

IS IT JUST SUSTAINABILITY? THE POLITICAL-ECONOMY OF URBAN  
SUSTAINABILITY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

by

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Labor-community-environmental coalitions, with a broad vision for sustainability and regional equity, present an alternative to traditional business coalitions' influence on economic development policy and provide a strategy for economic development based in wealth redistribution and environmental health.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

*“While liveable cities depend upon rational economics, that is just one leg of the [sustainability] stool. If our cities are to be truly sustainable and harmonious, we must improve the lives and well-being of everyone, especially the urban poor. We must not continue to consume natural resources at rates that deny opportunity to our children and grandchildren.” ~ UN Habitat Executive Director Anna Tibaijuka on World Habitat Day, 2009 (UN Habitat 2010b).*

In Eugene, Oregon, where I have been living for the last decade, I have become very interested in how social, economic, and environmental challenges take shape in cities, and particularly how various actors negotiate these challenges. My own concern for the built and natural environment in Eugene as well as achieving a high quality of life for all people living in Eugene and elsewhere, led me to participate in various local government processes, social movements, nonprofit organizations, my neighborhood council, and various research projects. These experiences have motivated me to think long and hard about how social justice, environmental sustainability, and economic development intersect and are pursued in cities. How these important issues are negotiated by urban actors is a concern shared by city officials and citizens around the world today. Often, these issues are subsumed under urban sustainability programs and policies. My own academic and personal interests, as well as the international interest in urban sustainability, have culminated in this research project in which I identify and explore how social equity is constructed and contested in City of Eugene Mayor Kitty Piercy’s Sustainable Business Initiative (hereinafter called the Mayor’s SBI, or the SBI). The SBI is a city-led initiative to help Eugene, OR businesses identify and implement socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable practices.

As environmental concerns such as climate change increase and social problems related to jobs, health care, housing and transportation grow in the United States, sustainability and sustainable development have emerged as a dominant framework for addressing society's main social, environmental and economic issues. Finding solutions that reduce one's impact on the environment, create greater social equity, and build a healthy economy, has become a guiding light for many political leaders, policy makers and citizens. The city-level is particularly central to sustainability efforts. Sustainability expert, Herman Daly (1989, 1996), suggests that interest in sustainability efforts is particularly piqued in cities because people often experience the problems of unsustainability on a daily basis in an urban setting. What's more, urban residents have the power to address such problems on the local level, rather than working toward abstract global sustainability (Daly 1989, 1996). For example, urban residents along the Hudson River in NY are unable to eat fish from the river due to water pollution; however, urban residents can directly experience the success of collectively advocating for sustainability as they work towards greater mobility options in their city for biking, walking and public transit. In fact, a recent study by Living Cities (2009) found that in more than 80% of U.S. cities, sustainability is one of their top five priorities.

Building on the momentum of urban sustainability nationwide, both as a concept and as a movement,<sup>1</sup> and its aim to integrate social, environmental and economic goals, Kitty Piercy, the Mayor of Eugene, OR, initiated the Mayor's SBI in 2005. Mayor Piercy wanted to use the framework of sustainability to address some of Eugene's most challenging issues. On the environmental front, wetlands and forests are disappearing due to human development; the Willamette River, which runs through Eugene, is a Superfund Toxic site in some areas; and, like all U.S. cities, the production and consumption patterns of Eugene residents is contributing to climate change. On the social front, Lane County (the county in which Eugene is located) as well as Oregon as a whole,

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<sup>1</sup> The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) definition of sustainability is the most commonly used. It defines sustainability as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (WCED 1987).

suffers from high unemployment, a large homeless population, a large population without health insurance, and one of the highest child hunger rates in the nation. Compounding these social issues, Eugene has had chronically high unemployment rates over the last few decades (Oregon Center for Public Policy 2008). On the business side, Piercy narrowly won the mayoral election in 2004 because she was confronted by constant criticism that her social and environmental interests would create an anti-business climate in Eugene. As a result, Piercy was looking for an innovative way to connect with and assist the business community but, at the same time, advance her social and environmental goals.

It is within this context that Mayor Piercy introduced the idea of creating a Mayor's SBI and implemented it during her first term as Mayor. Like so many elected officials, policy makers and citizens around the country, Mayor Piercy had high hopes for building an initiative that would "make Eugene one of the nation's most sustainable mid-size communities" by 2020, and "strengthen the economy by finding ways to support businesses and expand quality jobs that use sustainable measures" (City of Eugene SBI TF 2006:4). The Mayor formed a 16-member citizen Task Force (TF) to lead the SBI, charging the TF to make recommendations to the "City Council, the private sector, and other local organizations for retaining, growing, and creating Triple Bottom Line<sup>2</sup> businesses and jobs" (City of Eugene SBI TF 2006:4).<sup>3</sup> The SBI TF defined the triple bottom line as "measures to simultaneously achieve economic, social and environmental wellbeing" (City of Eugene SBI TF 2006:8). The SBI TF also described sustainability as a three-legged stool — the three legs of the stool being social equity, economic prosperity and environmental health — if one leg of the stool is missing, the stool collapses. Observing the SBI process unfold and knowing Mayor Piercy had a strong commitment to social and environmental issues, I took special interest in how the SBI TF would

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<sup>2</sup> The TF essentially used the terms "sustainability" and "triple bottom line" interchangeably.

<sup>3</sup> The term "triple-bottom-line" was coined by prominent sustainable economy thinker, Paul Hawken (1993).

develop recommendations that bolstered all three legs of the stool. This was an admirable and important undertaking, not just for Mayor Piercy, but for all city officials, policy makers and residents concerned with their cities developing in a way that creates a healthy economy that provides broad benefits to residents and a thriving ecosystem. Moreover, beginning in 2008 with the election of President Obama, the sustainability discourse, largely in the form of green jobs and a green or clean energy economy, has become widely popular on the national level. This draws even greater attention to the idea of sustainability, the triple-bottom-line and, in essence, the balancing of social equity, environmental health and economic prosperity.

However, my preliminary research into other sustainability initiatives in the United States revealed that the social leg of the sustainability stool is often neglected. The social side, also referred to as social sustainability, social equity, or social justice, refers to the social needs and desires of urban residents. Social justice can be broadly understood as addressing the distribution of benefits and burdens. As one author explains, “The Commission of Social Justice highlighted several essential values of social justice: the equal worth of all citizens, their equal right to be able to meet their basic needs, the need to spread opportunities and life chances as widely as possible, and finally the requirement that we reduce and where possible eliminate unjustified inequalities” (Foley 2004:2) Under the original definition of sustainability, from the World Commission on Environmental and Development (1987), social sustainability refers to equity between generations (future generations should have the same or greater access to social and environmental resources as current generations). Other sustainability theorists take this one step further by applying social sustainability within generations — all people of a generation have equal status, such as equal access and outcome with regard to basic quality of life issues such as a good livelihood, housing, education, health care, childcare, mobility, and other social securities (Agyeman 2003; Daly 1996). This more broadly conceived definition of sustainability often refers to sustainability that is firmly rooted in social justice concerns, otherwise known as “socially just sustainability” (Agyeman 2005;

Ayres 1998; Bullard 2005). In Chapter II, I examine the myriad of ways sustainability is defined, particularly social sustainability, as it is an integral part of understanding how social equity is or is not addressed in sustainability efforts. The SBI TF chose to focus on the sustainability of businesses and workplaces and referred to the social leg of the sustainability stool as “providing equitable access to jobs with fair wages, benefits and other services crucial to families” (City of Eugene SBI TF 2006). More relevant to my research, previous studies have shown that the “social leg” of the stool is often neglected, particularly related to gender, race, and class (Agyeman and Evans 2003; Dobson 1999; Daley 1996). In fact, even cities that explicitly aim to create social sustainability and address social equity often fall short of their goals. Indeed, at the end of the Mayor’s SBI process, no substantive proposals or recommendations for addressing the social equity component of sustainability were made. Instead, the SBI TF’s Final Report (2006:9) stated that “the TF found it much easier to identify mechanisms to promote the economic and environmental aspects of the Triple Bottom Line than the social equity components...the TF encourages Eugene City Government and the community at large to pursue additional actions to address social equity issues.”

The final outcome of the SBI in terms of social equity demonstrates that we lack understanding of the challenges city officials face when attempting to pursue comprehensive urban sustainability policies and programs. Much deeper exploration of how social, economic, and environmental interests play out in urban sustainability efforts is needed including: examination of the main urban actors involved in these efforts, especially identifying what their vision, goals and strategies for social equity and sustainability are; exploration of what the role of local government is regarding sustainability and social equity; and identification of the political economic factors that inhibit or motivate the pursuit of comprehensive sustainability programs that address social concerns as well as environmental and economic concerns (Portney 2003). My study intends to do explore these factors and to offer possible solutions for other cities that might seek to engage in sustainability efforts going forward.

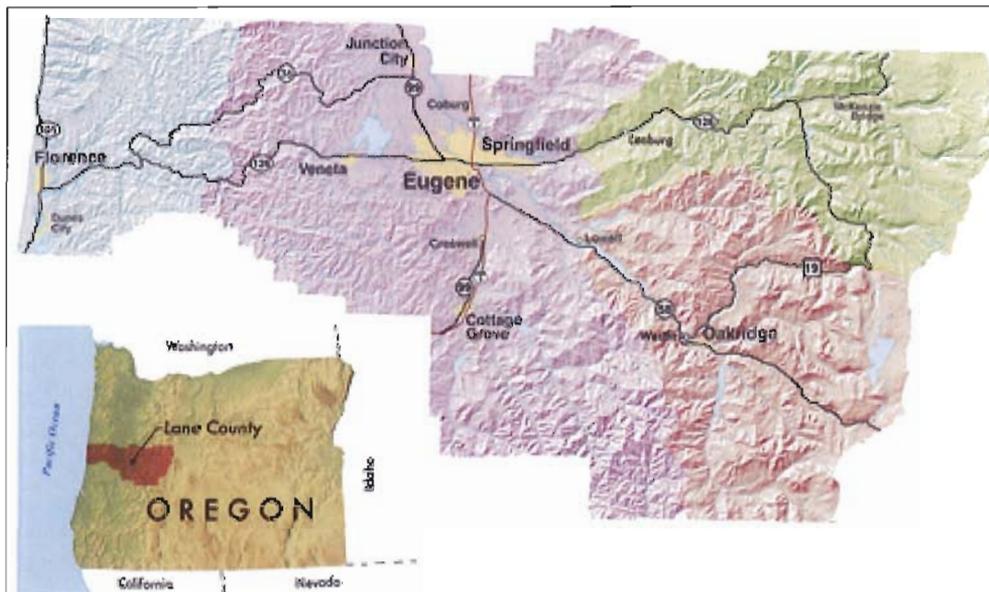
### **The Mayor's Sustainable Business Initiative in the Emerald City: Eugene, Oregon**

Eugene, Oregon, a city of 144,000 people situated in Lane County in the southern Willamette Valley, has been nationally recognized for its sustainability efforts and its high levels of political activity. Eugene has been rated as one of the top “sustainable cities” in the United States on several occasions, including being recognized as the number one “Green City” in the United States in 2006 by National Geographic’s Green Guide.<sup>4</sup> Eugene’s Mayor Kitty Piercy signed on to the Mayor’s Kyoto Protocol in 2007, and signed an anti-Iraq war resolution in 2007 (Pittman 2007; Eugene Weekly 2007). Eugene has a Human Rights Commission, was the first city in the nation to implement a “toxics-right-to-know” law that requires corporations to disclose their toxics use and discharges to the public, and opened one of the nation’s first Bus Rapid Transit systems in 2007. Also notable, Eugene implemented an urban growth boundary in 1992 that limits development on the urban periphery in order to preserve open space and farmland and it has more than a hundred miles of bicycle paths and routes. The City of Eugene’s government is also known for its internal sustainability policy, which includes: City staff receive energy conservation training; 25% of city facilities rely on renewable energy; 50% of Eugene’s wastewater treatment plant is powered by capturing the plant’s methane gases; traffic lights use more efficient LED lighting; 70–80% of products purchased by the City of Eugene are from the State of Oregon; a Sustainable Buildings Resolution was passed in 2006; by switching to hybrid vehicles the city vehicle fleet has reduced its emissions by 10% since 2001; city employees receive a free bus pass; and six City of Eugene parks are pesticide free (City of Eugene 2008).

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<sup>4</sup> The rating is based on surveys and information from the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Green Building Council, and other independent sources.

**Map 1.** Eugene and Lane County, Oregon.



(ActiveRain.com 2010)

Eugene is also nationally known for its vigorous environmental and social movements including anti-war, anti-nuclear, forest defense, immigrant rights, international solidarity and human rights, fair trade, food justice, alternative transportation and land use, economic justice, and feminist and government watchdog organizations (Register-Guard 1999). More specifically, Eugene residents' political activism is indicated by its hosting the Public Interest Environmental Law Conference (the largest conference of its kind in the world); being home to one of the largest cells of the Earth Liberation Front and green anarchy devotees; having active chapters of Latin American solidarity organizations, such as the Committee in Solidarity with Central American People (CISCAP) and Amigos de los Sobrevivientes (a solidarity organization for torture survivors); and an annual Take Back the Night March to protest sexual assault.

