Urbanising Suburbia – Tool Summary

Authors

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Info

Date:
2005 - 2007

Place of origin:
Glasgow, Scotland

Homepage:
http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-8647-2_8

References:

- Frey, H. & Bagaeen, S., 2005. Plus Project: Urbanising Suburbia,
- Frey, H. & Bagaeen, S., 2009. Adapting the City. In Sustainable City Form. Future City. Springer Netherlands, pp. 163-182.

Download:
Not applicable

Description

"The key objective of Urbanising Suburbia is to develop a tool with the help of which:
- The degree of sustainability of existing (sub)urban areas can be measured;
- Intensification programmes can be established that improve the degree of sustainability of these areas;
- The degree of sustainability of intensified (sub)urban areas can be predicted."

"The overriding approach to the task the project has set itself to develop more than a sustainability checklist that highlights goals and points at urban problems but does not give the user any advise how to respond to the problem. The tool that this project is in the process of developing is geared towards the measurement of the degree of sustainability of existing (sub)urban areas as well as the systematic formulation, by comparison of target values with existing values, of appropriate forms of modification and remodelling of these areas to improve their levels of sustainability in response to the qualities and/or deficiencies of their existing location, morphology and socio-economic profile."
"The capacity and applicability of the tool for the measurement of the degree of sustainability of (sub)urban areas and for the assessment of the potential for their remodelling will in this project be limited to the planning stage of intensification at district levels and to the conception stage of intensification at local, i.e. neighbourhood level."
All [2005]

Key Theoretical Background

"based on the threshold and target values that are derived from UN, EU and UK government recommendations, research publications and best practice case studies."
"For our research on Glasgow the recommended value profiles are predominantly based on statistical analysis of Scotland and Glasgow averages."
"Issues of design of urban neighbourhoods are covered in considerable detail by a growing number of publications, among them Bentley et al. (1985), Barton et al. (2003) and the English Partnerships (2000) to mention but a few."
All [2009]
Also references to and recommendations from the Urban Task Force report.

SUD Framework

Refer the sustainability framework considered, listing its dimensions and issues/categories.
"The relevant key indicators for the planning and conception stage of urban regeneration are those concerned with the operational, social, and economic viability of urban areas that in turn generate the quality of life of those who live and work there. Therefore the development of threshold and target values cannot only respond to housing needs but has to focus on sustainable communities with their own services and facilities and public transport." [2009]
The dimensions of sustainability considered are social and economic.
The indicators are grouped in four categories of descriptors/characteristics:

1. Built Form
2. Social
3. Economic
4. Operational - "Services and Facilities at Urban Neighbourhood, District, Town and City Cores"

Input

The indicators have been selected for "for the planning and conception stage" and are based on the following data.
"A preliminary investigation of the Govan areas generates secondary data by using MapInfo, the valuation roll (property taxation register), Census statistics, ArcGIS, and information provided by the city council. Additional primary data on housing conditions, the quality of services and facilities and their location and catchment populations, are collected in a number of area site visits. The data are collated in maps as well as built form, social and economic characteristics sheets." [2009]

Methods

There are no recommended software tools, although MapInfo and ArcGIS were used in the pilot projects. The calculations are simple area based statistics that can be completed with any GIS.
"The smallest planning entity and building block of the city for which targets are developed is therefore what is usually called an 'urban village' or an 'urban neighbourhood'." The minimal value aggregation area is the neighbourhood.
The definition of the neighbourhood boundary follows the principles of the City Form project, one would expect they are based on physical differences and barriers, but these do not include buffer zones.

Output

Not specified. Maps, GIS and summary tables were used. The comparison is made on an indicator by indicator basis, following local priorities.

Urbanising Suburbia – Tool Review

Comments on the tool regarding the various assessment criteria.

General

Background
Very simple research it seems, with references restricted to UK and based on even more local data specific to Glasgow. Very disappointing overall, especially considering the quality and profile of the book where it's published.

Application (Scale and Design Phase)
Seems to be appropriate for my goals in terms of scale and data requirements. But seems to be a very early design stage where the urban structure/design is not present.

Sustainability Principles
Misses the environmental dimension explicitly or directly, because it's considering only urban form and design indicators. Is not focusing on buildings, energy and technology, where most assessments focus.
Maybe if I were to select relevant and useable indicators would come up with the same?

Assessment Criteria
These are a bit of a mixed bag: some are clearly urban form based, but many others are depending on an existing population. Also the allocation of criteria to topics is not clear cut, although this is normal.

Indicators and Calculation Methods
Simple areal statistics: total, percentages.

Output
None is suggested, this is not a "real" tool.