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Inequality, sustainability, and public policy: Historical and spatial perspectives

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Introduction

Should the Australian Government develop urban policies that seek to enhance equity and sustainability? This chapter explores this question by comparing the experience of urban policies during the Whitlam Government's period of office in the 1970s with the subsequent decades of policy drift. Can we learn lessons from the former period that are relevant to the situation now with a new ALP federal government in office? What is the potential for a program of reforms in which urban policies are a central feature? What would it take for a policy package of that type to be more enduring than previously? These are questions that require consideration from historical and spatial perspectives.

This chapter probes what is possible and potentially effective. It begins with a section on methodology that seeks to clarify how, in general, knowledge can be framed to enhance its relevance for public policy purposes. Then come sections reviewing the Whitlam Government's urban and regional policy initiatives and the subsequent decades of relative policy inaction. The penultimate section turns to consideration of a reform agenda targeted at current concerns about employment, equity, and the environment. The chapter concludes with discussion of relationships between past experiences and current challenges.

Framing knowledge and policy

Public policy operates in the political space between the perception of problems and the practicalities of solving them. Awareness of problems does not of itself generate remedial policies. Systematic study of the possibilities and pitfalls is also needed, helping to build bridges between theorists and practitioners. Analytically, the process has three interrelated aspects: 1) understanding the problems 'out there' that must be addressed; 2) developing remedial policies; and 3) trying to attain effective outcomes.

The first stage requires recognition of social problems and research to illuminate their character, causes, and possible remedies. Only then do governments usually become actively engaged. Seen in this light, researchers are not marginal players, because their work can be crucial in framing problems and pointing to potentially effective policy responses.

The second stage—the public policy process itself—relates directly to the state, broadly defined to include all levels of government and public services. Here is where the choice between alternative policy approaches and the development and implementation of specific policies occurs. The public policy process converts what *might* be done into active interventions.

Then comes the third stage: policy implementation and its outcomes. Overall policy effectiveness—or lack thereof—depends on state capacity to drive effective change and the economic, environmental, and social factors that constrain what is achieved in practice. Policies—however well intentioned and carefully crafted—may be ineffective because of unforeseen obstacles. Political considerations are ever present, of course, because no policy operates in a vacuum, separate from other policies or from changes to the political-economic context.

Of course, all three aspects have strong interconnections and interdependencies. The policy process is seldom linear and requires feedback loops and modifications in the light of experience. The ultimate test is whether the problems are resolved, or at least ameliorated, by the policies pursued. For urban analysis, historical and spatial perspectives are integral to such assessments. To distinguish between what is unique to specific times and places and what can be usefully generalised is the key element in effective social science.

Urban policies in political-economic context

Public policies tend to reflect the general social concerns of each era. In Australia during the years after World War II, for example, a dominant concern was to address the housing shortage that had resulted from the housebuilding doldrums during the Great Depression and subsequent war years. There was a pressing need to create 'homes fit for heroes', for newly formed households, and increasingly, for immigrants arriving as 'new Australians'. State and territory governments, as well as many highly motivated households, sought to meet the challenge (Troy 2012). The macroeconomic conditions were propitious, with buoyant economic growth and the development of new manufacturing industries leading to almost continuous full employment over two decades. The federal government's novel commitment to Keynesian macroeconomic priorities was conducive to buoyant employment conditions and steadily rising incomes, though an array of other policies, including industry policies and tariff protection, also contributed (Jones 2021). The surge in housebuilding was a significant driver of economic growth, leading to the subsequent long boom and increasingly widespread urban prosperity.

Yet, not all was well, particularly in the bigger cities, where, by the 1960s, public attention was shifting to the problems arising from rapid urban expansion, much of it in poorly serviced dormitory suburbs. The growth in automobile ownership during that era, combining with 'urban sprawl', had resulted in traffic congestion and long journey times. Pioneering research by the leading Australian urban economist Max Neutze (1965) sought to identify an optimum city size, placing primary emphasis on those congestion costs. However, building more and wider roads for bigger cities remained the dominant practice. Some grumbling came from 'regional and rural Australia' about the absence of policies for more balanced regional development, but the dominant political-economic paradigm and policy practice seemed largely untroubled.