Concerning social sustainability issues, Eugene is far from immune to many of the major social problems affecting many U.S. cities. High unemployment, sagging

wages, lack of health insurance, and food and housing insecurity are all issues affecting Eugene residents. While data specific to Eugene is not available for many important social statistics, state and regional statistics give a good sense of the social issues in Oregon. Table 1 provides basic demographic and social information about Eugene, as well as Lane County and the United States to contextualize Eugene's statistics.

**Table 1.** Demographic information for Eugene, OR, Lane County, OR and the United States.

<b>Demographic Information for Eugene, OR, Lane County, OR and the United States</b>			
	<b>Eugene</b>	<b>Lane County</b>	<b>U.S.</b>
<b>Race*</b>			
White	88.10%	91.70%	79.80%
Black	1.30%	1.10%	12.80%
Asian	3.60%	2.90%	4.50%
Hispanic or Latino	5.00%	6.40%	15.40%
American-Indian & Alaskan Native	0.90%	1.20%	1.00%
Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander	0.20%	0.20%	0.20%
Persons Reporting Two or More Races	3.70%	2.90%	1.70%
<b>% Female</b>	51.00%	50.80%	50.70%
<b>% of High School Graduates (2000)</b>	91.50%	87.50%	80.40%
<b>% of Bachelor's Degrees or Higher (2000)</b>	37.30%	25.50%	24.40%
<b>% Homeownership Rate (2000)</b>	51.80%	62.30%	66.20%
<b>Median-value of owner-occupied housing (2000)</b>	\$152,000	\$141,000	119,600
<b>Median Household Income**</b>	\$35,850	\$43,614	\$52,029
<b>% of Persons Below Poverty</b>	17.10%	15.70%	13.20%

\*Race percentages for Eugene are from 2000, and for the U.S. and Lane County from 2008.

\*\*Median Household Income for Eugene is from 2000, and for the U.S. and Lane County is from 2008.

(U.S. Census Bureau 2010)

Unemployment is a chronic problem in Oregon: Oregon's unemployment rate (which was 5.5% in 2006) has only been lower than the national unemployment rate in five of the last thirty-three years (Oregon Center for Public Policy 2006). This is in part because Oregon has a lot of seasonal employment in natural resources, agriculture, tourism and construction, where workers are only employed for part of a year (Oregon Center for Public Policy 2006). It is also because, as in most areas of the country, Oregon's manufacturing sector is declining while the number of jobs in the service sector is growing. For example, Oregon had 59,000 more manufacturing jobs (mostly in the forest product industry) than service jobs in 1976.<sup>5</sup> By 2000, there were 187,000 more service jobs than manufacturing jobs. In other words, the service sector grew from 16% to 27% of the Oregon economy, while manufacturing declined from 23% to 15% in this same time period (Oregon Center for Public Policy 2006). This is a major issue for working families because most service sector jobs pay much less than manufacturing jobs and often don't offer health benefits. In 2006–2007, 17.3% of Oregonians, or 649,000 individuals, did not have health insurance; this represents a 5.6% increase from 2000. The impact of a growing low-wage sector in Oregon is also visible through a widening income gap. For the poorest one-fifth of Oregonians, real income has decreased 17% while for the top one-fifth, real income has increased 55% between 1979 and 2000 (Oregon Food Bank 2009).

As a result of high unemployment, lower wages and lack of access to health insurance, Oregon has twice as many working families with children that are below the poverty line than it did in 1979–81 (Oregon Center for Public Policy 2006). High unemployment and the rise of low-wage jobs is compounded by the fact that buying a home, going to college, and paying for childcare — important investments for working families — have become less affordable over the last 20–30 years as well (Oregon Center for Public Policy 2006:2). As of the most recent Lane County shelter count, which includes Eugene, “approximately 1,200 men, women and children are sleeping in a

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<sup>5</sup> Here, “service jobs” refers to a job paying less than \$30,000.

homeless shelter on any given night. Because this number excludes homeless individuals and families who are sleeping on the street, in cars, or with friends or family, the actual Lane County count is likely two or three times higher (Shelter Care 2009).

Unfortunately, as the government has reduced spending on affordable housing, less than 30% of those who qualify for low-income housing receive it in Lane County (Shelter Care 2009). Food insecurity (not knowing where one's next meal will come from) is a problem for Oregonians too. In 2005, nearly 750,000 Oregonians received food from emergency food boxes. Moreover, for the last decade, Oregon's food insecurity and hunger rates have been higher than the national average (Oregon Food Bank 2009).

Pursuing social sustainability in Eugene is certainly a laudable goal given the range of serious social issues it faces, and its high number of indigent residents – 17.1% of Eugene's population lives below the federal poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). Some might argue that social justice is not an important facet of urban sustainability in some places, but the state of social conditions in Eugene proves that addressing social issues is an important part of achieving overall sustainability. Furthermore, the situation in Eugene mirrors similar trends in other U.S. cities, where the high-wage manufacturing sector is slipping away to the low-wage service sector, at the same time that neoliberal policies draw funds away from critical social services.<sup>6</sup> The result is greater social inequality and more residents seeking good jobs, benefits, affordable housing and transportation, and a healthy environment. Consequently, the framework of urban sustainability, which seeks to simultaneously address social, environmental and economic concerns, resonates greatly with residents struggling to achieve a good quality of life and with city officials looking to build a healthy community.

Considering Eugene's history of concern for environmental, political, and social problems, it is not surprising that Eugene Mayor Kitty Piercy pursued a sustainable development framework to address important issues affecting Eugene's residents and the

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<sup>6</sup> I define neoliberalism as a political movement advocating for economic liberalism as a means for economic development. Neoliberal policies include free trade, privatization of public services, cutting social spending and taxes, and reducing environmental and labor regulations (Harvey 2005).

surrounding environment. One of Mayor Piercy's primary interests in creating a sustainable *business* initiative was provoked by her having only narrowly won her election against former City Councilor Nancy Nathanson. Nathanson was the Chamber of Commerce-backed candidate, projecting herself, and being perceived as, the business-friendly candidate (Pittman 2008). Given Piercy's desire to run for Mayor for a second term and her need to have City Council and City Manager support while in office, Piercy and some key supporters developed, "A Program for Jobs and a Healthy Eugene Economy" during her 2004 Mayoral primary (Piercy, McLauchlan and Teninty 2004). It is from this plan that the idea of a Sustainable Business Initiative (SBI) emerged.

Mayor Piercy appointed the SBI Task Force in April of 2005 and it was approved by the City Council that same month. This sixteen-member group, comprised of seven business owners, two labor leaders, two environmental leaders, one educational leader, ... and four individuals representing different local nonprofit agencies from Eugene, was charged with supporting and proposing "deliberate and thoughtful steps to strengthen the local economy in a manner that fits the community and can make Eugene one of the nation's most sustainable mid-size communities by 2020" (SBI TF 2006:8). The SBI TF spent one year formulating the initiative with research and technical assistance from the University of Oregon Resource Innovations program.

The TF met dozens of times throughout 2005–2006 to come up with recommendations for how Eugene's economy, including its businesses and workplaces, could become more sustainable. The TF was led by two co-chairs who were business owners. In order to come up with recommendations specifically around social equity, economy, and environment, the TF formed three sub-committees to focus on these areas, each of which was made up of three or four TF members. The TF also received feedback on its development of the SBI recommendations through public roundtable discussions, meetings with community organizations, web-based surveys, and a 50-member Technical Advisory Committee.<sup>7</sup> In the end, the outreach process for the SBI

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix A for list of all SBI Technical Advisory Committee members.

included 750 people (SBI TF 2006). At the end of this one-year period, the SBI TF produced a report that outlined its recommendations for actions that the City Government, private sector and nonprofits, and local governments and educational institutions could adopt in order to benefit from or promote sustainable practices in Eugene (SBI TF 2006).

The recommendations produced by the SBI TF were approved by the City Council (2006) and were largely of an educational or incentive-based approach to change. In other words, none of the recommendations were mandates for action or regulatory in nature. In fact, the SBI TF mentions in its report that it consciously chose to make ‘incentive-based’ recommendations, rather than “regulatory” recommendations in order to encourage positive cooperation among the various participants. This does not mean that the recommendations were not specific; many of the recommendations were very specific, especially those that pertained to offering businesses procedural and financial assistance to implement sustainable practices and related to meeting certain environmental goals. Table 2 lists all the recommendations made by the SBI TF.

Since City Government is one of the few places to house multi-stakeholder, far-reaching policy initiatives, the SBI was conceived of as a City Government-based initiative and, as a result, many of the recommendations are aimed at the City Government itself. One of the main recommendations to the City Government was to establish an Office of Sustainability to institutionalize the practice of sustainability, as well as a Sustainability Board or Commission to provide citizen oversight of the practice of sustainability. Both were established in 2007 (City of Eugene City Council 2007). Most Sustainability Commission members were identified by the Mayor and others from those that served on the SBI TF; some Commission members were chosen through an application process run by the Director of Sustainability. All then had to be appointed by the City Council. Several of the other recommendations for City Government had to do with the city supporting sustainable businesses through the city’s purchasing power – by purchasing and using sustainable practices, products and technologies, by following a

“Triple Bottom Line” analysis for all policies and actions, and through development of a sustainability indicators and measurement system. The final recommendation for City Government involved educating city staff and partners (City of Eugene City Council 2006).

**Table 2.** SBI Task Force list of final recommendations for: Eugene City Government; Private Sector and Nonprofits; and Local Governments and Educational Institutions.

<b>Eugene City Government</b>
Publicly commit to supporting businesses that use sustainable practices and/or produce sustainable products and services.
Establish an Office of Sustainability within City Government to highlight the City's commitment to sustainability and to champion and coordinate internal City sustainability activities.
Establish a Sustainability Board or Commission to help expand sustainability efforts within City government and externally within the business community.
Adopt the explicit goal of becoming carbon neutral in all City owned facilities by 2020 and develop an internal City climate action plan to achieve that goal.
Purchase and use sustainable practices, products and technologies.
Adopt sustainability criteria for decision making in all aspects of City operations, beginning with a policy requiring staff to complete a Triple Bottom Line analysis of proposed policies or actions for city council, and with a sustainable purchasing policy.
Adopt the explicit goal of achieving zero waste to landfills (and incinerators) from City facilities and operations by 2020 and develop an internal City plan to achieve that goal.
Adopt sustainability indicators and a measurement system to assess internal City operations as well as community-wide progress toward sustainability.
Education and enhance the professional skills and understanding of sustainability among City employees.
Provide incentives and recognition for businesses using sustainable practices and remove barriers to their use.
Form partnerships with private, public and non-profit entities in order to play a key role in the growth of sustainability practices, products and services.

**Table 2. (continued).**

<b>Private Sector and Nonprofits</b>
Help all interested local businesses apply or expand sustainability measures.
Commit to expanding sustainable business clusters.
Recruit new businesses that can fill niches and increase dynamism within existing sustainable clusters.
Help businesses in key sustainability sectors form local associations or networking mechanisms to increase communication and solve common problems.
Implement campaigns to education the public and grow the local market for sustainable products and services.
Improve access to loans, grants, and other forms of business financing.
Form a task force among business owners and organizations, workers and their representatives, non-profits, local governments and others to discuss ways to enhance social equity among area workers.
<b>Local Governments and Educational Institutions</b>
Support the local consortium on sustainability in public education organized by Lane Community College.
Develop and operate a consortium to provide sustainability education, training and technical assistance for local businesses.
Develop a metro-area wide consortium, adopt a goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2020, and implement a metro-area wide climate action plan to achieve that goal.
Develop a metro-area wide consortium, adopt a goal of achieving zero waste to landfills (and incineration) by 2020, and implement a metro-area wide zero waste strategy to achieve that goal.

(SBI TF 2006a).

For the private and nonprofit sector, the Task Force’s recommendations center on assisting local businesses and nonprofits to obtain information, tools, and financing for implementing certain sustainable practices. It also recommends that business and organizational networks be created among those pursuing sustainability in an effort to support each other. Lastly, it suggests using public educational campaigns to “grow the local market for sustainable products and services” (SBI TF 2006a:6). Recommendations for other local governments and educational institutions mainly involve these two sectors coordinating to provide education to the public on sustainability. Specifically, the TF proposes that a metro-area consortium of institutions, organizations and government agencies be created to achieve carbon neutrality and zero waste to landfills by 2020 (SBI TF 2006a).

