Introduction

Global Transformations, Cities, and the New Sustainability Consensus

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The end of the twentieth century marked a profound transformation of the Earth's natural and social systems. For example, some geologists postulate that the Earth, for the first time in human existence, is in a geological epoch where the influence and transformative power of human beings has become the *de facto* dominant force in nature; indeed, the very layers of the Earth show the profound effects of human activities. This new era is often referred to as the "Anthropocene." And it's not evidenced only in the Earth's crust, as *The Economist* (2011) has poignantly claimed something even more extraordinary: "Humans have changed the way the world works." Following on, we, the editors, soberly call for a fundamental change in how we think about the Earth and its systems. To be sure, the search for new modes of managing global change and consequent transformations is *the* major global task of today.

Some have tried to extend the concept of the Anthropocene to cities. The Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, for example, has reported in the World Urbanization Prospect that by 2050 two-thirds of the world population will live in urban areas (UNDES, 2014: 7). Consequently, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change considers urban adaptation an opportunity "for incremental and transformative adjustments to development trajectories

toward resilience and sustainable development" (IPCC, 2014: 538). At the same time, however, this observation is disrupting our traditional and somehow romanticized imaginary of cities, with some authors arguing that we all live in a moment of planetary urbanization (Brenner, 2014). These two big transformations can be merged into one term—"Urban Anthropocene"—establishing urban areas and processes of urbanization as the focal points for sustainable interventions.

Today, you would be hard pressed to find anyone opposed to sustainability. This is not to say that everyone agrees with what it means to be sustainable, but perhaps it *does* mean the concept should be addressed, no matter how we choose to define it. For example, in a recent radio report, the executive director of the Heartland Foundation, based in Alberta, Canada, claimed that constructing a pipeline for that province's oil shale is "more sustainable" than trucking the fossil fuels to refineries in the United States. "Sustainability" is thus a concept that means everything and nothing, which is not to suggest the concept lacks social importance. Indeed, there are significant material implications when the concept is invoked in whatever form. There may be a new sustainability consensus, and this makes things more complicated.

Before going further, let us explore *sustainability* as a word, or a set of words, that are common in our vocabulary. In its most basic form, sustainability can be thought of as a three-legged stool, with the legs representing social, economic, and environmental domains. At an urban scale, one manifestation of sustainability could be thought of as the locus where economic security, ecological integrity, and social well-being are linked in a complementary fashion. In the following sections we will develop our argument as to why transforming sustainability from theory to practice is not so simple. Further, we will help you think transformatively about sustainable urban development.

Sustainability: Simply from Theory to Practice?

There are dozens of definitions of sustainability. However, the challenge of sustainable development does not lie here; rather, it is in the details. Indeed, over twenty years ago, academic planner Scott Campbell made the bold statement that "in the battle of big public ideas, sustainability has won: the task of the coming years is simply to work out the details and to narrow the gap between its theory and practice" (Campbell, 1996: 301). We

believe the first clause of this statement is accurate, and it has stood the test of time. It is true that sustainability, and its various synonyms (e.g., green, renewable, smart), have become household terms. But if the second clause in Campbell's statement were true, we would not have needed to write this book. While you can hardly find anyone in the world who is against the idea of sustainability, narrowing the gap between theory and practice has hardly been simple.

Forming, Norming, and Performing Sustainability

Sustainability is a long-established concept that means many different things depending on who you ask. For people in the global north, the meaning of sustainability is quite different from that held in the global south—the meanings can even seem contradictory. The concept is defined differently by people living in the countryside from those living in the city. It can be a very narrow term, such as sustainable economic growth, or very broad, as conceptualized by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987. No matter how its meaning is understood, sustainability, both conceptually and in practice, is imbued with various politics and influenced by various political forces in different places and times. Sometimes it is mobilized as a concept to influence policymakers and to get "buy-in" from stakeholders. Sustainability is thus both a *word*, often used in adjective form—*sustainable*—to describe behaviors and conditions, as well as a *concept* that implies a set of principles for how the economy, environment, and society interface should function. This book explores many of the different influences and forces that act on sustainability concerns as they have been understood in the conceptual academic literature as well as in practice, primarily in urban contexts, which we will henceforth term as "sustainable urban development."