Substantial stirrings of discontent were evident within the cities, however. Looking at the cities from a critical aesthetic and architectural perspective, Robin Boyd's book *The Australian Ugliness* (1960) was a landmark contribution. Ten years later, the historian and political scientist Hugh Stretton produced his *Ideas for Australian Cities* (1970), which became renowned as the springboard for modern concerns about urban policies aiming to redress social inequalities. Then, Lois Bryson and Faith Thompson's

An Australian Newtown (1972) pointed to the social stresses arising from inadequate provision of the necessary infrastructure to accompany the new housing in the outer suburbs. These and other academic contributions fed into the yet deeper discontent being expressed by growing waves of urban social movements. Of special note was the cooperation between resident action groups and the Builders Labourers Federation in New South Wales in the early 1970s, forming a 'green bans' movement to stop proposed urban development projects that prioritised the pursuit of profits over the wellbeing of urban residents and the environment (Mundey 1981; Iveson 2021).

Indeed, there was no shortage of topics for urban and regional researchers to study during that era, including concerns about social-spatial inequality and the growing imbalance between metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas. Some mild policy stirrings, including the establishment of the National Urban and Regional Development Authority, occurred during the last few years of the 23-year reign of Liberal–Country Party Coalition governments. It was not until the advent in 1972 of the federal Labor government led by Gough Whitlam, however, that more coherent policy emerged.

Whitlam's government established the Department of Urban and Regional Development (DURD) as a vehicle for realising the potential synergies between research, policy development, and implementation. Its minister was Tom Uren, a leading light in the ALP's Left faction, with the urbane Bob Lansdown as its senior public servant, and engineer-turned-urbanist Pat Troy as the major internal driving force. Unusually, the department's personnel were recruited largely from outside the existing federal bureaucracy. The team that Troy assembled—including key participants such as Michael Eyers, Peter Till, Joan Vipond, Michael Keating, David Wilmoth, Murray Geddes, and Henry Wardlaw—put prodigious efforts into developing new policies to tackle the urban and regional problems that had proliferated during the preceding decades (Wilmoth 2021).

The principal programs of DURD included formulation of a national urban and regional strategy; plans for development of new growth centres; formation of land commissions; provision of funds for area improvement schemes; creating a regional employment development program; changing the Commonwealth Grants Commission processes; and developing public housing projects in inner-city areas like Sydney's Glebe and Woolloomooloo. Redressing the backlog in the provision of sewerage to the expanding suburbs of the big cities was another program that Whitlam himself often—

and wittily—described as one of his most pleasing signature achievements. DURD's impact was significant, not only because of what was directly achieved 'on the ground' but also because it heralded overdue recognition of the need for a coherent national approach to the development and management of Australia's cities and regions.

Expertise from outsiders was helpful, too. For example, the distinguished US urban economist William Alonso was invited to visit DURD as an advisor on policy development. It was Alonso's proposed quartet of assessment criteria—efficiency, equity, environment, and quality of life—that helped set the standards by which the effectiveness of policies would be judged. Two underlying beliefs, reflected in the DURD policy agenda, were that each of these four criteria was being violated by the prevailing spatial socioeconomic arrangements and that progressive, research-based public policies could fundamentally change the situation for the better. Pursuing this theme, I used those four criteria to frame how my first book on Australian urban and regional development addressed the issues (Stilwell 1974). In other advice to DURD, Alonso emphasised the need for urban analysts and policymakers to take account of the *implicit* urban policies embedded in other government policies, such as those relating to taxation, trade, industry, money, and banking (Alonso 1971; Wilmoth 2021). This usefully highlighted the necessity for urban and regional policy to reach beyond explicitly spatial policy instruments, such as land-use controls. Not surprisingly, it also made other government departments, particularly Treasury, alarmed that the upstart DURD would be 'meddling' in their policy areas.

This DURD experience is worth recalling because, while it created tensions and faced practical impediments to progress, it was a bold step towards coherence in urban and regional policies. It showed that the federal government *could* develop and implement policies to deal with stresses that the six state governments had manifestly failed to resolve. The initiative was short-lived, however, ending when the conservative Coalition parties recaptured government after the controversial 'constitutional coup' of 1975 (Lloyd and Troy 1981; Wilmoth 2021). The new government led by Malcolm Fraser amalgamated DURD into the Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development, which had only a brief life before being disbanded by subsequent departmental restructuring. So ended the 'short flowering of national urban policy' (Wilmoth 2021: 31). The dominance of business and landed property interests over the broader public interest was re-established. Capital accumulation resumed as the main

game in town, portending the later turn to neoliberalism in public policy formulation. That is why it is better to regard the DURD experiment not as a watershed in the development of urban policy but as an interregnum in the longstanding 'rule of capital'.