The SBI TF recommendations varied in their level of specificity but, at the same time, sent a clear message as to where the majority of city officials' efforts should be focused — providing educational opportunities for individuals and business owners to learn how to implement and benefit from sustainable practices, setting up specific programs that financially support and assist businesses that adopt sustainable practices, and having the City Government lead by example in terms of adopting sustainable practices. Regarding social equity, the recommendations do not directly address any of the workplace or community-wide social equity concerns raised by the SBI TF social equity sub-committee. Furthermore, even though social equity is continually cited as one of three legs of the sustainability stool, it ends up having no real presence in the final recommendations of the TF. In the Final Report, the TF states that even though social equity is one of three major components to their definition of sustainability, it was the most difficult aspect to address:

The Task Force found it much easier to identify mechanisms to promote the economic and environmental aspects of the Triple Bottom Line than the social equity components....In the end the Task Force determined that it had just scratched the surface on social equity issues....The SBI Task Force encourages Eugene City Government and the community at large to pursue additional actions to address social equity issues (SBI TF 2006a:9).

Yet no additional actions for addressing sustainability and equity issues related to the workforce — a main ingredient of business operations — are proposed or even mentioned. And this is despite the fact that the social equity sub-committee of the TF developed very specific ideas for addressing equity issues such as paying at or above a living wage, providing health and retirement benefits, offering a flexible work schedule, offering opportunities for career advancement, and supporting workers' rights. Some SBI members assumed the Sustainability Commission or Office of Sustainability would find a way to address the social justice component of sustainability, but they offered no specific plan or ideas for how these entities would do that. Members of the SBI TF social equity sub-committee produced a separate report during the SBI process that reinforced the importance of including social equity concerns in the SBI, which was based on focus

group interviews with local workers who identified specific social equity indicators that were most important to them (Bussel, Feekin and Syrett 2006).

The TF's lack of recommendations around social equity and its main conclusion regarding social equity — for it to be studied further — coupled with other important factors, motivated my research. Mayor Piercy was committed to a vision of sustainability that included social equity and, more generally, the Eugene community has been nationally recognized for being socially and environmentally driven. Given this situation, why was Eugene unable to incorporate social equity into its SBI, given that it was a publicly declared and pursued goal from the beginning of the initiative? Beyond the Mayor's SBI, as hundred of cities in the United States and even the national government undertakes sustainability initiatives and programs, how can social equity have a meaningful role in sustainability? More specifically, did Eugene lack certain ingredients for incorporating social equity into its vision and recommendations for sustainability that other cities may contain and build upon to ensure that sustainability efforts address people's critical need for good jobs, benefits, affordable housing, a healthy environment and more? Or, are there structural barriers to incorporating social equity into sustainability efforts that extend beyond Eugene's particular circumstance?

### **Beyond Cities: The State of Sustainability Programs and Policies**

As a result of a significant political and economic shift that has occurred since this research study commenced in 2005, my research has taken on much broader significance. Not only do numerous city governments continue to take on sustainability programs and initiatives to deal with their most pressing problems, but the sustainability discourse has now been picked up at the national level with the election of President Obama (Living Cities 2009).<sup>8</sup> Yet, the ever-increasing use of a sustainability framework at various

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<sup>8</sup> City officials from more than 500 U.S. cities participate in SustainLane's program for Advancing Cross-Sector Sustainable Development for State and Local Government (SustainLane Government 2010).

political levels has not created corollary growth in the discussion of social equity as it relates to sustainability. In other words, once again, a concept that has become widely recognized for its ability to balance three major societal concerns — social equity, economic prosperity, and environmental health — comes up short in terms of addressing social equity concerns. In this respect, I hope that this study's research on the failure to include social justice in the Eugene SBI helps to shed light on larger forces within the United States that marginalize discussions of social inequity, social sustainability and the needs and desires of working families.

Since this research study began in 2005, the use of the sustainability framework to concurrently take up social, environmental and economic concerns has expanded from the city level to the national level. Over the last five years, the political situation in the United States, particularly around the issues examined herein, has changed considerably. The public discussion of environmental issues, such as climate change, has both expanded and deepened, bringing an awareness of the planet's beleaguered environment to an unprecedented level across various social groups (Hawken 2007). Then, in 2007, the financial crisis in the United States and other world markets, including the housing market crisis, the bank "bail-outs," the fall of the "Big Two" automakers (GM and Chrysler), and historically high unemployment and foreclosure levels, called into question many aspects of the U.S.'s political and economic situation. (Herbert 2008:A23). To some extent, the neoliberal policies that were introduced and maintained by Reagan, Clinton, and the two Bush administrations, such as deregulation of markets, economic subsidies to corporations, and tax breaks for the wealthy, are being publicly questioned and, in fact, the effectiveness of our whole economic system is being questioned (Krugman 2009:A19). And while Obama's response to the financial crisis from 2008-2010, like the stimulus package and other financial recovery programs, is far from a suite of government programs to redistribute wealth like Roosevelt's New Deal, it still marks a major shift in the role of government vis-à-vis regulation and concern for working families. The adoption of sweeping health care reform- the Patient Protection

and Affordable Care Act- has been called “the most expansive social legislation enacted in decades” and best represents the U.S. government’s shifting role (Stolberg and Pear 2010:A19).

In 2008, U.S. voters elected President Barack Obama, who ran on a social and economic platform distinctly different than the policies advocated by George W. Bush, or Obama’s opponent, John McCain (Republican AZ). Obama responded to the concerns of middle-class families on issues such as jobs, mortgages, retirement, and paying for college, the need for government to play a role in controlling the economy, the importance of addressing environmental issues, and working with other countries to achieve national and global goals (Organizing for America 2010). In fact, Obama took his concern for providing jobs and meeting middle class needs, as well as addressing environmental degradation, and deemed his economic development proposal a “Green New Deal” or “Green Recovery” (Stolberg 2010). In essence, he combined job growth concerns with environmental concerns to create what this study refers to as an “alternative economic development” platform (Organizing for America 2010).<sup>9</sup> During his campaign for the presidency and through his first year in office, Obama has expressed his desire to build a “clean energy economy.”<sup>10</sup> Upon being elected, Obama even signed an executive order that sets sustainability goals for federal agencies (West 2009). This is fascinating because when Mayor Piercy of Eugene proposed creating a Sustainable Business Initiative in 2004, which I also categorize as an alternative economic development program, it did not appear possible that a similar program would be proposed at the national level any time soon given Bush’s attacks on environmental

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<sup>9</sup> This study uses the phrase alternative economic development to mean a platform that prioritizes economic health as well as community well-being and environmental health. This topic will be a central theme of Chapters III and IV.

<sup>10</sup> In some ways, the financial crisis intensified politicians calls around the world for investment in renewable energy, energy efficiency, etc. to create “green jobs”: “Meeting targets on greenhouse gas emissions and improving energy security will require hundreds of billions of dollars of investment in renewable technologies, and this opens up the attractive prospect of an explosive growth in jobs in these new industries at a time when more traditional jobs are disappearing” (Harvey 2010).

protection and regulation and, more importantly, his general disinterest in addressing environmental issues.

Building on his (alternative) economic development platform, and relevant to this study's research, Obama committed to passing domestic climate change legislation within his first two months of office; indeed, in 2009, the House of Representatives passed the American Clean Energy and Security Act — a national climate and energy bill (H.R. 2454). In addition, Obama guided the U.S. House to sign the Bill prior to the United Nations' Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) meetings in November 2009, so that the rest of the world would see that the United States is committed to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions (CNN 2010). Obama has also indicated that the United States is on board with the rest of the world to sign a new Kyoto Protocol agreement and, while this did not happen in 2009, Obama did attend the United Nation's Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) meetings in Copenhagen in November 2009 (CNN 2009). Obama also approved \$200 billion in funding for technology and workforce development related to renewable energy and energy efficiency programs through his Stimulus package (Benjamin and Goldman 2009). Finally, Obama was also a major force in raising emissions and mileage standards for automobiles and light-duty trucks (LDVs) to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the U.S. vehicle fleet (Broder 2010:B1).

The creation of "green jobs" comes up almost daily in the popular media since Obama's election, and especially in relation to creating clean energy jobs through the stimulus packages that have been passed over the last year. Following up on his commitment to revive the U.S. economy with green jobs — new jobs based in environmentally sensitive or energy-saving industries, such as constructing solar panels and building hybrid cars — Obama appointed Van Jones to the White House as the Green

Jobs Czar (Terry 2010:A19).<sup>11</sup> Jones chose to resign from the administration in September 2009 due to numerous attacks on his past political positions from conservatives (Broder 2009). Still, Jones' appointment marked significant movement in the national discussion on the environment, social justice and the economy; not only because it demonstrated that the Obama administration is attempting to address our dire environmental situation, but also because Jones represents a different side of the environmental movement than that normally involved in U.S. national politics.

The environmental movement is largely known as a white, middle and upper-class social movement, but Jones' environmentalism has long been rooted in urban, environmental justice issues (Bullard 2005; Speth 2008). Jones had worked for more than a decade building a grassroots environmental and social justice movement in Oakland, California, trying to keep poor youth of color from being incarcerated by facilitating their training and employment in "green" jobs. In fact, Jones founded two organizations committed to social justice, environmentalism and green jobs: The Ella Baker Center for Human Rights and Green for All (Ella Baker Center 2010). In short, Jones' appointment as a young, gay, black man from the environmental justice movement to the environmental cabinet of the President's administration represents a big step from 1990, when the most prominent environmental justice (EJ) leaders in the United States wrote a letter to the "Big 10" (the ten largest national environmental organizations in the United States) (Matsuoka 2001). In this letter, EJ leaders criticized the Big 10 organizations for racist environmentalism, which included the absence of people of color represented in the "Big 10" organizations, as well as the "Big 10's" myopic focus on protecting pristine wilderness- deemed playgrounds for mainly white, middle and upper class people. As an alternative, EJ leaders pointed out that the Big 10 could extend their work to environmental issues affecting low-income, communities of color around the

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<sup>11</sup> Green jobs can be defined as: Blue-collar employment that has been upgraded to better respect the environment; Family-supporting, career-track, vocational, or trade-level employment in environmentally-friendly fields. Examples: electricians who install solar panels; plumbers who install solar water heaters; farmers engaged in organic agriculture and some bio-fuel production; and construction workers who build energy-efficient green buildings, wind power farms, solar farms, and wave energy farms (Jones 2008).

world. Jones' appointment and the explosion of the green jobs discourse are relevant to this research study because they connect concerns for the environment with concerns for social equity and working families, particularly with respect to job availability and security. Also significant to the U.S. public discussion on environmental issues is the Obama administration's newly formed, "Sustainable communities and public transportation" committee of the Housing and Urban Development Department. Through Department of Labor grants, Obama has also rallied support for the Emerald Cities program, a building retrofit program implemented in several U.S. cities. Emerald Cities is a government-run energy-efficiency program that reduces energy costs for low-income residents and, at the same time, provides jobs for the hard-hit building trades sector.

### **Civil Society Organizations Embrace Sustainability**

Since 2005, more and more nongovernmental organizations are embracing the concept of sustainability as well. University programs that specifically research and instruct on sustainability are cropping up, like the City University of New York's Institute for Sustainable Cities and the University of Southern California's Center for Sustainable Cities. This means students are now earning degrees specifically in the study of sustainability. Also at the college level, university presidents are becoming signatories to sustainability and climate change commitments. For example, there are now 620 signatories to the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment, which requires universities to do an emissions inventory, take immediate steps to decrease greenhouse gases, integrate sustainability into their curriculum and make sustainability a part of students' overall educational experience. Fourteen universities and colleges have signed on to this challenge in Oregon alone. Similarly, 350 university presidents in 40 countries now belong to "University Leaders for a Sustainable Future." This commitment requires universities to support sustainability as a critical focus of teaching, research, operations, and outreach through publications, research and assessment. Universities' engagement with sustainability is just one example of how

sustainability is sweeping through political, economic and social debates in the United States and around the world.

Many international governmental and nongovernmental institutions are concentrating on cities and sustainability. Numerous reports over the last 20 years have emphasized that cities need to play a leading role in achieving sustainability; these include: 1987 Brundtland Report (World Commission on Sustainable Development), 1990 Green Paper on the Urban Environment (Commission of the European Communities), 1998 Sustainable Urban Development in the European Union: A Framework for Action (Commission of the European Communities), and 2004 Towards a Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment (Commission of the European Communities) (Bulkeley and Betsill 2005). Recent United Nations (UN) initiatives, such as Agenda 21 and Habitat II Agenda, which have been adopted by numerous European cities, specifically address the problems of urban environmental degradation and urban poverty<sup>12</sup> (Mahadevia 2000). In 1992, 172 countries committed to the goals of Agenda 21, including social equity, environmental protection, and a stable economy (European Commission 2004). In addition, the international community is starting to focus more on the urban indigent, mainly women and children of color, and how they are disproportionately burdened by environmental hazards and excluded from prosperity (Mahadevia 2000). International organizations' attempt to simultaneously tackle social and environmental concerns demonstrates the significance of scholars and practitioners elucidation of the relationship between these issues.