Sustainability, only a generation old as a discrete concept, has a long historical legacy. In terms of practice, it has been implemented differently in different places. Indeed, many policies and practices go by the same names. Local Agenda 21, a process for envisioning sustainable urban futures conceived in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, has been implemented thousands of times around the globe. However, no two processes or their respective outcomes have been identical. These differences can largely be attributed to the material needs of the cities and the perceptions of various stakeholders where they were conceived. Phoenix differs from Boston;

Paris differs from Rome; Berlin differs from London; and Johannesburg differs from Rio. The institutions and agencies that develop sustainability programs also differ. Sustainable urban development can be initiated by local NGOs, local economic development agencies, planning organizations, or politicians.

Finally, perhaps the most difficult to understand are the forces that act on practice of sustainability. These practices, as well as the concepts from which they come, are not created in a vacuum, but have complex social histories attached to them and norms—agreed upon ways of doing things—that preceded them. These histories and norms do not go away with each new generation of policymaking or conceptual understanding of a problem; the "old" and the "new" get braided together in new and unpredictable ways. Thus, there is not a single idea shaping practices out there that doesn't have a complex and diverse social history. What makes these histories even more challenging to comprehend is that they represent norms. If norms are the established ways of doing things, this means that actors involved in these processes don't think about these histories; they merely act in accordance with the past, as a perceived matter of course. The point we are making here is that ideas are *socially constructed*. In procedural terms, scholars call the process of braiding new conceptual and programmatic ideas with existing and preexisting notions *social construction*. This means that despite having a *normative* conceptual status, actors and institutions will privilege different aspects of a new idea and bring their own particular context to bear on it without thinking about these details. Social norms exist, but they are not consistent across space, even when they look exactly alike.

The Power of Words: Sustainability as Text

Thinking sustainably takes a number of forms. It's theoretical—about how the economy functions and people's role in shaping it. Thinking sustainably is a conceptual act in that it requires us to consider explicitly, but more often implicitly, the connections between the three domains of sustainability. Above all else, sustainability is a word. Even with its diverse and variegated meanings, the *word* has become part of our common parlance—"my hybrid car is sustainable," "my organic food is a sustainable form of agriculture," "my city buys sustainable energy," "I live in a green building," and so on. The last example, green building, shows the

common connection people make between sustainability and greenness, and in popular usage the terms are synonymous. We could just as easily substitute "green" as a descriptor in each of the examples above ("my city buys green energy," etc.). Philosophers and social theorists have noted for some time the power of words. Rorty, for example, argues that language is "interposed, like a cushion between us and the real world" (1991: 81). A simple example illustrating this viewpoint comes from the current environmental condition under global debate: is it "climate change" or "global warming"? Just a generation ago, global warming was the phrase of choice for scientists, policymakers, and the public, as far as global warming figured in the public debate—in the United States, at least. As research evolved on this issue, it turned out that global warming was only one factor of climate change, which seemed to have regional and annual variations. Other factors include acidification of the oceans and extreme weather events, such as rain, snow, drought, and superstorm cells. Yet, despite this conceptual change, the phrase "global warming," the words "global" and "warming" together, are sometimes used as a foil to action on climate change because in many places the weather is not warmer. Words, then, can be more than just combinations of letters that have meaning; they are employed instrumentally to harness power.

"Green," a popular synonym for sustainability does not come without rhetorical consequences. Think for a moment about the rhetorical difference between the words "green" and "sustainable." Being green implies environmental consciousness, but are all green acts sustainable? For us, the answer is no. What is beneficial to the environment does not always bring broader social benefits. Sustainability scholar Julian Agyeman has argued "a truly sustainable society is one where wider questions of social needs and welfare, and economic opportunity, are *integrally* connected to environmental concerns" (2013: 5). For him, the power of the word *green* obscures the wider question of social needs and welfare. Thus, what is green for one social group may have a negative social impact or affect the welfare of another. This is different—albeit similar—from the concept of "green washing," which refers to practices used by organizations to create the perception that they are good, assuming green equals good or desirable, when in reality they are going about business as usual. "Green" as it is used here is a powerful social construct that has made being green popularly synonymous with sustainability. To do so, it uses real—and perceived—green benefits to suggest that social welfare and needs are being incorporated into policy and practice.

Sustainable Development? No. Yes. It Depends . . .

In the previous section, we described how words are used instrumentally to create the illusion of certain outcomes while obscuring the undesirable consequences. Let us illustrate this point through a few examples.

