welfare (Cruz-Saco, 2008). On a socio-cultural level, it examines the societal mechanisms which can nurture relationships, development networks, and strengthen solidarity (Jenson, 2010). Social inclusion enhances respect and tolerance for all, or even celebrates diversity (Kymlicka, 2010). Spatially, it is about equitable distribution of amenities and services to ensure everyone, no matter their location, can access essential services, from healthcare and education to public spaces (Jian et al., 2020; Hsu et al., 2020). In the policy process, it calls for all groups and individuals have a voice in decisions that may affect their life and can exercise their rights and responsibilities (Scorgie & Forlin, 2019).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ugj.2024.01.004>

Available online 20 January 2024

2664-3286/© 2024 Published by Elsevier B.V. on behalf of Shanghai Jiao Tong University. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>)

Social inclusion has been considered beneficial to foster social harmony, mutual understanding, and cohesion (Schiefer & Van der Noll, 2017). Inclusive communities tend to be better equipped for sustainable growth and development. Furthermore, such societies are generally more stable, as they actively work to reduce inequalities and address potential sources of societal unrest (White, 2007).

Social innovation and social inclusion

Achieving a fully inclusive society is not without challenges. People can be marginalised because of societal bias and discrimination. They can also be marginalised by structural impediments, such as ingrained institutional biases, which can perpetuate and even intensify exclusion (Marlier et al., 2009). Addressing these challenges and promoting social inclusion necessitates a comprehensive strategy. Some of the challenges can be deeply engrained in the society and the institutions that governs it and call for unconventional solutions by stakeholders.

Social innovations are new social practices that aim to meet social needs in a better way than the existing solutions (Grimm et al., 2013). They can be novel strategies, ideas, concepts, and organizations. One of its primary benefits is its potential to cater to the needs of marginalized and excluded groups that have been neglected or incapable to address by established systems and markets (Von Jacobi et al., 2017). By involving marginalized groups in the co-creation of solutions, empowerment arises, altering existing and introducing new power relations.

Social inclusion, social innovation, and urban governance

Urban areas are a melting pot of diverse cultures, traditions, and socio-economic backgrounds. Social inclusion in urban governance goes beyond mere representation. It is also about creating urban spaces accessible and usable for all, whether it's in the form of public transportation suitable for people with disabilities, parks that cater to all age groups, or housing policies that provide for the homeless and the affluent alike (Cheema, 2020). It is also about providing services and infrastructures to make cities not just livable but also accessible so that they become thriving ecosystems for all (Andrew & Doloreux, 2012; Hulse, 2010). Inclusive urban governance recognizes the value of diverse perspectives. When more voices, especially those from underrepresented groups, are factored into decision-making processes, the outcomes are often more holistic, sustainable, and harmonious (Hemmati, 2002).

The dynamic interplay between social innovation and urban governance is crucial in shaping the trajectory of modern cities. Their intertwined influences determine how urban centers evolve, respond to chal-

allenges, and adapt to changing needs. Social innovation often emerges as a response to pressing urban issues, ranging from housing shortages and transportation gaps to environmental challenges. When embraced by urban governance, these innovative solutions enable cities to adapt with agility and effectiveness. However, the role of urban governance isn't just reactive. It provides the foundational policy frameworks and regulations that either enable or constrain social innovation. A supportive regulatory environment can nurture and stimulate the growth of innovative projects, whereas stringent or misaligned regulations might hinder them. Thus, it's imperative for policymakers to strike a delicate balance, ensuring both city safety and a conducive atmosphere for fresh ideas.

Nurturing symbiotic relationship between social innovations and urban governance and to achieve social inclusion outcomes can be crucial for cities aiming to thrive in an era of unprecedented changes.

In this special issue, we include four articles which cover various challenges in urban housing, urban revitalization, public budgeting, planning participation and land use planning. Each paper adds a layer of understanding to the multifaceted realm of urban governance. They collectively underscore the need for innovation, inclusivity, and adaptability as cities across the globe (Germany, United States, Singapore, and Ghana) grapple with contemporary challenges.

Balsas in the paper "Qualitative Planning Philosophy and the Governance of Urban Revitalization" delves into the often-overlooked aspects of planning that go beyond the physical and into the cultural heartbeats of urban spaces. This paper examines downtown revitalization governance evolution and the role of cultural mega-events in Europe and the United States. Key findings include dispelling revitalization myths, cultural policy as civic boosterism, and the importance of qualitative research in empowering urban renewal.

Johnson, Jones, and Reitano examine "Stakeholder Networks and Inclusive Public Participation Mechanisms in the Public Budgeting Process" in the United States. Their investigation unravels the intricacies of stakeholder involvement in fiscal matters and the mechanisms through which they can exert influence. Local governments involve various stakeholders in budget processes using public participation mechanisms like neighborhood meetings and citizen committees. Survey data from 294 U.S. senior officers indicates a positive association between citizen committees and most stakeholder groups. However, the effectiveness of participation methods may be context-dependent, questioning their inclusivity.

The theme of public participation continues with Diehl and Chan's insightful paper, "Is it just apathy? Using the Theory of Planned Behaviour to Understand Young Adults' Response to Government Efforts to Increase Planning Participation in Singapore". This paper offers a unique perspective on the factors that drive or deter the involvement of the younger demographic in planning processes. This research used the TPB to study the participation of 18–35-year-olds. A gap exists between young adults' concerns and authorities' views. Recommendations include trust-building and tailored engagement methods.