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<sup>12</sup> Agenda 21 was created as a blueprint for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century for sustainable development by the United Nations (UN). It outlines policies to be adopted at the local, national, and international level by governments, UN organizations, and other organizations. The document is over 900 pages long with four main sections on sustainable development: social and economic dimensions; conservation and management of resources for development; strengthening the role of major groups; and means of implementation (United Nations 1992b). UN Habitat's twin goals are achieving sustainable cities and adequate shelter for all. UN Habitat Agenda expands on previous UN initiatives by focusing on the importance of including non-governmental partners in sustainable development efforts (United Nations 1992b).

### **Green Capitalism: Sustainability and the Business Sector**

Surprisingly, the growth in sustainability discussion and efforts may be most evident among the business sector, where sustainability is being built into businesses' strategic and marketing plans, and used to assuage stakeholders and consumers interested in investing in companies that are socially and environmentally conscious as well as financially viable. According to the *Beyond Gray Pinstripes* study, approximately 45% of U.S. university-based business schools required students to take courses on sustainability, ethics, and social responsibility in 2003, up from 34% in 2000 (Nachman-Hunt 2005). Furthermore, this study also identified 36 graduate business schools in different parts of the world that are specializing in offering students an education in the "triple bottom line."

The membership of the World Business Council on Sustainable Development (WBCSD), an organization run by over 200 business leaders focused on business and sustainable development, has been steadily growing since it was formed in the early 1990s (WBCSD 2005). Focused on the important role businesses and business leaders can play in achieving sustainability, WBCSD has more than 1,000 members from more than 35 countries and 20 major industrial sectors. They focus on a range of social and environmental sustainability issues including assisting businesses to meet the emissions-reduction targets of the Kyoto Protocol and the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals around income, health, and education (WBCSD 2010).

Over the last ten to fifteen years, many business owners have begun to instruct their businesses not only on the financial bottom line but also on how their business' contribute socially and environmentally — "this more conscience-led capitalism seeks to synergize environmental restoration, social justice, and financial sustainability. Triple-bottom-line management recognizes that yes, businesses need to make a profit, but those profits should not come at the expense of people or the planet" (Danaher, Biggs and Mark 2007:202). In the United States, the Co-op America Business Network provides a good gauge of business owners' increasing interest in using their businesses to create social

and environmental change; the network includes more than 3,000 businesses committed to harnessing “economic power — the strength of consumers, investors, businesses, and the marketplace — to create a socially just and environmentally sustainable society (Green America 2010). There are over 100 businesses in Oregon that are included in the Co-op America Business Network of which more than a dozen businesses are from Eugene, OR.

Also a huge part of businesses’ interest in sustainability and the triple bottom line is its marketing potential. This kind of engagement with sustainability from the business sector has led to the rise of the term “greenwashing,” indicating a business’ attempt to exude environmental and social sustainability values without actually making their business less environmentally or socially destructive; in other words, greenwashing can be applied to anyone who makes false or disingenuous environmental claims. “When environmentalism went mainstream, green (both the color and the word) was hijacked by businesses as a visual clue to suggest that this, that or the other product was ecologically sound” (Rawsthorn 2010). At any rate, either as a marketing strategy or because of a genuine interest in running a more environmentally and socially sensitive business, businesses have become very involved in sustainability practices and policy development.

## **Conclusion**

In terms of this study, the emergence of a strong green economy, green jobs discussion at the local, state and national levels of politics makes my research more important and timely. While there is a more vibrant discussion of environmental issues occurring because of President Obama’s attention to rebuilding our economy through green industry and jobs, the discourse is not firmly rooted in a concern for justice and equity. This study focuses on the integration of environmental and social equity issues as integral to the particular time and place in which we reside, which is marked by an opening of political, social, and cultural opportunity.

These shifts in rhetoric and action have two main affects on this research study. On the one hand, they affect my research because city politics are very much connected to national politics and Eugene, my case study, is bound to feel the impact of this change at the national level. On the other hand, because the current discourse on “green economies” and “sustainability” has attained a more prominent position on the U.S. national stage, the findings of this research study appear to suddenly have farther reach.

This farther reach is forecast, both because I believe the sustainability discussion will expand and deepen even more than it has since 2005, and because my curiosity in how social justice is reflected in sustainability may now play out on the national stage. Moreover, due to a lack of inaction at the national level during most of the first decade of the Twentieth Century, cities often addressed sustainability issues more actively than did the national government. Therefore, this study’s research at the urban level focuses on the roots of what is now a national political discourse on sustainability. Understanding the challenges cities face in addressing social equity in their sustainability initiatives will inform the ensuing national dialogue.

While the shift in sustainability discussion at the national level may affect how cities address sustainability in the future, I do not think the increased attention to sustainability at the national level will make this study’s urban-based findings any less relevant for several reasons. First, in many ways, cities are a microcosm of national level politics and the forces at play at the urban level are similar to those at play at the national level. Second, regardless of their bad reputation in the United States, historically, cities have been incubators of social, economic and cultural change. In other words, political struggles at the city level often precede struggles at the state and national levels, and blaze the path for similar changes to occur at the national level. Third, the current case study is focused on a city that has been highly recognized for its sustainability work and, generally, its progressive politics; if Eugene cannot develop a comprehensive sustainability program, then other cities must engage in a thorough and honest discussion about the possibilities in their own cities.

In conclusion, the expansion of the sustainability and alternative economic development discourse, including a general broadening and deepening of environmental concerns and their connection to reviving the economy, makes this research study extremely timely. Understanding the reasons for the inclusion or exclusion of social justice concerns in sustainability (or alternative economic development) programs is essential to understanding how the United States can move forward in a way that reduces our impact on the environment and improves quality of life, especially for those with the greatest social needs.

### **Research Questions**

*How is social equity constructed, contested and acted upon in Eugene's SBI?*

There have been numerous studies on the practical challenges cities face in implementing sustainability policies, but those are not the focus of this study. This study concentrates on the broader social, political and economic forces shaping urban sustainability efforts including the role of key actors, and the social and political struggles that mark how sustainability is conceived and defined. Studies of the technical issues related to sustainability, such as traffic management, architectural design, institutional restructuring, green technologies, etc. often view each city as dislocated from other cities, nation-states, and the international context (Dobson 1999). I think the technical issues posing barriers to achieving sustainability can be overcome; while the political issues surrounding sustainability and social equity that are the real challenge to achieving sustainability.

This study begins with the assumption that broader political, economic, and social processes at different levels of government and community create a dynamic interaction whereby sustainability discourse and action, including its relation to social equity, is shaped and determined (Dobson 1999). A few processes stand out. The local impacts of neoliberal economic policies, such as government investment in private economic development while divesting in public services, has created a political and economic

dynamic in which cities want to provide for their citizens but are limited by the need to support and attract business through deregulation of business activities. The emergence of citizen-led decision making processes in which governments facilitate citizen boards to oversee government activities or to propose policy has allowed for more civic participation, but often such participation is not facilitated properly, and an unequal power imbalance among citizen groups leads to faulty decisions. Lastly, sustainability as a concept vague enough on its face to garner broad support, and as a movement capable of bringing together broad coalitions to move policies for greater sustainability, creates somewhat of a counter-weight to the larger process of neoliberalism, generating the terrain for significant political struggle. More specifically, this study closely examines the political contest over social equity that occurred between the major players in the Mayor's SBI. This research identifies and explains the political challenges and opportunities in addressing social equity in City Government-based sustainability efforts, specifically honing in on the tensions felt by a Mayor when bringing multiple interest groups together around a common issue, the power brought to bear on such a process by interest groups and individual personalities, and the possibility of building a more unified community as well as a new green economy in the process.

*How is social equity framed in the Mayor's SBI? How does this compare to how it is framed in other sustainability efforts?*

How social equity is framed in sustainability efforts reveals a great deal about how social equity will be addressed in sustainability efforts. Unlike other concepts that may be well-defined or have broad agreement regarding their meaning, the concept of sustainability lacks clarity. Despite (or perhaps because of) its popularity, the conception and definition of sustainability is highly contested (Hallsmith 2003; Agyeman and Evans 2003). In *Blueprint for a Green Economy*, Pearce, Markandya, and Barbier (1989) quote 24 different definitions of sustainable development — and many more exist. Despite the widespread support that exists for sustainability, there remains continued obscurity of the

concept. Chapter II identifies the range of ways sustainability is conceptualized and defined in relation to social equity. When examining various conceptualizations of sustainability, including the Mayor's SBI, this study examines how the three legs of the sustainability stool — social, economic, and environmental — are defined, contested, and prioritized in relation to each other. In addition, this study asks what comprises the competing definitions of sustainability, and the nature of the relationship between the social, economic, and environmental components in each definition? For example, is social equity on equal footing with the environmental and economic aspects of sustainability or is social equity considered a core concern of sustainability efforts? Or, how does the conceptualization of one component impact the realization of the other components?

The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) definition of sustainability is the most commonly used. It defines sustainability as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs” (WCED 1987; Agyeman and Evans 2003). This definition does not explicitly refer to social justice or equity. In fact, most definitions of sustainability do not include such references. In an analysis of 579 applications to the Environmental Protection Agency's 1996 Sustainable Development Challenge Grant Program, the Environmental Law Institute (ELI) found that less than 5% of the applications listed equity as a goal of their project (ELI, 1999).

To better understand why economics and the environment have overshadowed social equity concerns in sustainability efforts, a closer examination of the relationship between the “three legs of the sustainability stool”— economy, environment and social concerns — is necessary (Dobson 1999). Of particular interest are the different economic rationales that inform the concept of sustainability. These differing economic rationales shape our understanding of what it means to have a healthy economy, which in turn alters our definition of sustainability, resulting in a distinct vision of the proper relationship between economics, environment, and society in sustainability initiatives (Daly 1996).

The sustainability literature has generally categorized various definitions as strong or weak. Those definitions that do address social equity are referred to as “strong”, not just because of their strong orientation to social justice, but also because “strong” definitions assume that a paradigm shift is necessary to achieve complete sustainability (Haughton and Hunter 1994). “Weak” definitions of sustainability, such as the WCED definition (1987), assume increased economic growth is still the main goal, regardless of environmental and social concerns, and that small tweaks to the current system will be enough to reach environmental, economic, and social sustainability (Haughton and Hunter 1994).

The main characteristic of weak definitions of sustainability is that economic growth is the main priority for urban policies. It is assumed that environmental and social improvements will follow from vigorous economic growth (Bugliarello 2006). Strong definitions of sustainability, arising from the more radical Deep Green or Deep Ecology backgrounds, view economic growth as the cause of social inequality and environmental degradation (Daly 1996; Haughton and Hunter 1994; Seabrook 1990). Following this argument, weak sustainability efforts are critiqued for their unwillingness to introduce measures that might reduce the rate of economic growth. In addition, approaches that propose increased economic growth and technological innovation to reach sustainability take a reactionary approach to environmental crisis, rather than prioritizing the prevention of environmental crisis (Daly 1996; Haughton and Hunter 1994; Seabrook 1990).

Prominent sustainability thinker, Herman Daly in his book “Beyond Growth” (1996), also brings attention to the role of economic growth in sustainability. As economic growth relates to addressing environmental problems, Daly critiques individuals and institutions, such as the World Bank (WB), that argue that increased economic growth leads to an improved environment and a reduction in poverty (Daly 1996). For Daly, the economy exists within a finite natural environment. While the WB advocates for increased economic growth in the Global North to address environmental

degradation and poverty, Daly argues that the North's economic growth actually leads to less resources and ecological space on a global level, creating increased global income inequality and political tensions (1996). Clearly, thinkers such as Daly and the WB have drastically different approaches to addressing social, environmental, and economic problems, yet both lay claim to the concept of sustainability. On this point, Daly argues that maintaining a vague definition of sustainability is a strategic tactic for the WB and others who rely on increased economic growth, because it allows them "to continue business as usual" (1996:9). Consequently, Daly's attention to the different approaches to economic growth in sustainability sheds light on the "triple bottom line" definition of sustainability, the one used by the Mayor's SBI: social, environmental and economic health should be mutually reinforcing goals, but if economic growth is defined solely as a quantitative increase in the size of the economy (such as measured by Gross National Product rather than a more qualitative measurement such as the Human Development Index) then the social, economic, and environmental components are sure to conflict (Daly 1996:13).

Defining sustainability is not a straightforward process for Daly, however, as he believes appropriate definitions will arise out of particular social, political and cultural contexts that create their own definitions — "it is subject to multiple conceptions and continuous revision, the very stuff of politics" (1996:7). Yet, Daly offers his example of a strong definition of sustainability: "sustainability is the scope, quality, richness, and benignity of human culture, the biosphere and the economic life we make from them, and the distribution of those benefits, both now and over time" (1996:8). These varying explanations of the role of economic growth in achieving sustainability indicate the importance of this research project's goal of uncovering how the three components of sustainability — the economic, environmental, and social — are conceived of, framed, and ultimately prioritized in relation to each other by the main participants in the SBI's formulation.