The Green Economy

Local Agenda 21 was developed as Chapter 21 of Agenda 21, which came out of the United Nations Sustainable Development Conference in 1992. Twenty years later, in June of 2012, leaders from around the world again gathered in Rio de Janeiro at the "Rio +20" Conference. On the agenda at the conference was the "green economy." A generation ago, having a green economy on the agenda would have seemed anathema to a high-level conference on development. However, the world had only a few years prior experienced the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, and there was a need for alternatives. Just as the Welfare State in the United States, led by Franklin D. Roosevelt, was an alternative to laissez faire capitalism of the 1920s and early '30s, the global "green economy" discourse embodied an antidote for the corrupt economy that brought derivatives, toxic debt, and a minimally regulated US banking industry.

Going green had been sought in earnest by some national governments for some time, such as in Scandinavia and Germany, which was essentially a corporate fad for a number of years. However, in current times, mainstream national governments, such as the United States and United Kingdom, have started adopting the discourse and fabricating new economic policies to support these visions. For example, the UK Central Government spoke of a "Green New Deal" where the nation's economic direction would be based on a postcarbon economy. In the United States, presidential candidate Barack Obama ran partially on a "green jobs" platform, which sought to reskill workers whose jobs were rendered obsolete after the economic crisis of 2008. China, the heir apparent to become the world's economic superpower, put its industrial machine into green technology. Most recently, as part of a green economy initiative—but veiled as a "good global citizen" initiative—Switzerland, a country that uses nuclear power to obtain 37 percent of its energy, announced a plan to reduce its CO_2 output to below 50 percent of 1990 levels, all while decommissioning its nuclear power system.

Back at Rio +20, there remained room for skepticism for some. In fact, as the conference sponsored by the United Nations was being held at the site of the 2016 Summer Olympics, some 50,000 people took to the streets of Rio proper to protest the green economy as it was being framed by the United Nations. Who could be against a green economy? After all, doesn't the green economy help polar bears, benefit ecologically sensitive areas, and create wealth and jobs? Maybe. But, for the United Nations (and others), it did. In 2011, for example, the UNEP published a report entitled *Towards a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication*, which argued that the green economy results in "improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing ecological risks and environmental scarcity" (2011: 16). What, then, could the protestors be so upset about? For one, they were concerned about the institutional mechanisms associated with the "free" market that would supposedly deliver these goals. For them, the market had neither brought economic security nor social justice. One need only to look at the composition of the protestor groups to see this: labor unions, Indigenous rights organizations, women's groups, and, of course, some environmental organizations. For them, the work on the green economy, taking place on the future Olympic grounds, was adopting the words of sustainability but invoking the same delivery mechanisms that had led to previous rounds of environmental destruction, economic downturn, and uneven distribution of wealth.

Urban Regeneration and Renewable Energy

Policies about renewable energy development and urban regeneration in the United States offer another example of the instrumental use of the rhetoric of sustainability. In 2008, the United States Environmental Protection Agency established the "RE-powering America Lands" initiative. This initiative sought to convert tens of thousands of acres of America's most contaminated lands to sites of green energy production. For many, these are "sustainable" solutions in that the United States' growing electricity demand will be met by green sources, thus producing fewer greenhouse gases. It will help the economy by providing much-needed jobs to rural and urban America. It will take the stress off of undeveloped land (greenfield sites) and thus help maintain natural carbon sinks, and it will help clean up sites in communities that need development. The rhetoric, the *words*,

of this policy discourse suggests that this is a sustainable outcome. Who could argue against creating jobs, hazardous site clean-ups, and fewer carbon emissions? But do the words belie the concept of sustainability? The answer is, "It depends." It certainly provides "sustainable" benefits for some, yet for others the benefits are less clear. Consider those living around a contaminated site (or brownfield) in a city programmed for a green energy development. Their level of economic security is lower because they live proximate to such a site (Bullard, 2000). They have borne a higher level of risk over time because of their proximity to such sites. Moreover, the clean-up standard will be lower because the land use is industrial, not recreational or housing. Further, chances are that the jobs produced won't be from their neighborhood. Finally, because of the way grid infrastructure works, the electrons produced by the green system on the converted brownfield site will not benefit those living near it. So, the winners do not compensate the losers, a key concept called *pareto optimality* in market-oriented economic thinking.