In terms of this chapter's earlier analytical framing of 'understanding', 'policies', and 'outcomes', DURD can be seen in retrospect as a bold experiment that scored well in the first two respects but poorly in relation to the third. While it was innovative in mobilising knowledge about cities and in the formulation of policy, its short life produced only glimpses of transformed practical outcomes. The essentially 'grounded' character of cities and regions requires effective policy over decades, not just a few years.

An era of public policy drift

Following DURD's demise, macroeconomic problems dominated the Australian Government's policy agenda, particularly as the pressures of unemployment and inflation coalesced into seemingly intractable 'stagflation'. The switch to a neoliberal approach in public policy gained increasing traction during the 1980s and continued for the next four decades, interrupted by brief interludes of revived Keynesianism to deal with the economic crises that erupted in 2008 and 2020. A brief flurry of federal government interest in explicitly urban policies occurred in the 1990s when Brian Howe, then deputy prime minister, implemented the Building Better Cities Program; but urban policy was generally left to the state and territory governments to manage as they saw fit. To the extent that there was any attempted coherence in spatial policies during this era, it was the increasing emphasis on 'urban consolidation' policies to increase urban density, sometimes accompanied by TINA ('there is no alternative') rhetoric. Pat Troy, back in his academic role at The Australian National University, was among the trenchant critics of this policy turn, pointing to its adverse consequences for equity and the environment (Troy 1996).

The growing socio-spatial inequalities and stresses made it more difficult to achieve the necessary transition to a sustainable economy and society (as argued in Troy 1999). In transport policy, for example, the emphasis on building yet more freeways to 'serve' cities by continuing their outward expansion—notwithstanding the concurrent policy push for urban consolidation—has been extraordinarily energy-intensive. On neoliberal principles, the primary emphasis has been on accommodating the

preferences for travel modes expressed 'in the market', while constraining public transport provision through funding models in which the sale of public assets and the adoption of public–private partnerships have been recurring features.

Housing policy is another example. During the past half-century, both state and federal governments have substantially changed the character of public housing policy. An original ambition to provide decent, affordable housing for low and middle-income people has been transformed into a policy of providing welfare housing for people in dire straits. Seen in relation to the longer history of active federal government engagement in housing (as recorded in Troy 2012), the growing emphasis on private provision has had perverse effects. Housing outcomes have been increasingly stratified by income inequalities (Pawson et al. 2020), thereby compounding *wealth* inequalities over time as increasingly valuable housing assets—or the lack thereof—are passed on intergenerationally. One could not imagine a clearer example of 'circular and cumulative causation' in the intensification of socioeconomic inequalities (Stilwell 2019). The greater emphasis on housing as tradeable *property*, rather than as a home, has become a pervasive feature of the political economy of housing. The use of real estate as a vehicle for further capital accumulation by already wealthy people and tax-advantaged investors has worsened housing affordability and prioritised capitalistic values over social needs.

Indeed, the development of an 'asset economy' in which housing's primary function, for many people, is capital accumulation rather than the direct provision of housing services has been one of the most striking features of the past four decades (Konings et al. 2021). It is a process that has contributed to an ever-deeper gulf between those with a stake in property inflation and those simply trying to 'put a roof over their head'. Increased wealth in real estate and increased problems of housing affordability have been the twin outcomes, particularly in the major cities where the process has been most marked. Sydney is the extreme case, as revealed by data on household income inequalities that show it to be the most unequal city in Australia (Pearce and Hitchcock 2019). This is not purely a 'natural' market outcome; rather, as Scanlon (2019) indicates, public institutions have also buttressed policies that prioritise processes of capital accumulation over concerns about inequality and unsustainability.