In short, this section on the competing definitions of sustainability demonstrates that the concept of urban sustainability hasn't been fully developed. More specifically, the relationship between the social, economic, and environmental components of sustainability have not been comprehensively theorized (Bugliarello 2006). Moreover, some scholars have argued that it is at the urban level that environmental problems are more experientially obvious because resources are being consumed *en masse* and environmental degradation is centralized in the city (Daly 1989; Daly 1996). However, Haughton and Hunter (1994) point out that cities, particularly in the United States, have been viewed with disdain for quite some time despite the fact that there is a high level of urbanization- 80% of U.S. residents live in cities.

Cities have been characterized as unnatural places to live, and a return to rural forms of living posited as the best solution to environmental degradation (Dunlap and Michelson 2002). Today, however, after years of continual urbanization, the need to focus on how cities can be designed in a way that addresses environmental and social issues is paramount (Haughton and Hunter 1994; Bugliarello 2006). *New York Times* architectural critic, Nicolai Ouroussoff, uniquely describes the convergence of sustainability and attention on cities: "The country has fallen on hard times, but those of us who love cities know we have been living in the dark ages for a while now" (2009). Ouroussoff was referring to the fact that cities in the United States are finally being recognized as places of opportunity — for individuals looking for a high quality of life that has less impact on the natural environment. In short, a comprehensive examination of urban sustainability is necessary, including a better understanding of the relationship between social, environmental, and economic needs as well as the ways in which definitions of the different components of sustainability will affect the achievement and implementation of the other components.

*Who are the main actors or interest groups involved in the Mayor's SBI? What are their visions, goals and strategy for social equity and sustainability with respect to the Mayor's SBI?*

Deeply interconnected with the question of how social equity is framed in sustainability efforts, is who is involved in the efforts? Identifying the main actors and/or interest groups engaged in sustainability efforts, such as the SBI, facilitates the process of understanding the competing visions, goals and strategies being pursued by actors within the initiative. As explained above, because the concept of sustainability is widely supported but lacks clear definition, a situation has emerged in which there is ample space for various urban interest groups to support sustainability efforts by defining sustainability in a way that best suits their own interests. In essence, the term sustainability has become extremely malleable politically and, thus, highly contested. The political contest regarding sustainability becomes particularly heated when it takes place in the context of economic development (how to attract and foster businesses with good jobs that use sustainable practices and produce sustainable products), as it did with the Mayor's SBI. Over the past ten to twenty years, interest groups, such as the traditional business community, have invested a lot politically and financially into influencing city-based policies. As a result, they have a deep stake in the policy recommendations and outcomes that emerge from processes such as the SBI. The Mayor's SBI in Eugene represents one specific context in which this broader political and social contest occurred regarding the concept of sustainability.

This study's research on the SBI examined the roles of city officials, businesses and business associations, labor unions, environmental groups and some social justice organizations in forming and producing the final recommendations of the SBI. These groups were the main players in the political contest that occurred around social justice and sustainability in the Mayor's SBI. Each interest group (and even individuals within these groups) had its own way of defining sustainability, understanding the relationship between the social, economic, and environmental components of sustainability, and its

own formulation for incorporating, or not incorporating, social equity into the Final Recommendations of the SBI.

Several schools of theory shed light on the individuals and interest groups involved in the SBI, what their stakes in the SBI were, and the strategies they used to pursue their goals for the SBI. According to growth machine theorists, such as Logan and Molotch (1987), local elites and business coalitions have a deep stake in the growth of the local economy and are powerful actors shaping city policy (Dunlap and Michelson 2002; Molotch 1976). As a business initiative, there was significant involvement in the SBI by the business community, both by individual business owners and by business coalition members, but how were they able to influence a process initiated by the Mayor, a known social justice and environmental advocate? These coalitions of local elites are often adept at influencing local policy by equating economic growth to job growth — “growth creates jobs!” (Dunlap and Michelson 2002; Molotch 1976). Job creation was a central component of the SBI, and thus was necessarily coupled with economic growth.

The Los Angeles School (LA School) views the government as largely serving the interests of local elites and businesses, although the LA School focuses more on the fragmentation taking place in today’s cities as a result of globalization, economic restructuring, fragmentation by race, class, gender and sexuality, and the rise of minority populations. The LA School refers to city government as a “shadow government” — a privatized proto-government — that is rarely accountable to the public and responsible primarily to wealth (Dear 2002:17). The LA School also calls attention to the effects of neoliberal policies on cities, especially the deregulation of the economy and the reduction in non-market entitlements, such as public amenities like parks, beaches, libraries, and playgrounds. Mike Davis calls it a “de facto disinvestment in traditional public space and recreation” and a redirection of monies to “corporate-defined redevelopment priorities” (2002:325). The LA School perspective offers insight into the approach the SBI TF takes regarding the role of government in addressing social equity and sustainability. What role will the city government have in implementing sustainability policies in Eugene?

Will government regulation or incentivization drive the effort to create a more sustainable Eugene? Will there be public accountability built into the SBI recommendations? And what will the funding priorities be with respect to addressing social equity and sustainability?

Moreover, a person or group's purpose in engaging sustainability has vast implications for how social equity efforts are addressed. For example, will sustainability goals be implemented through incentivization or regulation? This depends largely on who or what one identifies as the drivers of change toward a more sustainable city — for example, is it businesses driving economic growth as the Chamber of Commerce argues or is it action from the citizens most affected by development, as leaders of labor-community coalitions for regional equity argue?

The role of race, class, gender and educational attainment is another important dimension of exploring who the main actors of the SBI are. Since this study is specifically exploring how social equity is addressed in the SBI, it is important to identify which social groups are involved in the process. Diaz, a scholar of urban planning processes, argues that it is imperative that socially disadvantaged residents are involved in city processes that will have a direct impact upon them (2005). However, socially disadvantaged residents are often left out of these processes (Diaz 2005; Hsiao and Liu 2002; DeFillippis and North 2004). I consider the composition of the SBI TF, TAC and the public outreach meetings to be an important dimension of how social equity is addressed in the SBI.

As part of this research question, which identifies and examines the key actors and their goals, visions and strategies for the SBI, this study explores how the Mayor's SBI experience compares to urban sustainability efforts in other U.S. cities. Does the composition of those involved with the SBI, business owners and business associations, labor unions, environmental groups, city officials and social justice advocates, look the same or different in other U.S. sustainability efforts? Is the relative power of these different actors and interest groups in influencing the process the same or different in

other U.S. urban sustainability efforts? And, finally, does the social makeup of those involved differ from the Eugene experience?

*How does the current urban political-economic context shape the ways in which city officials, interest groups, and citizens make use of the concept of sustainability and, more importantly, what are the implications of this for socially just sustainability?*

In my analysis of the Mayor's SBI and social equity, urban political-economic forces set the stage for how urban sustainability efforts like the SBI emerge. Several major political-economic factors are currently shaping urban processes in significant ways. These include the decisions that city officials make regarding economic and/or sustainable development and the demands that citizens and interest groups make upon city government. Some of the factors that have come to light in the process of studying the SBI and which have been examined more closely to better understand how they impact the Mayor's SBI and its addressing social equity are: the decline of the manufacturing sector and the subsequent rise of the low-wage, service sector economy; the intensification of urbanization and the increase in the gap between the urban rich and poor; the shifting role of city governance toward a more expanded and perforated structure; a lack of funding at the city level; and the expectation that city governments will be more entrepreneurial. All of these political-economic forces indicate why various individuals and interest groups were involved with the SBI, their goals and strategies for the SBI, and what they hoped to achieve through the SBI.

A concurrent decline in manufacturing and rise in the service sector has created a highly unequal economy in many cities (Sassen 1990, 2001), including Eugene, as manufacturing jobs in the timber industry have drastically declined and a growing high-tech industry has not produced a proportionate number of jobs. A growing service sector creates new wealth, but not for all people; women, immigrants, and people of color are often excluded from the benefits of a growing service sector and they are instead marginalized to low-wage, part-time and contingent work within the service industry

(Sassen 1990, 2001). The shift to a service sector economy has led to a vision for U.S. cities that focuses on the needs and desires of privileged residents, rather than the needs and desires of the majority of urban residents — those who are less wealthy (Bayat 2000; Ruben 2001). An emphasis on real estate development also often accompanies a growing service sector economy, thereby increasing the cost of living and, as a consequence, exacerbating low-income residents' economic insecurity (Ruben 2001).

Saskia Sassen (2001) points out, however, that economic processes still include fixed assets and the necessary resources of specific locales: this means that not all capital is mobile and is thus dependent, in some ways, on specific locals. This dependency gives city governments and citizens leverage when dealing with global economic forces such as neoliberal policies, privatization and restructuring. This perspective suggests that cities are not just shaped by global economic forces; local citizen groups also have the power to shape these forces. In some cases, local citizen groups, such as the labor-community coalitions I discuss in Chapter V, demand that social and environmental concerns be addressed in the process of urban development largely driven by local elites, corporations and business coalitions (Sassen 2001). In the case of the SBI, are advocates of environmentalism and social justice able to influence the discourse around social equity and sustainability? Is the push for economic growth kept in check by parallel forces for social justice, environmental sustainability and broader benefits for the community?

In addition to a growing gap between the urban rich and poor, U.S. cities have also experienced changes in their urban governance. Over the last two to three decades, the roles and responsibilities of local governments have expanded (Beaumont and Nicholls 2004). According to Beaumont and Nicholls, more administrative and service provision by local governments, a shift towards consolidating local governments into metropolitan level governing bodies, and an increase in interest group involvement in city politics, have led to “an expanded and more perforated urban political opportunity structure” (2004:123). This transformation in local governments spurs urban interest groups and movements to organize and make demands of city government (Beaumont

and Nicholls 2004). As a result, many cities today face contradictory forces that greatly influence and shape their policies and actions.

Following neoliberal thought, the decentralization of power towards local governments has not been accompanied by a corresponding decentralization of funds towards local governments. This means more of a burden is placed on city government to maintain the economic health of the city with little assistance through federal and state funding (Logan and Molotch 1987). At the same time, various urban stakeholders and social movements recognize the political opportunity structure in city governments and, therefore, force city governments to be more responsive to their demands, including protecting the urban environment and addressing urban social problems (Agyeman and Evans 2003). In short, city governments are charged with being good “entrepreneurial cities” in a globalized world, as well as regulating environmental and social health. And these social, environmental and economic challenges that city officials face will only increase as more and more people move to cities, like Eugene, where the population has grown by 8.9% since 2000 (City Data 2010)

It is within the context of being “charged with being good entrepreneurial cities” and “regulating environmental and social health” that Mayor Piercy proposed the SBI. And thus her interest, as well as that of many other actors involved in the SBI, including the other city officials, traditional business interests, environmental groups and social justice advocates, is connected to major political-economic issues: declining federal spending to urban areas; the rise of low-wage, service sector jobs; increased pressure on city governments to regulate social and environmental concerns; and an increasing urban population marked by growing social inequality.

To sum up, the SBI is embedded in difficult conversations occurring in cities around how to develop. In the case of the SBI, this study argues that the Mayor was using the SBI as a type of alternative economic development tool that focused on attracting and maintaining businesses and jobs, but also used social and environmental criteria to evaluate businesses. These conversations are highly political and involve

many different urban actors and interest groups with varying needs and desires, including some very powerful interest groups, such as traditional business coalitions, which have a high stake in the policy outcomes of the discussion. Examining these political-economic forces is key to understanding the motivations and dynamics behind the SBI, including the interests and desires of the individuals and groups involved and, ultimately, it is essential to understanding the political contest that occurred around addressing social equity in the SBI.

*How does a city-based or city-housed initiative limit or expand the ways in which social equity is addressed in sustainability efforts, like the SBI?*

Given the complex financial, demographic and political forces molding the actions of city government today, this study concludes by asking, what are the limitations and opportunities involved in initiating and basing a sustainability policy or program in city government? There are few other institutions that can house a policy that will allow for such broad-reaching effects, yet having the policy based in city government also means it is constrained by the myriad commitments that the city government must meet. For example, Cox and Mair (1988) point out that elected officials of city government have a dual commitment to their constituency as well as to bringing in the necessary funds to cover the city budget. As a result, these officials are pushed into situations in which they must consider what constitutes the most fiscally responsible decision for the city (such as increasing the city tax base through implementation of new taxes or ending tax breaks to businesses) and what decision will most likely lead to their re-election because their constituency is pleased with their actions (such as stopping the construction of a highway that community members and environmentalists oppose). The city government can also be hamstrung by having only limited financial resources to run a very complex process like the SBI, and/or its obligation to powerful interest groups. At the same time, Van Jones, appointed by the Obama administration to run the White House green jobs program, argues that the involvement of government, at all levels, is

necessary for creation of a socially just, sustainable economy (2008): “Government policies can and must play a key role in creating an inclusive, green economy — by setting standards, spurring innovation, realigning existing investments, and making new investments. Government action can ensure that we make the transition rapidly, while protecting and benefiting our most vulnerable populations” (Jones 2008:145).

