

"SUSTAINABLE" DEVELOPMENT? CREATING AN EQUITABLE AND JUST SOCIETY THROUGH CAPITAL PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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BACKGROUND

- Sustainable development has been championed as a way to combat climate change
- Current narratives of sustainability often leave out the key component of social equity (see Figure 1)

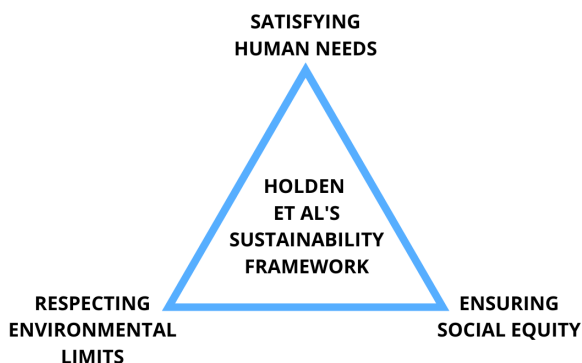


Figure 1: Holden et al.'s framework of sustainability that includes satisfying human needs, respecting environmental limits, and ensuring social equity.

- It often falls on the role of the government to promote social equity through practices and policies
- To explore government implementation of social equity, I researched the following question:

RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the barriers to incorporating equity and social justice (ESJ) in capital projects and what solutions can government agencies utilize to overcome them?

INTERNSHIP & METHODS

- I interned with King County's Solid Waste Division and Green Buildings Team. I attended meetings of ongoing projects and explored the implementation of King County ESJ guidelines through writing an Equity Impact Review and ESJ Plan for a specific project
- I also interviewed seven County employees and conducted a literature review of existing case studies

RESULTS

Barriers:

- I found three main barriers to ESJ implementation: unclear government prioritization, a lack of public accessibility, and insufficient funding (See Figure 2)

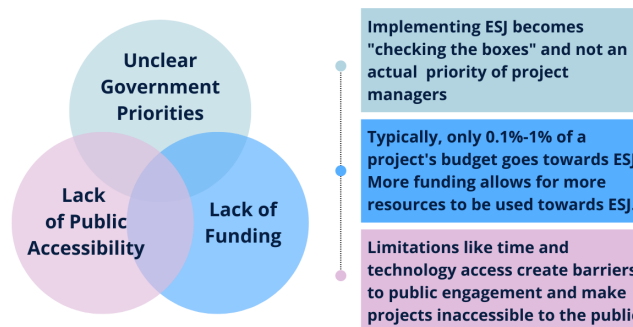


Figure 2: The three overarching barriers to the implementation of equity and social justice: funding, a lack of public accessibility, and priorities of the government.

Solutions:

- I determined three ideal solutions to these barriers: Increasing public accessibility and awareness of projects, prioritizing ESJ in all aspects of the government with intention, and increasing funding are all ways to better implement ESJ in capital projects
- Increasing public accessibility and engagement is especially important as including community member's voices ensures that projects are benefiting the people they serve (See Figure 3)



Figure 3: Word cloud of keywords from interviews with King County employees in response to the question: "What are effective ways of implementing equity and social justice in capital projects?"

IMPLICATIONS

- Incorporating the previously mentioned solutions to ESJ implementation barriers will increase equity amongst all groups
- Increasing equity and providing resources to all communities both satisfies human needs and respects environmental limits, thus contributing to a more sustainable future
- Promoting community accessibility and engagement also raises voices of community members who have historically been left out of decision making processes
- Collaborating with community based organizations, compensating people for their time, and ensuring written/spoken resources are available in commonly spoken languages helps projects become more accessible
- Having more diverse hiring practices and prioritizing ESJ from the very beginning of a project ensures that ESJ becomes foundational in all County work and becomes an intentional priority, not a task



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