Planning for Parks and Recreation

Inequity becomes more evident when using an example from public parks and green space. Green space and public parks have been found to be both desirable and an improvement to the quality of life for those who use them. Yet, as Agyeman (2013) has noted, the park design in 1980s London with green spaces for "all" to enjoy are not equally accessible to everyone, and thus privilege a certain social class and racial group. Why? There are several reasons. First, housing in close proximity to parks is typically more desirable than housing without access to green spaces. Parks provide recreation, better air quality, and a place for families to interact outside the home. Yet, increased demand for housing near parks translates into higher home prices. Without requirements or provisions for affordable housing, many middle-class and working-class people are priced out of these housing markets and must settle for housing further away from the green space. And when they do have access to these spaces, they often find the spaces are designed for the middle-class, white, nuclear family. How so? Think of park benches and picnic tables. How many people do they seat? Four, comfortably? Six, but uncomfortably? This presents a problem for some families, such as immigrant families, which tend be larger. These families also tend to congregate with their extended families. For them, a family of four on a weekend outing is an exception, not a rule.

What message does this send to social groups who do not fit the design? Imagine a sign reading "No more than six people at this site." Might that affect their interest in using green space? In their place, would you have argued against park development or "improvement"?

Sustainability and the Planner's Dilemma

Thus far we have argued that sustainability is a socially constructed concept. We have used renewable energy and parks as examples. But how do planners, the people who allocate resources for sustainability projects, think about how they ply their trade? For Scott Campbell (1996), it is a triangle of conflicts that arise from different understandings and meanings that are attributed to the notion of sustainability. Campbell enters the enduring debate on whether emphasis should be on the economy, the ecology, or social justice—and how to reconcile these seemingly opposing concepts. He calls this the "planners dilemma." In discussing this dilemma, he identifies three approaches to planning that are fundamentally different, but connected, to different conflicts in urban planning: property conflict, resource conflict, and equity-versus-nature conflict.

Property conflict is about the space allocated for innovation, distribution, production, and consumption. Following this logic, urban space, often private property, is a rare and contested good that needs to be used in order to promote and stimulate economic growth, create or save jobs, and guarantee profits. Here, cities transform or regenerate in order to adapt to new economic challenges and circumstances. For example, large-scale industries were once key to economic prosperity, but nowadays many cities focus on the creative class with its distributed demands for urban space. Property conflict arises when planners consider how to allocate urban space to different activities.

Let's create an image to give these conflicts a concrete form. In recent years, many cities around the world have undergone profound transformations due to significant technological changes in logistics and transportation. Inner-city harbors are no longer needed for freight; containers are more practical, cheaper, and mobile. So, what's to be done with all these inner-city harbor areas? From an economic perspective, these areas were always a significant engine of the urban economy, so why change it? Water used to be a "hard" location factor, meaning that water was a basic requirement for economic activity such as a mill or a microprocessor manufacturer. Today, urban economies think of water

differently. Water can now be seen as a "soft" location factor, one that is attractive and desirable but not a basic requirement. Following this logic, harbor areas are transformed into office spaces for new service industries. Old industrial buildings are retrofitted into modern lofts, the desired form of living for the new creative class. Fancy restaurants invite views over the waterfront. Well-designed public spaces are converted into elegant promenades and plazas that invite them for a walk after dinner. They do not offer respite for those who lack a place to live. This is exactly what the property conflict is about: for whom and what purpose do we design our cities—profit or people (Chomsky, 2011)? Are attractive areas in the city primarily aimed at accommodating the wealthy (c.f. Lees, Slater, and Wyly, 2013)? Or, are planners obliged to plan for everybody since everybody has a "right to the city" (Harvey, 2012; Brenner, Marcuse, and Mayer, 2012)?

This problematizes Campbell's second concern: resource conflict. Resource conflict sees cities as sites where natural resources are consumed and transformed. Cities consume much of the global energy resources and significantly contribute to global warming. Following this, urban space needs to be protected from further exploitation—that is, human use. Buildings, roads, plazas: they all contribute to the sealing of soil, preventing rain water from draining or plants from growing. In our example of inner-city waterfront regeneration, the vacant harbor area is an excellent opportunity to transform this area back into "nature." With technological progress come new opportunities. While new areas outside of the cities are transformed into container terminals, the inner-city areas are now no longer used. So why not "renaturalize" inner-city harbor areas? Instead of office buildings, there could be larger park areas. Instead of cemented promenades flanked by expensive restaurants, there could be areas reserved for more natural flood prevention with new biotops, such as in Hamburg. Sure, there is certainly quite a romanticized idea of nature behind this strategy. But instead of dedicating space to economic activities, production, and consumption, this approach aims at reclaiming nature and reintroducing biodiversity into the city.