One alternative to a city-sanctioned or city-based sustainability program, and one that is explored in the last chapter of this study, is having a community-based sustainability program. A community-based sustainability program is initiated and run by civil society and/or community organizations. In a process very similar to the SBI, but run outside the city government, Urban Agenda, a nonprofit in New York City, conducted a two year process gathering input from businesses, citizens, city officials, and community groups on how to build an equitable, environmentally sustainable New York City economy (Urban Agenda 2009). While my study does not examine this case in detail, it is clear from the Final Recommendations of this Green Jobs Roundtable that basing such an effort within a social justice and environmentally focused organization allows these themes much greater presence than the SBI did. On the other hand, because this process was not established within the city government, it must now engage in another phase of work that aims to get the recommendations — which contain much more controversial material related to labor unions and regulation than the SBI recommendations — adopted by the New York City Council.

Several factors make this project very important to city officials and citizens who want to address the major social, environmental, and economic issues of urban places. First, with increasing frequency, sustainability is being put forth as the dominant framework for dealing with a myriad of social, environmental and economic issues, yet the ambiguity around the concept, intentionally or unintentionally, leads to political struggle among various urban actors regarding the use of sustainability. In the case of the SBI, environmental groups, business owners and business coalitions, such as the Chamber of Commerce, labor unions, city officials, and other civil society organizations,

are often involved in the struggle to develop a vision, goals and strategy for action and implementation around sustainability that fulfills each group's needs.

Second, few studies have closely examined the political-economic forces that shape this struggle with a specific interest in better understanding how and why social equity concerns are marginalized in sustainability efforts (Daly 1996; Dobson 1999). In terms of political-economic forces, the decline of well-paying manufacturing jobs, the increase in low-paying service sector jobs, an increase in urban inequality, and a shifting role for local government related to fiscal crisis and increased demands from citizens and interest groups, such as the environmental movement, all set the stage for the political struggle over the use of sustainability and, ultimately, what sustainability actions are taken around social equity.

Third, while the rise of the urban sustainability discourse is fairly recent, in many ways, the issues surrounding social equity and sustainability are age-old. The struggle regarding social equity as a component of sustainability efforts, and the relationship among the three components of sustainability, is at the core of issues inherent in discussions of economic development versus environmental conservation, environmental conservation versus job creation, and whether economic growth is linked to job growth (good jobs). Within the rich, local context of this case study, I seek to find alternatives to the deeply rooted dichotomies between the environment, economic growth, and the creation of good jobs and social equity more generally. Does the rhetoric of "alternative economic development" or "sustainable development" have the political power and traction to challenge the hegemony of these dualisms? Furthermore, as is discussed below, the rise of a national discourse on alternative economic development in the form of the green economy, green jobs, and sustainable development since Obama's campaign for the presidency in 2007 makes this study's examination of the tensions between economic prosperity, environmental health, and social equity even more timely. Put more broadly, the sustainability discourse provides an opportunity to seriously address another very important question: how do we improve quality of life for people and, at the

same time, stop degradation of the natural environment? And if the marginalization of social equity in sustainability efforts is not closely examined, it is a missed opportunity for jointly addressing social and environmental concerns.

### **Research Methodology**

This dissertation is based on a case study analysis of the Eugene SBI. It draws on 25 interviews with SBI members and staff, as well as policymakers, politicians, business leaders, environmental activists, and social justice activists in Eugene, OR, between 2005 and 2009. During this time, an extensive review was conducted of policy documents and secondary texts related to the Eugene SBI and other cities sustainability work. In addition, this researcher did participant observation at SBI TF and public meetings. The case study forms part of a wider study of the relationship between sustainability and social justice in the United States, particularly justice related to workers and the workplace.

### **Chapter Summaries**

#### *Chapter I. Introduction*

This Chapter opens the discussion on sustainability, orienting the reader to my interest in the topic and how Eugene, OR is a microcosm of the national and international movements to create a sustainable economy. I provide a summary of Eugene's Sustainable Business Initiative, its members, and the key recommendations that resulted from the process. Lastly, I lay out the research questions that led my study, and explore some of the theory that informs my responses to these questions.

#### *Chapter II. Is There a Socially Just Sustainability? Examining the compatibility of social equity, environmental health, and economic prosperity*

Chapter II sets the stage for sustainability and social equity by reviewing the theoretical and conceptual background of sustainability. First, I discuss how and when

sustainability rose to prominence, and then what the conceptual path of sustainability has meant for defining, measuring and using it today. The theoretical body of works on sustainability is weak for numerous reasons, and an examination of this body and the schools of thought sustainability draws on, illuminates the need for theoretical coherence on the concept. My review of the theory focuses on the relationship between the economic, environmental and social aspects of sustainability and how this theory relates to the SBI Task Force (SBI TF) members' understanding of sustainability. There is variation in how the social aspect is conceptualized, demonstrated by the divergence in theory, SBI TF member interviews, and materials produced by the TF. Using the theoretical discourse on sustainability and the experience of the Eugene SBI, I argue that sustainability is a contested discourse and understanding the various ways it is used illuminates the political battle for defining, using and implementing sustainability. In addition, understanding the larger political battle occurring around sustainability helps explain the vision, goals and strategies of the various interest groups involved with the Eugene SBI. The chapter concludes with an attempt to push the theoretical bounds of sustainability by reconceptualizing the relationship between the social, environmental and economic aspects of sustainability.

### *Chapter III. Sustainability as an "Urban Fix": The politics of the Mayor's Sustainable Business Initiative*

In Chapter III, I examine how the political context of the SBI generated a dynamic, internal political struggle among the SBI participants, particularly related to social equity. I closely examine the political dynamic produced by the SBI Task Force members — the specific individuals involved in the SBI, the interest groups they represented or were reaching out to and, more importantly, what their roles were in producing the discourse and products of the SBI that ultimately resulted in the neglect of social equity issues. I argue that the SBI filled a very specific political strategy for the Mayor, and these political goals, closely linked to electoral politics, historical divides

between the business and environmental communities, and the City Government's financial constraints, strongly influenced the composition of the SBI, the process for developing it, and the outcomes of the SBI TF Recommendations. Next, I critically examine and discuss the various political reasons for certain individuals and interest groups being assigned to the SBI groups and how their orientation to social equity affected how social equity issues were addressed throughout the SBI. Particularly illuminating in this area is how the labor community came to represent social equity on the SBI, the specific social equity issues the labor representatives brought to the SBI table and how these issues were received by the other TF members and the interest groups they represented.

*Chapter IV. The Entrepreneurial City: Urban political economy and sustainability*

Chapter IV delves into how the changing role of city governments on the national stage has taken form in Eugene and, in turn, shaped the purpose, goals and outcomes of the Eugene SBI. More specifically, I examine the motivating and limiting factors for the City of Eugene governments' role in initiating and implementing a socially equitable SBI including the city manager form of government, City staff and Council's support (or lack of support) for the SBI, City Government's (in)ability to implement social and environmental regulation, and the financial capacities and responsibilities of the City. Understanding the SBI's outcomes in relation to social equity also requires an exploration of the political relations between the environmental, business and social justice communities in Eugene, and also each of these communities' relations with the City Government. This includes an examination of the increasing demands on the City Government from the environmental community to implement environmental regulation and related resistance to regulation from the business community and, consequently, a long-term polarization between the environmental community and business community over various local measures. This polarization in many ways boils down to divergent

views on economic growth and what role the local government should play vis-à-vis social and environmental issues.

*Chapter V. Just Sustainability: Labor-community coalitions working for regional equity*

To enable a better understanding of why the Eugene SBI was not able to address social equity issues in any substantive way, Chapter V looks at labor-community coalitions as successful examples of how sustainability/alternative economic development efforts in the United States have included labor-focused, social equity components. After identifying the successful actions that brought about the inclusion of social equity in sustainability efforts in several other places around the U.S., I focus on why Eugene did not or could not pursue similar actions. For example, how does a city-led effort for sustainability, such as the SBI, inhibit or enhance opportunities for addressing social equity? How do the main actors and interest groups involved in the SBI differ from other places with more successful sustainability actions? The discussion pays special attention to the historical and contemporary relationship between the environmental, labor and social justice communities and the specific labor unions and labor councils involved in the sustainability efforts including their perspective on addressing broader social justice issues.

*Chapter VI. Conclusion: Reclaiming sustainability*

Chapter VI recaps the Eugene SBI experience in the context of national trends and recommendations regarding sustainability and social equity, and more specifically, regarding labor issues. This discussion hones in on the specific elements that play a large part in determining how sustainability efforts address social equity concerns such as who initiates the sustainability program in the first place and why; how previous political battles among the main actors participating in the current efforts affect its discourse and goals; and finally, what is the historical relationship between the social, environmental and economic communities in any given place?

**CHAPTER II**

**IS THERE A SOCIALLY JUST SUSTAINABILITY?**

**EXAMINING THE COMPATIBILITY OF SOCIAL EQUITY,  
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH, AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY**

*“The 20<sup>th</sup> century has been ‘the’ century of urbanization...The future of the most of humanity now lies, for the first time in history, fundamentally in urbanizing areas. The qualities of urban living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will define the qualities of civilization itself”* (Harvey 1996:403).

**Introduction**

Over the last two decades a general consensus has been reached around the desirability of pursuing the concept of “urban sustainability” and, more importantly, achieving sustainability in cities — which, most generally, means creating cities that can meet long-term human and environmental needs (Agyeman 2005; Agyeman, Bullard, and Evans 2003; Fitzgerald 2010; Foley 2004; Mebratu 1998; Wheeler and Beatley 2004). Both social justice and environmental sustainability are “widely regarded as desirable goals” and sustainability advocates seek ways to meet social, environmental and economic goals simultaneously, “rather than play[ing] them off against one another as more traditional development strategies have often done” (Foley 2004:1; Wheeler and Beatley 2004:8). At a most basic level, advocates for social justice and environmental sustainability realize that social inequality often causes environmental degradation and that environmental problems disproportionately affect the poor (toxic facilities, pollution, inadequate transit options, etc. are disproportionately found in poor neighborhoods) (Foley 2004:1). The planning and implementation of programs that help achieve urban sustainability is now a major priority for international institutions, governments at all

levels, social movements, and citizens (Agyeman, Bullard, and Evans 2003; Agyeman 2005; Fitzgerald 2010; Foley 2004). Major international agencies, such as the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Business Council, have entire departments devoted to identifying and creating sustainability plans and programs. There are thousands of sustainability ordinances and initiatives housed in sustainability offices, which establish indicators and goals for reaching sustainability at the local, state, and national levels of government around the world (Agyeman 2004; Wheeler and Beatley 2004). And over the last ten years, sustainability has been declared its own social movement due to the number of grassroots, state, national and international organizations working on the various aspects of sustainability (Agyeman 2005; Foley 2004).

A major impetus for the heightened pursuit of urban sustainability stems from intensifying urbanization processes, deepening urban inequality and environmental degradation and, more generally, the significance of urban areas in the achievement of environmental and social sustainability (United Nations Habitat 2007). Most notably, more than one-half of the world's population now lives in urban areas, and five billion people are expected to live in cities by 2030 (UN Habitat 2010a). In some cities of the Global South, over 50% of urban residents live in slums, where there is little or no access to basic necessities such as water, sanitation, education, health services, or shelter (UN Habitat 2010c). Furthermore, cities consume 75% of the world's energy and produce 80% of its greenhouse gases emissions (Fitzgerald 2010:11). Since the majority of the world's population lives in cities and cities are massive consumers of resources and have a significant impact upon the environment (e.g., climate change, destruction of forests, elimination of coral reefs, loss of genetic and biological diversity, increasing the toxicity of our environment and our food, overfishing, extinction of species, desertification, radioactive contamination, shrinking water supplies, etc.), the question of how we will meet long-term human and environmental needs — generally defined as urban sustainability — becomes a fundamentally urban issue and, as a result, has risen to the top

of many urban planners', city officials', citizens', and civil and community organizations' agendas (Agyeman 2005; Foster 2002 ).

The simultaneous pursuit of the three components of sustainability — social equity, economic prosperity, and environmental health — is now a major consideration in city officials' and citizens' approaches to urban development. However, the marginalization of social equity within the Mayor's SBI, as well as many other local government sustainability initiatives, despite its having been proclaimed a main goal by a mayor with a well-known commitment to environmental and social equity issues, requires investigation as to the theoretical feasibility of meeting all three components of sustainability simultaneously (Agyeman 2005; Environmental Law Institute 1999; Foley 2004; Warner 2002). Is there theoretical or practical method to addressing social equity, environmental health, and economic prosperity in unison? What are the potential opportunities and tradeoffs in simultaneously addressing the three components? Some sustainability scholars argue that these three components are compatible in theory, but not in practice; some argue they are compatible in both theory and practice; and others argue that the opportunities and tradeoffs of pursuing all three components really depends on how sustainability is defined and conceptualized (Foley 2004).