The economic crises beginning in 2007 and 2020 highlighted the socioeconomic vulnerabilities that result from this neoliberal orientation. In both instances—the GFC and the economic crisis triggered by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic—the severity of the downturns made the switch to a more stimulatory Keynesian approach to fiscal management a political-economic imperative. Even the Morrison-led conservative Coalition government—notorious for its rhetoric about 'getting the budget back to surplus'—followed suit, rightly fearing the prospect of unemployment. Its economic legacy is huge public deficits and debt that are projected to continue for many years. Yet, returning to policies of economic austerity is not really an option. Dealing with the widespread public concerns about the social and environmental stresses that intensified during the neoliberal era requires more, not less, government spending. Alongside growing awareness of climate change, questions about urban ecological resilience are increasingly gaining attention, including the energy policy requirements for creating more sustainable cities, housing, and transport. This is why concerns about equity and sustainability have become part of the dominant global discourse—evident in statements by presidents and prime ministers in many nations and by heads of international agencies such as the International Monetary Fund.

Does this signal the possibility as well as desirability of a sea-change in public policy? Many social commentators have argued that governments should aim for much more than a 'snap back' to the pre-pandemic norms, making the case for more ambitious programs that would rebuild for a better future (for example, Dawson and McCalman 2020; Macklin 2020; Stilwell 2020). Seen in this light, it is pertinent to probe how urban policies could form part of a broader program of radical economic and social reform that would address macroeconomic concerns in conjunction with restructuring for equity and sustainability.

Having a new federal government elected in 2022 and dependent on the Greens and progressive independents to advance its legislative agenda bodes well for the prospects for some such policy shift. The ALP government, with an eye to the possibility of having two or more terms in office, faces a political context in which sustained long-term policy commitments are needed. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, with a personal background and keen interest in urban political economy, is well placed to lead that reform process. Of course, systemic and structural impediments exist, too, because self-interested economic actors and powerful institutional forces continue to propel processes that fuel inequality and inhibit sustainability.

Indeed, it is this tension between the market-focused capital accumulation processes and broader public concerns about equity and sustainability that creates awareness of the need for fundamental political-economic change. It is timely to recognise the exhaustion of the old paradigm and grasp the opportunity to create a new one.

A Labor 'Green Deal' and its spatial policy aspects

The current challenges of growing inequality and unsustainability require policy responses that go well beyond the normal reliance on market forces augmented by some tinkering at the edges. The wellbeing of the planet and our capacity to live in harmony on it are at stake. The principal alternative to business as usual is what has come to be known as the Green New Deal. The 'new deal' terminology has a distinctively US origin, stemming from President Franklin D. Roosevelt's employment-creation policies during the Great Depression of the 1930s (Chomsky and Pollin 2020; Stilwell 2021). The 'green' element, of course, signals the need to ensure that the policy program also responds to the challenges of dealing with climate change and other environmental stresses. In the current Australian political context, rather more appropriate local terminology could be a 'Labor Green Deal'.

How would a comprehensive approach to public policy for jobs and the environment integrate urban and regional policies into the broader program of reforms? Broadly, five interacting elements can be identified, relating to green jobs, just transition, redistribution, recognition, and empowerment.

The first policy element is the development of green jobs to reconcile concerns about employment and the environment. This is the principal link between the conventional Keynesian job-creation aspect of a fiscally expansionary program and the economic restructuring that is needed for more ecologically sustainable industries and employment. This element in the reform program requires detailed plans for developing industry sectors that use renewable energy sources, recycle waste, and have minimal climate change impacts, coupled with planned transition of labour and capital out of industries that cannot meet these criteria (Pearce and Stilwell 2008). Developing industry policies of this sort necessarily has an explicit *spatial* dimension, taking account of where industries are located and the needs and human and

natural resource capacities of different localities. Detailed spatial specificity is required because industry policies for the development of green jobs are 'joined at the hip' to urban (and regional) policies.

The second element is policies to ensure a just transition, including workforce training and retraining that enable displaced workers to get new jobs. Provision of improved technical and further education is essential for this purpose, as acknowledged by the Jobs and Skills Summit held by the Albanese-led Labor government shortly after taking office in 2022. In practice, there is a crucial spatial dimension to the policy process, too, because attention to the *locations* of the existing workforce and places of work is essential. Developing regional transition plans, particularly for areas currently specialising in ecologically unsustainable industries, is essential. Not everyone in regions with 'sunset' industries will voluntarily relocate to where employment opportunities are being created in 'sunrise' industries. Making a 'just transition' requires organised relocation and retraining assistance for workers who are vulnerable to structural changes in employment conditions.

