

- **No.65**
- **Transition from Sanitary City to the Sustainable city: Lessons Learned from Across the Atlantic**

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- **Abstract:**

- There is ample evidence that the transition in evolving the sanitary city to the sustainable city is complex, multi-layered and contradictory process. While the environmental benefits of nature-driven services in cities have started to be quantified by biophysical scientists, little critical attention is paid to implementation of this new urban landscape and type of infrastructure and the concomitant governance structures that may require a different civic code of conduct from its residents and transfer responsibilities and burdens. The sustainable city reflects a growing momentum that acknowledges that nature exists in cities and creates the potential for naturalisation of the urban fabric for multiple benefits and raises difficult governance issues about responsibilities, costs and management. At the same time, it is imperative to understand the origins of this shift and its assumptions about the benefits of nature in order to be able to successfully cultivate the sustainable city. This session focuses on the application of specific examples –e.g. tree planting initiatives, recycling, composting, gardening and all other forms of greening and mobility measures of the current modern city– to raise questions about the implementation and challenges in the transition from previous mode of urban landscape to the current sustainable cities in North America and Europe. Further, we will debate sustainability and governance approaches to the environment, and the tensions they create with current city organisational structures for democratic accountability and participation, and for equity. We believe that the emergence of sustainability and governance are the outcomes of processes that have occurred over time: sustainability comes as a response to the perceived degradation of the environment by human action, and governance as an approach to managing human affairs comes out of complex changes in the economy, attitudes towards the state, and global geopolitical shifts (Jordon 2008). Nature-driven services infrastructure, in the current context, depends on a different set of political and economic shifts towards governance, caught within the paradoxical alignment of state-market-society relations that imply that important new economic conditions and civic engagements are complex and not easily unfolding without the corresponding institutional context (Jessop 1998, p. 32). Applying a “lessons-learned” framework, the following guiding questions would help focus the discussion: What are the actual biophysical effects of implementing ecological services (tree planting, watershed restoration, bioswales, infiltration trenches and so forth) and; what science is necessary to understand the actual biophysical effects of these services? What are the new forms of municipal government and

civic engagement necessary to implement the sustainable city? How do we advance learning and facilitate knowledge transfer relevant to local government policy makers, research institutes and civic society? Are partnerships necessary, on whose terms and what kinds? What are the impacts on land use in the city, public and private spaces? Should we be concerned about the source and costs of ecosystem services infrastructure? How does an ecosystem service-based infrastructure interface with the post-modernist splintering city? Does it contribute to exacerbating inequalities and creating marginalized places? What are the artistic/creative image implications of moving from invisible and technical landscape systems to nature-driven and earth-based systems in the urban environment?