Campbell's third conflict refers to the question of social equity and justice and ecological objectives. Here, the focus is on the distribution of ecological amenities, as described above, and the question of whether they will be equally accessible for all. The central question is, does the preference of ecological goals over economic growth hit poorer people harder because it limits their access to job markets even further? Does the implementation of sustainable buildings automatically lead to higher rents

and thus exclude lower-income groups from the amenities of low-energy standards or green neighborhoods? The transformation of an inner-city harbor area into a natural park that contributes to environmental protection might indeed imply that job opportunities in surrounding neighborhoods are spatially dislocated, because lower-income groups must now travel or commute to reach their work places. From this perspective, the ecological transformation would have contributed to social injustice.

These are important questions that have dominated urban planning for some time. And to be honest, this typology has its blind spots. In the center of Campbell's (1996) perspective is the idea that urban planning is the rational act to manage or trade these different foci—the environment, the economy, and the social. Successful urban planning is about finding solutions to these conflicts. And according to Campbell (1996), the best planning project is the one situated at the center of the triangle comprised of property conflict, resource conflict, and equity-versus-nature conflict. Urban regeneration, from this perspective, needs to reconcile these aspects by stimulating economic interests to the same degree as referring to environmental protection or social equity. This book is about exploring these conflicts—not in ideal ways, but in their messiness of urban-planning practice.

So, does sustainability exist in practice? The answer is no . . . yes . . . well, *maybe*. It depends on who you ask. Our approach is not only about imagining what a more sustainable future might look like, as the examples above suggest, but also about realizing the range of knowledge and analytical tools one will need if they hope to deliver it. As we will see in the coming pages, despite the consensus regarding the term "sustainability," it remains a contested concept.

The Contribution of this Book

In this book we explore the many concepts, norms, processes, programs, and practices of sustainable urban development. Our goal is not only to expose these to you but that they will become part of your analytical toolkit. While we will lead you through the conceptual scholarly research, the practitioner literature, and even look at sustainable urban development programs and practices, our objective is to not constrain your thinking to some arbitrary endpoint of what "sustainable" is. Instead we seek to offer both conceptual and practical material as a starting point for you

to develop your own ideas about sustainable urban development and to examine these ideas in new and creative ways. This book comes from our own frustration with the limits of thinking about and acting in the name of "sustainability." As part of the next generation of thinkers and policy-makers, you should realize that "thinking sustainably" *should* be difficult. It should require careful examination of well-established tradeoffs, and actively seeking to render visible "new" ones. It should be about making tough decisions and struggling over what we can accept and what we cannot. In other words, thinking sustainably is itself a process of constant political struggle and should be consciously regarded as so. This does not mean equitable decisions cannot be made. Rather, we must strive to think beyond norms, to recognize the histories of policy formations and their impacts on conceptual and policy outcomes.

We believe that cities can and will play an important role in setting the foundation for sustainable development. Cities are sites of power, innovation, and transmission; they can be seen as forerunners and trendsetters that are instrumental in transforming themselves, as well as other places and regions throughout the world.

Our Invitation: A User Guide for the Book

To promote critical and creative thinking, we have presented the material in this book in an innovative format that allows you to assemble your own personal reading path. If you wish to dive into the adventures of the field trips immediately, you may come back later to the conceptual chapters. You need not embark on the field trips in the order that we have presented them. Our hope is that you will move through the chapters in a way that you might an actual field trip, wandering, exploring, and letting curiosity be your guide as you reflect on the material presented.

We would like to point out that our field trips are *not* case studies. Rather, they are told through a first-person narrative from the perspective of our well-informed and experienced contributors, and are designed to lead you through a district or several districts. What separates these field trips from conventional case studies is that they are not written to build theory or to illustrate a conceptual point. They are there for you to explore from a variety of perspectives. We offer some conceptual frameworks for you in the first chapters, but we would consider it a lost opportunity if you limit your examination of the field trips to them. In fact, we challenge

you to imagine what postsustainable urbanism might look like. Whether you are a student of urban planning, geography, sociology, or a related discipline, we want you to see these field trips as complex puzzles with moving pieces, or as a pallet of colors, canvas, and other materials—much like the artwork that accompanies each field trip—that you can disassemble, reassemble, or adjust by mixing "colors" in new ways. We invite you to develop your own field trips of new models and practices, or to identify other sustainable urban development fallacies. The book's final chapter should help you to better understand how political, economic, and other factors in sustainable urbanism appear to be framed in particular settings and perspectives.