The third element is economic and social policies emphasising redistribution. The fiscal costs of transition falling on the public sector must be paid for by those individuals and institutions with the greatest capacity to do so. Seen in this way, the concern with equity is a corollary of the quest for sustainability. More than just progressive income taxation is implied. An expanded system of *land taxation*, for example, would more directly ensure that the increases in land values resulting from urban developments or investment in new transport infrastructure are *publicly*, rather than privately, appropriated. A major expansion of *social housing*—linked with green building design and retrofitting for ecological sustainability—is also potentially a key element in this context. Because housing markets, as well as labour and capital markets, have been driving the growth of socio-spatial inequalities, a major refocusing on social housing could help to break the vicious cycle of housing unaffordability, while also creating substantial employment. Concurrently, it would extend the policy instruments by which government exerts influence on patterns of urban and regional development.

A fourth element concerns processes of recognition and engagement of First Nations peoples in policy development and implementation. This is also fundamental to any 'new deal' process, as emphasised by the Australian Greens when making their policy commitment (Di Natale 2019). The Labor government's strong commitment to the Indigenous 'Voice' process should extend beyond the failed 2023 Referendum. The policy formulation

process should not only seek to redress the longstanding marginalisation of Indigenous peoples but also provide an overdue opportunity for learning from their traditional knowledge of sustainability. After all, having lived here for more than 60,000 years, Indigenous Australians have the world's best sustainability credentials. Given the distinctive spatial distribution and community structures of First Nations peoples, such processes of recognition and engagement necessarily have a *regional* focus.

Finally, broader community empowerment can give the policy development and implementation processes a bottom-up character. The durability and potential success of any 'new deal' are likely to depend substantially on the development of processes for widespread public participation. This is best done at a scale with which people personally identify, which most often means their *locality*. The value of a communitarian approach that encourages and harnesses urban grassroots activism is increasingly emphasised in Australian urban studies (for example, Alexander and Gleeson 2019). Bridging the top-down and bottom-up elements, *local governments* can also play a significant role, as can be seen in the UK context where local 'community wealth-building' programs have injected renewed vitality into previously depressed urban areas and empowered urban communities to take control of their future (Guinan and O'Neill 2020; Brown and Jones 2021).

Seen in this way, the potential effectiveness of a Labor Green Deal depends substantially on policies applied at the urban and regional scales. It is a point that echoes Alonso's (1971) advice to the architects of DURD's policies half a century ago: all policies are spatial, whether explicitly and implicitly. Explicitly spatial policies directly target locations to enhance their prospects for making sustainable transitions, taking account of their resources and distinctive needs. But the *implicitly* spatial impacts of all policies must be considered if the policy reforms are to be turned into grounded outcomes across different cities and regions. A big research agenda is implied, the surface of which is barely scratched by outlining the foregoing five features.

Is it worth the bother? Or is it a utopian fantasy to which research programs and policy analyses cannot sensibly be pinned? Green New Deal advocacy has been a controversial position in many countries, even among advocates of radical reform (Chomsky and Pollin 2020; Sturman and Heenan 2021; Tsuda 2021). Moreover, the conditions conducive to its adoption and implementation are profoundly uncertain. Even the policy's name could be an obstacle to getting started: Labor parliamentarians might think the label 'Labor Green Deal' concedes too much to a minority party that they regard

as a political competitor, perhaps preferring Jenny Macklin's (2020) proposed 'jobs and climate accord' because it echoes the accord between the ALP government and trade unions during the 1980s. Indeed, terminology does matter, even though it should not be an obstacle when so much is at stake.

Deeper problems to be anticipated relate to political opposition. On the right flank, a proposed policy package like this would inevitably have powerful critics who adhere to neoliberal views, cling to pro-market orthodoxies, advocate more austerity to rein in post-pandemic budget deficits, and warn that policies to reduce the effects of climate change will have intolerable economic costs. Concurrently, on the left flank, proponents of a more ambitiously transformational program for achieving a 'circular economy', a 'steady state economy', or 'ecological socialism' (Baer 2019) will be critical of any incrementally reformist program, positing bolder ambitions for an economy that recycles all resources, jettisons ongoing economic growth ambitions, and challenges capitalists' power. Indeed, such aspirations are pertinent to any prospect of political economic transformation. However, the immediate challenge is to start the process of change. As Chomsky and Pollin (2020) argue, the urgency of dealing with climate change requires the first steps to be taken within the existing structures of corporate and state power. How the policy program develops in the longer term would then depend on the evolving balance of interests, ideologies, and social forces, interacting in an 'arena of struggle' (Stilwell 2020, 2021). A pullback on the expansionary Keynesian aspects, relative to the redistributive and 'deeper green' aspects of the program, could become a stronger feature in the medium term, depending on the shifting balance of political forces and the as-yet-unknown environmental and economic outcomes.