The intricate tapestry of land use planning in Ghana comes alive in Kaamah, Doe, and Asibey's work. Through a mixed-methods approach, they dive deep into "Conventional Land Use Planning" while making a compelling case for participatory strategies in shaping local plans. This study in Ghana compared conventional and participatory planning approaches in two areas. Data from 397 stakeholders indicated differences in plan preparation but similarities in implementation. Satisfaction varied between areas. Participatory planning with better communication is recommended.

Editorial team: Bingqin Li, Ilan Katz, Lijie Fang, Sunil Kumar

Balsas, C. J. (2022). Qualitative planning philosophy and the governance of urban revitalization, a plea for cultural diversity. *Urban Governance*, 2(2), 247–258.

Johnson, B., Jones, P. A., & Reitano, V. (2021). Stakeholder networks and inclusive public participation mechanisms in the public budgeting process. *Urban Governance*, 1(2), 98–106.

Diehl, J. A., & Chan, I. S. L. (2021). Is it just apathy? Using the Theory of Planned Behaviour to understand young adults' (18 to 35 years old) response to government efforts to increase planning participation in Singapore. *Urban Governance*, 1(2), 89–97.

Kaamah, A. F., Doe, B., & Asibey, M. O. (2023). Policy and practice: Stakeholders' satisfaction with conventional and participatory land use planning in Ghana. *Urban Governance*, 3(4), 278–291.

Bingqin Li*, Ilan Katz
University of New South Wales, Australia

Lijie Fang
Renmin University, PRC

Sunil Kumar
London School of Economics, UK

*Social Policy Research Centre, John Goodsell Building, UNSW, Sydney, Australia, 2052
E-mail address: Bingqin.li@unsw.edu.au (B. Li)

References

- Andrew, C., & Doloreux, D. (2012). Economic development, social inclusion and urban governance: The case of the city-region of Ottawa in Canada. *International journal of urban and regional research*, 36(6), 1288–1305.
- Bartels, K. (2020). Transforming the relational dynamics of urban governance: How social innovation research can create a trajectory for learning and change. *Urban Studies*, 57(14), 2868–2884.
- Cheema, S. (2020). Governance for urban services: Towards political and social inclusion in cities. *Governance for Urban Services: Access, Participation, Accountability, and Transparency*, 1–30.
- Cruz-Saco M.A. (2008) Promoting social integration: Economic, social and political dimensions with a focus on Latin America. Retrieved from United Nations website: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/social/meetings/egm6_social_integration/documents/Promoting_Social_Integration.pdf
- Cooke, A., & Kemeny, T. (2017). Cities, immigrant diversity, and complex problem solving. *Research Policy*, 46(6), 1175–1185.
- Grimm, R., Fox, C., Baines, S., et al., (2013). Social innovation, an answer to contemporary societal challenges? Locating the concept in theory and practice. *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 26(4), 436–455.
- Hemmati, M. (2002). *Multi-stakeholder processes for governance and sustainability: Beyond deadlock and conflict*. Routledge.
- Hsu, A., Chakraborty, T., Thomas, R., et al., (2020). Measuring what matters, where it matters: A spatially explicit urban environment and social inclusion index for the sustainable development goals. *Frontiers in Sustainable Cities*, 2, Article 556484.
- Hulse, K. (2010). In *Housing, public policy and social inclusion*. AHURI Positioning Paper (p. 135).
- Jenson, J. (2010). *Defining and measuring social cohesion*. Commonwealth Secretariat.
- Jian, I. Y., Luo, J., & Chan, E. H. (2020). Spatial justice in public open space planning: Accessibility and inclusivity. *Habitat International*, 97, Article 102122.
- Jones, M. (2010). Inclusion, social inclusion and participation. In *Critical perspectives on human rights and disability law* (pp. 57–82). Brill Nijhoff.
- Kabeer, N. (2000). Social exclusion, poverty and discrimination towards an analytical framework. *IDS bulletin*, 31(4), 83–97.
- Kymlicka, W. (2010). The rise and fall of multiculturalism? New debates on inclusion and accommodation in diverse societies. *International social science journal*, 61(199), 97–112.
- Marlier, E., Atkinson, T., Cantillon, B., et al., (2009). The EU and social inclusion: Facing the challenges. In *The eu and social inclusion* (pp. 237–246). Policy Press.
- Schiefer, D., & Van der Noll, J. (2017). The essentials of social cohesion: A literature review. *Social Indicators Research*, 132, 579–603.
- Scorgie, K., & Forlin, C. (2019). Social inclusion and belonging: Affirming validation, agency and voice. In *Promoting social inclusion* (pp. 3–15). Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Von Jacobi, N., Edmiston, D., & Ziegler, R. (2017). Tackling marginalisation through social innovation? Examining the EU social innovation policy agenda from a capabilities perspective. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 18(2), 148–162.
- Yang, W., Roig, M., Jimenez, M., Perry, J., & Shepherd, A. *Leaving no one behind: The imperative of inclusive development*. Report on the World Social Situation. <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/rwss/2016/full-report.pdf>.
- White, J. J. (2007). *Building bridges toward political stability: Consociationalism and social inclusion in institutions of deeply divided societies*. University of Georgia.