Our key idea is to take up field trips as an old and established instrument of teaching and to implement them into a new textbook format. Field trips can serve as an important and powerful approach to observe, analyze, and better understand spaces; and they form an integral part of teaching and learning in a wide range of disciplines, including geography, history, archeology, social and cultural sciences, as well as the natural sciences and related disciplines. As mentioned, it is important to keep in mind that field trips and case studies are not the same. A case study is a form of research that analyzes a specific (geographical) case, taking into account the specificity of place (including historicity, path dependency, local resources, etc.), wider theoretical debates, and over-arching structures and trends. Case study research starts with research questions and combines empirical and theoretical approaches. The aim of a case study is to give a concluding explanation on the basis of field research and analysis.

Our field trip approach is different. Field trips are based on the idea of *visiting* places in order to gain experience and new insights. Most of the field trips invite readers to explore specific sites, neighborhoods, or projects linked to the overarching topic of sustainable urbanism. Contributors were asked to point out political and social aspects in their field trips and to explicitly address the different, sometimes competing, meanings and practices of social sustainability to be observed. The field trips tell the story of the projects and focus on particular problems, controversies, and major challenges for present and future developments. The degree to which the authors' positionalities are reflected varies among the field trips.

Usually, a field trip is not framed within a particular theoretical perspective; rather, its primary aim concerns exploration, not analysis. In this book, we would like to engage with different forms of sustainable

urban development as part of a "traveling experience" in the sense that the field trip experiences are presented to the readers as place-based *stories of sustainability*. As mentioned, these sustainability stories are related by contributors with international expertise in their field, but—far different from the manifold research articles and books they have written and published—they were asked to tell their own subjective story of their cases, drawing on their subjective perceptions and theoretical insights, and without explicit reference to a theoretical framework. Just like going on an actual field trip, readers are invited to discover and experience the presented stories, some of which appear to be unfinished—and thus to be regarded as "raw material"—and still open to further interpretation and reflections that can build on different angles and perspectives to read (or rather *see*) these stories.

The potential of our field trips relies on the following benefits:

1. *Openness*. The field trips are presented as open stories in order to stimulate further reflection. The aim of the field trips are to raise questions, not give answers. The field trips thus end without conclusions, as it is up to readers to reflect on them and make sense of them. Obviously, the same field trip may be read and understood in various ways by different readers.

2. *Interpretation*. The absence of a theoretical framework provides methodological freedom to readers to reinterpret the presented stories. Stimulated by the storyline, readers can develop further questions and interpretations based on their own experiences, judgment, and creativity. While the place-specific details of the field trips may fade into the background, the readers' thoughts and interpretations are likely to touch on broader questions of environmental injustice, social exclusion, neoliberalism, and commodification of the environment.

3. *Relatedness*. We take students/readers on these field trips because we want them to discover places and environments. Right from the start, they tend to interpret and cope with the new impressions by relating them to their previous experiences. They relate the *new* to the *well-known*, the *unfamiliar* to the *familiar*. In this sense, our field trips have

the potential to help readers identify similarities and differences and, in doing so, make sense of their new and old experiences. Thus the reflection of their own experiences is rationalized and sharpened by the otherness of the material provided in the field trips. Further, the field trips offer the possibility to comparatively relate them to each other.

4. *Learning from the field*. The field trips help readers understand and challenge the theoretical claims, the empirical evidence, and the meaning of social sustainability in particular and sustainable urban development in general. As part of an iterative process, the field trips complement the overarching theoretical concept presented in the first part of the book. In addition, we invite readers to assess and collect complementary information about the sites visited in the field trips and to develop a more in-depth perspective. In order to facilitate this process, we have suggested further readings at the end of each field trip chapter. We also plan to set up an Internet platform where further material can be found.

In a nutshell, our book invites readers to engage with the raw materials provided in the field trips, to mobilize their knowledge, and to transfer their interdisciplinary and cross-cultural experiences in order to reflect on, discuss, and better understand different forms of sustainable urbanism. We hope you will enjoy taking an active part in this adventure, and identify new kinds of solutions to the problems that plague urban development, in general, and sustainable urban development, in particular.

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