

Unit 18 Design and implementation of effective and efficient policies

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In synthesizing and evaluating the papers presented, it appears firstly that there are numerous policies and policy tools in place globally, directed at the achievement of a more sustainable built environment. However, there is a lack, at the global level, of an accepted series of policies for the internationally integrated and unified pursuit of sustainable development.

While gaining such international collaboration and acceptance is clearly a very difficult task, there is no doubt that there is a need to link a sustainable built environment with mainstream policy and economics in particular. At the global level, and specifically regarding developing nations, the principles and tools for the achievement of a sustainable built environment, may need to be integrated into the policy decisions of the larger economic institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and World Bank and World Trade Organisation, before real measurable results can be achieved.

Deepa Nair spoke that policy must be appropriate and represent the needs of the users that the policy will effect. In essence, this is helping ensure social sustainability, by developing locally appropriate solutions to local problems, in a manner most suited to a particular region and culture. While this is very true, Deepa may well be identifying one of the biggest challenges of achieving a sustainable built environment, policy implementation.

A policy that is obviously supported by the people that it affects will clearly be more readily implemented than one that has been developed in isolation in government or elsewhere. Either way however, there are a number of policy tools that have been utilised globally, that may be used for encouraging, guiding and/or directing the uptake of sustainable practices.

Dominique Sellier discussed economic instruments and their use in accelerating the diffusion of sustainable construction, looking at such things as tax abatements, etc. The economic instruments will be obviously a major decisive factor on the uptake of sustainable construction policy, however, some will no doubt be more effective than others. Shoichi Ando evaluated the types of policies, specifically in regard to energy efficiency, including economic policy tools, regulatory tools, information, and research and development policy tools.

In adopting any of these tools, it does seem that the level of policy and type of

policy will vary greatly depending on the degree and rate of change desired or required, and the social and cultural context in which it is to be implemented. A well driven policy strategy through regulation implemented in parallel with other policy tools, such as economic instruments may be the best solution in some economies, however, in others, a 'go with the flow' strategy may be more desirable. At a global level however, I feel, from the presentations, there is a need to ensure firm implementation strategies and measurement of progress to ensure we are on path to achieving the broader goals of sustainable development.

Finally, policy implementation through appropriate tools will rely on education. That is, equipping people with the knowledge, techniques and confidence to adopt the policy and further refine their own solutions. This is identified by Ando and discussed more exclusively by Paula Feminias, who stated that such projects help make sustainable building a more tangible and visible concept.

In summary the presentations conveyed the message that, at present, there is no concrete sustainable development policy and strategies. Global collaboration will be required in developing these if unified, measurable steps are to be taken across the globe. These 'global' policies may then be adopted and refined within nations and local regions to ensure locally appropriate responses to local development issues.

Regardless of the type of policy instruments adopted, there is need for broader institutional support, and this may best be done through mainstreaming sustainable development and sustainable construction goals and principles.

Personal stance and urgency will determine whether policy should be led by the private or public sector. I suggest that in the vast majority of cases, the public sector is the sector able to overcome ingrained methods of operation and attitudes, and provide the appropriate incentive and centralised support systems to create the required change.

Either way, any policy should be performance and guideline based, to maximise creativity and innovation, yet more prescriptive in areas of the market that may not respond to such a strategy and in areas where rapid change will be required to prevent ecological collapse.