In order to better understand the relationship between social equity and sustainability in the Mayor's SBI, I briefly review the conceptual background of sustainability including how the concept of sustainability has risen to prominence in policy-making circles around the world and become highly politicized. Despite the ideological similarities between the concepts of environmental justice and sustainability, there is divergence between the environmental justice and sustainability movements; therefore, I examine the historical relationship between the two movements to better understand social justice's role in sustainability as a concept and a movement.

Second, I discuss how the major theories of sustainability address the relationship among the three components of sustainability — social equity, environmental health, and economic prosperity. I first look at the predominant approach to sustainability —

ecological modernization and how proponents of ecological modernization define the three components of sustainability, conceptualize their relationship, and where they expect the change towards sustainability to come from. This is followed by a discussion of the views of three prominent sustainability scholars, each of whom addresses the role of social justice within the concept of sustainability: Paul Hawken, Herman Daly; and Julian Agyeman.

Third, I review the contributions of eco-feminism and eco-socialism to the thinking regarding the connection between sustainability and social justice. I believe a review of these theories and major theorists will help to illuminate the ways in which various members of the SBI TF conceptualized sustainability, justified their prioritization of the three components of sustainability, and ultimately, advocated for a particular approach to sustainability, which resulted in the SBI TF's Final Recommendations to the Eugene City Council. The reader should bear in mind, this discussion is focused on the political construction and contestation of sustainability and social justice in the Mayor's SBI, and how the ways in which sustainability has been conceptualized theoretically are directly linked to how sustainability is used politically.

### **Tracing the Conceptual Background of Sustainability**

A deep concern for achieving a balance between nature and urban development, as well as achieving equity in cities, has existed since the 1800s. Thoreau (1854) discussed the detrimental effects of urban expansion into nature in his writings at Walden Pond. Engels (1844) was writing about the awful social conditions of the working class in English industrial cities in the mid-1800s — including the spatial segregation between urban elites in the suburbs and the unhealthy and unsafe conditions of the working class in urban tenements. Even poets and great literary figures, such as D.H. Lawrence (1919) and Charles Dickens (1859), discussed the problems of industrial cities and people's struggle to survive in these places. In the early 1900s, several major urban scholars began discussing the environmental impacts of the industrial city and the relationship

between the development of human society and nature. Ebenezer Howard's (1902) writing on garden cities emphasized the importance of bringing nature into cities and is still influences urban planners today. The American scholar Lewis Mumford (1961) described the social malaise that occurred from overcrowding in early industrial cities, such as public health concerns related to sanitation, pollution, and a general lack of services.

In the mid-1900s, such authors as Jane Jacobs, Herman Daly, E.F. Schumacher, and Andre Gunder Frank severely questioned the path of traditional development, in cities and globally, and how it affected both people and the environment. In their own way, each of these authors pointed out that current development patterns were not improving living conditions for the majority of people, but were actually increasing inequality (Wheeler and Beatley 2004). These authors' identification of unsustainable development practices led to a broader awareness among planning and community development policy makers as to the social and environmental implications of current development practices. This awareness spurred efforts to establish a different development paradigm. Building on this momentum, UN Conferences and Commissions during the 1980s and 1990s also began to explore this idea of creating a new development paradigm that would give greater weight to social and environmental concerns, as opposed to economic concerns (Mebratu 1998; Wheeler and Beatley 2004).

The concept of sustainability, or sustainable (urban) development rose to prominence when the UN-sponsored World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) report, *Our Common Future* (1987) first recognized the concept of sustainability. This report is also known as the Brundtland Commission Report, named for its Chairwoman, Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland (Mebratu 1998; Ayres 1998). The report's use of sustainability connected economic, environmental and social challenges, and raised the importance of seeing these challenges on a global scale (i.e., the opportunities and challenges of one city or region is connected to the opportunities and challenges of another city or region) (Mebratu 1998:494). This

report produced the well-known definition of sustainability: “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs” (WCED 1987).

Shortly following the dissemination of the Brundtland Commission Report, the ideas of “sustainability” and “sustainable development” gained wide acceptance and their use increased greatly (Agyeman 2005; Mebratu 1998). It has been estimated that by 1994, just several years after the report was published, various organizations and groups had already created more than 80 different variations (or definitions) of the Brundtland Commission’s definition (Mebratu 1998:502). Also instrumental in the popularization of the concept was the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which was held in 1992. Mebratu (1998) identifies the preparation for this conference as crucial in connecting sustainability in the international, policy-making arena to specific, local communities around the world. Apparently, the outreach process was unprecedented in its scale and ability to engage a sustainability discussion at the local level (502). Of course, the UNCED also led to the production of several major UN documents, including the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21 — both of which deal with environmental and social development issues extensively (Mebratu 1998:502). The Rio Declaration, produced at the 1992 UNCED, was a declaration of 27 principles for sustainable development (United Nations 1992a). The principles ranged from eradication of poverty to the view that indigenous people, youth, and women have a vital role to play in achieving sustainable communities, to the idea that states have common but differentiated responsibilities to protect the ecosystem (United Nations 1992a). Agenda 21 was a resolution on sustainable development that was passed by 178 countries at the UNCED in 1992 (United Nations 1992b). Agenda 21 is a plan of action, or blueprint, for international, national and local institutions, governments and organizations that covers four main topics: social and environmental dimensions; conservation and management of resources for development; strengthening the role of major groups (this

includes women, NGOs, local authorities, etc.); and means for implementation (for example, technology transfer, financing mechanisms, etc.) (United Nations 1992b).

In the 20 years since sustainability's entrance into international environmental and development discourse, the concept has been used to drive or compel thousands of local, national and international initiatives (Agyeman 2005; Whitehead 2002). Yet, as Mebratu (1998) points out, despite the successful adoption of many sustainability initiatives, there is still a sense that our ability to address global environmental problems has been minimal and "this had led to an increasing level of frustration and disenchantment, even among the different groups promoting the concept of sustainable development" (494). This frustration helps to explain the attitude of some policy makers and scholars that sustainability is now a meaningless concept and that sustainability-focused initiatives are ineffectual in actually improving the social and environmental situation (Prugh, Costanza, and Daly 2000; Mebratu 1998).

Nevertheless, the idea of "sustainability" has maintained center stage in policy-making arenas at all levels of government for over 20 years. It is now at the core of thousands of local, national and international policies. As a result, there has been space and time for the discourse around the concept of sustainability to broaden; to take on a multitude of meanings; and, frankly, become highly politicized (Agyeman 2005; Daly 1996; Mebratu 1998; Prugh, Costanza, and Daly 2000). Therefore, the concept of sustainability is increasingly used to address a variety of social, economic and environmental issues; however, overall, there is little agreement as to what the definition of sustainability is, what is to be sustained and for whom.

Although the concept of sustainability has gained great prominence and is widely popular in international, national and regional policy circles, surprisingly, there is little theoretical coherence regarding sustainability (Daly 1996; Mebratu 1998; Prugh, Costanza, and Daly 2000). In fact, there is a surprisingly small body of extant theory around the concept. Instead, the discourse on sustainability has focused more on what sustainability is NOT; what sustainability means at a policy level, rather than on a

theoretical level; and the issues surrounding implementation of a sustainability policy. (Whitehead 2002). I think sustainability's lack of theoretical development can be attributed to two issues: (1) it has occupied policy circles, rather than academic arenas, from its inception; and (2) as a result of its inherently interdisciplinary nature, sustainability has not been naturally picked up and developed by any one academic discipline (Agyeman 2005).

Daly (1996) argues that the popularity of the idea of sustainability indicates that "although there is an emerging political consensus on the desirability of something called sustainable development, this term — touted by many and even institutionalized in some places — is still dangerously vague." In the same vein, others assert that sustainability is "elusive," "an oxymoron," and "cliché" (Mebratu 1998:503; Goldin and Winters 1995; Tryzna 1995; Holmberg 1994). While Daly (1989) praises the value of sustainability's vagueness as a "good political strategy" to gain consensus around the idea, later (in 1995), he said that its vagueness had actually created disagreement over the utility of the idea and it was no longer a uniting term (Daly 1995). I would argue that while the "loose use" of the concept of sustainability (applied to everything from corporate green washing to grassroots, to community sustainability efforts for better transport options, etc.) has caused contention regarding the term's meaning in academic and more progressive policy circles, among the general public sustainability is still very much a uniting term, evidenced by its widespread use. Mebratu (1998) observed that the result of sustainability's vagueness is: "acceptance of a largely undefined term as a basis sets the stage for a situation where whoever can pin his or her definition to the term automatically will win a large political battle for influence over the future" (503). In short, I would argue that more than anything, sustainability is a politically contested concept.

Redclift (2000) expanded on the obscurity of sustainability by closely teasing apart the Brundtland Commission's definition of sustainability: "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (60). He pointed out that there is widespread support for societies'

sustainably developing and little discussion of the complexities and contradictions underlying this idea (60). For example, Redclift identified the fact that “needs” look very different depending on the generation or culture one is speaking of. Another complicated concept in the Brundtland Commission definition is that of “development.” Does “needs” refer to one community’s need to help reduce the world’s carbon dioxide emissions to ensure a healthy place for future generations or another community’s need for better public transit to help young people get to school? How does development reflect changes in need or differences between social contexts? (Redclift 2000:60). Again, for poorer communities of the Global South, “sustainable development” may be set in a context of trying to meet basic needs, such as providing water, food and shelter, without damaging the environment. On the other hand, a Global North community may be more likely to address methods for curbing consumption, such as replacing residents’ use of personal vehicles with increased use of public transportation. If different cultures define sustainability differently, Redclift (2000) asks “how do we establish which course of action is *more* sustainable?” (60). Furthermore, there are numerous and contradictory approaches to sustainability, which Redclift explained is because there is “considerable confusion surrounding *what* is to be sustained” (60). Should we be sustaining soil fertility, biodiversity, natural capital, or any number of other natural and social cycles?

Perhaps the most important question is, how does one groups’ idea of sustainability affect another groups’ ability to meet its sustainability goals, or even just its basic needs? In other words, what level of quality of life or consumption are we trying to sustain and is it possible for all societies to sustain any given level without destroying natural ecosystems? For example, would strict CAFÉ standards in the United States reduce the environmental impact of automobiles enough to allow all other societies to use cars at the same rates as that of the U.S. population? Examples like this one highlight the fact that not only can sustainability be defined and implemented in a myriad of ways, depending on the context and culture defining it but, also, that sustainability is not just about improving the social, environmental and economic conditions of one geographic

area. In reality, the social, environmental and economic quality of any one place is very much connected to the social, economic, and environmental conditions of other places. Furthermore, some institutions and organizations define sustainability with a global awareness of social, environmental and economic health, realizing that one community's pursuit of a certain quality of life may limit another community's ability to meet even its most basic needs. Others focus solely on improving the social, environmental and economic conditions of their particular community with no interest in how their sustainability practices affect others.

Another main aspect of the confusion around sustainability relates to the concept of intergenerational equity. Currently, there are various moral perspectives on intergenerational equity and they all lack unanimity (Ayres 1998:128; Redclift 2000). For example, for some, a large part of intergenerational equity has to do with decreasing population growth because of the consumption issues it engenders but, for others, limiting population growth is antithetical to their religious belief system (Ayres 1998:128; Redclift 2000). On a practical level, the concept of intergenerational equity is problematic because future generations are not able to defend themselves (Ayres 1998:129). Future generations cannot defend themselves in court or vote in our political system; "[future generations] are not identifiable individuals with identifiable interests at stake. What rights they have are only granted voluntarily by us, the present generation. It is worthwhile to bear in mind that some human cultures give great weight to the interests of future generations. Others do not" (Ayres 1998:129). While it is obvious that various parts of the concept of sustainability are nebulous, intergenerational equity is particularly difficult to define because, as Ayres (1998) points out, it refers to a group that is not currently present to represent its interests.

Redclift's (2000) analysis of the World Commission on Environment and Development's definition of sustainability proves that although the definition was broad enough to gain extensive political support for a vague notion of a new type of development that emphasizes social and environmental concerns, it left many questions

unanswered. Whose needs are we sustaining? How is development defined? How do we determine if certain actions or visions for sustainability are more or less sustainable? Can all societies sustain the same quality of life? And, finally, how much weight do we give to the interests of future generations — those not yet here to represent themselves? In brief, there is little agreement as to the specifics of sustainability, in part because the concept is undertheorized and, as a result it has become a highly politicized concept. The political contest centers around who can lay claim, or define, sustainability in a way that best suits his or her own interests.