The possibility that a radical reform program might not survive such contestation cannot be discounted. A parallel with DURD's premature demise is not difficult to envisage. Yet, the circumstances now are different, particularly because of the growing recognition of the challenges posed by climate change. Unless a 'political tipping point' towards radical reform precedes an irreversible ecological tipping point in the climate change process, all is otherwise futile. Seen in this way, the *precautionary principle* justifies the embrace of a new policy direction even though there are still many unknowns among the environmental, economic, and policy variables. Acting on that principle, gaining an initial policy 'toehold' could initiate a more thoroughgoing process of social democratic reform that strengthens the emphasis on 'just transition', redistribution, further engagement with First Nations peoples, and broader community empowerment, facilitated

by newly developed institutional arrangements at local, urban, and regional scales. Starting on a process of comprehensive political-economic reform widens the future possibilities for yet more fundamental change.

The future is never a simple extrapolation of the past: successive social, economic, and ecological stresses generate continually evolving political expressions. The barrier that climate change denialism has imposed to progress in Australian public policy is already in the process of being overcome. The Covid-19 pandemic has precipitated awareness of the need and possibilities for ongoing political-economic changes. This creates the potential for a different policy direction to be taken, addressing the systemic roots of inequality, environmental damage, and economic insecurity. Seen in this way, the political-economic context could be regarded as comparable with that which spawned the DURD initiatives, albeit with public policies now more directly related to dealing with global ecological and socioeconomic crises.

Conclusion

On current trends, Australia will become a much more deeply unequal and environmentally unsustainable society unless a policy program of radical reform is initiated. If the waiting time for that policy shift is comparable with the half-century since the Whitlam Government's DURD initiatives, it will surely be too little, too late. Urban and regional analysts have an important role, alongside a broader array of concerned citizens, in driving the necessary political-economic changes. Laying the necessary analytical foundations for changes in public policy requires explicit attention to the 'framing' introduced at the start of this chapter and targeted research. A historically informed analysis can strengthen the connections between our understanding of the problems to be tackled, the possible public policy options, and the broader political-economic considerations that shape outcomes, for better or worse. Concurrently, a spatially informed analysis strengthens awareness of how local and global concerns interact across cities and regions.

Retrospective consideration of the DURD experience offers significant lessons in this context. It shows what can be done to create innovative policy initiatives if there is clarity about the social concerns to be addressed and willingness to draw on a continuously improving knowledge base. Even more, it is also a potent reminder that the reform process can be vulnerable

to changing economic conditions and political conflicts. Looking through a similar lens shows the adverse effects arising from the dearth of comparable government policy interventions during recent decades, including the growing stresses relating to inequality and unsustainability. Recognising the impoverished political-economic legacy of the neoliberal era may imply a pessimistic conclusion; yet pessimism of the intellect always needs, as its companion, optimism of the will. Among the grounds for the latter is the prospect that ongoing research and more widely disseminated knowledge will help to pave the way for progressive political responses.

Making the case for radical reform like a Labor Green Deal, not just as a policy program but also as a framing for research that includes urban and regional analysis, fits well into this way of seeing policy development and social change. Thus, the advocacy of radical reform in the latter half of this chapter may be regarded as part of a process of laying foundations for remedial action to deal with inequality and unsustainability. It has an agenda-setting role that is especially important for researchers and practitioners in a field such as this. As we have seen, research and writing by Boyd, Neutze, Stretton, and Troy, among others, helped to pave the way for DURD's major policy push. New analyses of policies for combating the current problems of inequality and unsustainability, especially from an urban and regional policy perspective, are both necessary and timely. Taking this journey, following in Pat Troy's footsteps, is a good path to tread, linking academic research in urban studies with careful consideration and advocacy of public policy. Pat's contributions (such as Troy 1981a, 1981b, 1999, 2000) exemplified a similar concern to link critique, research, and policy development. His approach was both visionary and practical, dealing with the big picture and the devilish details. The best tribute to him would be to proceed purposefully with the task at hand, engaging with the challenge to create a more equitable and sustainable future for our cities and regions. Onward …

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