### **Environmental Justice and Sustainability: A Natural Nexus?**

Another informative aspect of the development of the concept of sustainability, as well as the sustainability movement, is its relationship to environmental justice. In fact, one cannot explore the relationship between social justice and sustainability without considering the relationship between sustainability and environmental justice, both as concepts and social movements, given their overlap on environmental and social justice issues. The environmental justice movement seeks to end the inequitable distribution of environmental “bads” and to link social justice and environmental issues (Cole and Foster 2001; Agyeman, Bullard, and Evans 2003; Stein 2004). Environmental justice organizations are typically led by low-income people and/or people of color (Agyeman 2005; Agyeman, Bullard, and Evans 2003). Environmental justice organizations work on a range of issues including race and the environment, civil rights and human rights, facility siting, land use planning, brownfields, transportation equity, suburban sprawl and smart growth, energy and climate justice (Agyeman, Bullard, and Evans 2003). Given that the concept of sustainability is based on linking social equity, environmental health, and economic prosperity, and environmental justice is based on linking social justice and environmental issues, it seems there is natural nexus between the two concepts. But, in reality, the relationship between environmental justice and sustainability has been rocky and fraught with ideological and other such problems (Agyeman 2005). While both of

the above concepts have become influential in the public policy and planning realms over the last two decades, they were conceived from very different backgrounds.

Even though the concept of sustainability is now very much a part of local-level policy and practice, it actually emerged from formal, top-down policy-making arenas, such as international processes and committees, think tanks, government structures, and international nongovernmental organization (NGO) networks (Agyeman 2005; Agyeman, Bullard, and Evans 2003). In contrast, the environmental justice movement was born of a “local, grassroots, or “bottom-up” community reaction to external threats related to the health of a community, which had been shown to disproportionately affect people of color and low-income neighborhoods” (Agyeman 2005:2; Agyeman, Bullard and Evans 2003). A defining characteristic of the environmental justice movement is that it expanded the concept of the “environment” to include the places where people live, work and play. In so doing, the environmental justice movement built an equity and social justice dimension into the idea of environmental stewardship. The environmental justice movement also challenged the environmental movement to expand its environmental concerns to include urban disinvestment, jobs, racism, neighborhoods as well as wilderness and natural resources.

The environmental justice movement is built upon the civil rights movement of the 1960s in the United States (Agyeman 2005; Bullard 1990; Agyeman, Bullard, and Evans 2003). In contrast, sustainability advocates mainly come from the traditional environmental movement and often hold professional occupations (Agyeman 2005). Sustainability advocates often use what Agyeman (2005) described as “deliberative and inclusionary processes and procedures” (DIPS) in order to avoid pluralistic decision making processes that can be dominated by powerful interests like large multinationals who have “disproportionate influence, economic muscle, and knowledge” (3). He explained:

The overall aim is to involve a broad cross-section of lay citizens in the development of shared values, consensus, and a vision of the common good...DIPS include visioning, study circles, collaboration, consensus building

and consensus conferencing, negotiation and conflict resolution, and citizen's jury" (2-3).

Mebratu (1998) critiques the sustainability movement for utilizing DIPS and other visioning processes too heavily. Mebratu (1998) argues that, in effect, visioning has become a fallback position for politicians, environmentalists, and others who cannot give practical advice on an issue, often because agreement was not reached on a specific definition, purpose or endpoint for their efforts. The visioning process has become a common path for sustainability efforts (517). Sustainability processes that do not lead to concrete action contribute to the frustration around sustainability's perceived (or real) inaction. Without downplaying the importance of a visioning process, Mebratu (1998) concludes that the emphasis on visioning and ethical processes really comes from a more fundamental need to have a more clear and concrete body of theory on sustainability and sustainable development.

As one might assume, based on the sustainability's movement use of DIPS and visioning, the sustainability movement has a proactive approach to determining the kind of communities it would like to create. The path that the concept of sustainability has taken, through formal policy-making arenas, has afforded it legitimacy and access to mainstream culture, but it has also sheltered it against addressing the concerns and desires of those who do not regularly participate in those policy circles, typically those who are less privileged (Agyeman 2005).

At the other end of the spectrum, the environmental justice movement tends to have a reactive approach to action: "Most but not all groups in the environmental justice movement are trapped in the traditional pluralistic decision-making processes, common in much environmental law, that make reaction the norm and proaction much more difficult" (Agyeman 2005:3). The differences in the conceptual history of sustainability and environmental justice helps to explain their different relationships with equity, the lack of unity between these two movements and, ultimately, it sheds light on the

marginalization of social equity within the concept of sustainability, as well as in sustainability initiatives.

### **What Are We Sustaining? And for Whom?**

Many theoretical schools have contributed to the conceptual development of sustainability, but there are two basic approaches to the concept and the way in which each component of sustainability is defined. There is the ecological modernization approach to sustainability, which stems from modernization theory and is characterized as weak sustainability, and there is the ‘strong’ approach to sustainability, which encompasses a number of theoretical schools’ approaches to sustainability including eco-feminism and eco-socialism (Redclift 2000). Weak and strong sustainability definitions expose the different relationships that can exist between the social, environmental and economic components of sustainability. Weak definitions, according to Redclift (2000), “require shifts in the level of resources allocated to problems, combined with the establishment of higher environmental ‘standards’” (70). Strong definitions attempt to arrive at fundamental policy choices, and aim for strong environmental protection, egalitarian social structures, bottom-up participation, a broad look at policy issues, and develop principles to guide policy. On the other hand, weak definitions focus on weak environmental protections, non-egalitarian social structures, top-down participation in decision making, narrow issue scope, and pragmatic delivery of policies (Redclift, 2000:70).

The most critical difference between the weak and strong approaches to sustainability is the way in which they define economic prosperity and, as a result, what role the economy will play in relation to social and environmental needs. Based upon the approach taken, other issues, such as how social justice is addressed, what type of role the government has in sustainability, and who are the main actors in the sustainability movement deciding what to sustain, are determined.

Ecological modernization, a theory that came out of the Free School in Germany in the 1980s, argues that the current economic system can be adapted to accommodate environmental concerns (York and Rosa 2003). A core concept of ecological modernization is achieving greater environmental productivity — the idea that energy and resource efficiency can be increased, which will lead to future economic growth and development, just as labor and capital productivity increase economic growth (York and Rosa 2003). Ecological modernization proponents argue that greater environmental productivity can be achieved through more efficient use of energy and natural resources, including improving production processes through sustainable supply chain management, using “clean” technologies (i.e., carbon capture and sequestration), and substituting the use of environmentally degrading materials with materials that do not harm the environment (Redclift and Woodgate 2005). The goal of ecological modernization is that through entrepreneurialism, new innovations in production processes will increase the “carrying capacity” of the environment (the number of humans the earth can support given their production and consumption patterns) so that current consumption and production patterns can mostly continue as usual. Ecological modernization’s approach to dealing with social issues is similar to its approach to environmental issues: social issues will also be resolved through greater entrepreneurialism and technological innovation. Inventions to address poverty, like high-yield seeds, are one such example (York and Rosa 2003; Redclift and Woodgate 2005).

Under ecological modernization theory, there are a couple of different interpretations of the role of the state in increasing environmental production. For some ecological modernization theorists, the state is expected to facilitate competition in the market and thus drive technological advancements. Under this interpretation, the state facilitates competition by minimizing its interference in business operations and offering incentives to businesses for meeting certain goals; regulation is seen as the main form of interference by the government (LeRoy 2005). Another interpretation is that the state does play a regulatory role and by so doing ensures that businesses account for their

environmental impact. In other words, in response to environmental regulation, businesses internalize their environmental costs (LeRoy 2005). An example of this is a carbon tax whereby businesses must pay a tax on every ton of CO<sub>2</sub> they emit.

Given that entrepreneurialism is expected to generate technological advancements that create more efficient use of energy and natural resources, businesses and business associations are identified as the main source of change under ecological modernization (LeRoy 2005; York and Rosa 2003). The World Business Council on Sustainable Development (WBCSD) is a good example of an organization that is addressing sustainable development and ascribes to the ecological modernization perspective. Some of the main goals of the WBCSD are to:

Participate in policy development to create the right framework conditions for businesses to make effective contribution to sustainable human progress; develop and promote the business case for sustainable development; and demonstrate the business contribution to sustainable development solutions and share leading edge practices among members (WBCSD 2010).

The underlying assumption of ecological modernization theory is that the growth paradigm should remain constant, although there is some disagreement about whether the current economic system requires a slight or significant change to accommodate environmental concerns. According to this approach, economic growth, currently measured by Gross Domestic Product (GDP), is unquestionable. There are several explanations for why economic growth and its supposed benefits — a trickle-down approach to addressing social and environmental concerns — are assumed. For example, Marx's critique of capitalism was based on the capitalist system's constant need to expand, consuming natural and human capital in the process (Foster 2002). Similarly, Ayres (1998) explained that the capitalist system will always grow because an increase in demand for goods and services creates demand for increased production and, because the production scale becomes larger, the products can be produced for less and less, further fueling demand for the new cheaper products (Ayres 1998).

On a more practical level, corporations often finance further expansion of their production by increasing their debt and repaying such debt through future profits. In fact, “the practice of financing growth by increasing debt is encouraged by government policies of taxing profits and treating interest payments on debt as untaxable costs” (Ayres, 1998:102). This practice means that a corporation’s survival is dependent upon future profits being larger than present ones. If borrowing against future profits is not available to a firm, it can encourage greater consumption through advertisements, by increasing its market share through mergers and takeovers, raiding pension funds, reducing employee wages and benefits, reducing or eliminating research and development, among other strategies (Ayres, 1998:102).

In essence, we have a situation where individuals, corporations and governments have come to assume and depend upon economic growth. Not only do governments implement programs to accommodate economic growth, they are just as dependent upon economic growth as the private sector (Ayres, 1998:102). Most Global North countries have made financial commitments to their citizens based on the continued growth of the economy (e.g., paying for social security and pensions). However, even if growth rates continued at their current levels, there is still a significant gap between expected revenues and the funds needed to meet entitlements. “In short, most Western governments are functionally, if not legally bankrupt. Of course, this crisis makes growth even more necessary as the growth engine slows down” (Ayres, 1998:104). The discourse regarding creation of a green economy with green jobs taking place at the national level in the United States is no exception either. The predominant discourse in the United States around the relationship between the environment and the economy — ecological modernization ideas put forth by traditional business interests — contends that economic growth leads to improved social and environmental conditions, particularly through job growth (LeRoy 2005; York and Rosa 2003). In other words, it is proposed that we can keep our economy healthy (i.e., growing) and protect our environment through more sustainable development, which includes creating jobs in sectors that contribute to

reducing energy consumption (insulating homes, etc.) and expanding our renewable energy sector (solar panels, wind turbines, etc.) (LeRoy 2005). Yet, in reality, the growth of “green jobs” or “sustainable businesses” is rarely pegged to specific environmental or social goals. For example, President Obama has stated his support for the growth of a green economy and green jobs, yet his proposals for reducing emissions at the last United Nations Climate Conference were far below the levels required by science.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, many U.S. labor unions have expressed their support for growing the U.S. green economy and creating green jobs but, at the same time, have strongly discouraged the U.S. House and Senate from passing climate legislation that would set emissions targets with the levels demanded by science. In short, economic growth — a central feature of ecological modernization theory, which is the predominant approach in the world to reducing environmental impact — is, to a great extent, an assumed aspect of our current economic system, and is often tied to reducing environmental impact and social inequality by choosing to address these issues through entrepreneurialism, technological advancements, and job creation.

### **“Strong” Sustainability**

Several major sustainability scholars have sharply criticized ecological modernization for not protecting the environment or improving social conditions. These scholars propose an alternative approach to achieving sustainability. Hawken, Daly and Agyeman are three of the most prominent thinkers on sustainability, each proposing his own strategies for achieving both social and environmental sustainability. Several schools of thought also contribute to the conceptualization of sustainability including eco-feminism and eco-socialism. Before reviewing these major perspectives on sustainability, I outline the major criticisms of ecological modernization — criticisms that are largely shared by those adhering to the “strong” tradition of sustainability.

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<sup>13</sup> Obama proposed a 17% reduction on 2005 levels by 2030 (equivalent to a 4% decrease on 1990 levels). Science demands a 40% reduction (for developed nations) on 1990 levels by 2030 (Obama 2009).

### **Criticisms of Ecological Modernization**

The main criticism of the ecological modernization approach is that sustainable growth is not possible (Foster 2002; Foster 2000). Modernization proponents argue that growth is inherently unsustainable because it relies on the consumption of human and natural capital, which comes at great cost to the majority of people and the environment (Foster 2002; Foster 2000). Moreover, ecological modernization relies on businesses to self-regulate themselves to achieve less environmental and social degradation (Foster 2000; Foster 2002; York and Rosa 2003). Proponents of ecological modernization often purport that many advanced technologies to reduce human society's impact on the environment have already been developed and are available, but the state has not adopted regulations to compel their use; these technologies lay dormant because businesses do not choose to use them (Foster 2002; York and Rosa 2003). For example, great gains have been made within the last few decades on vehicle energy and fuel efficiency, yet these technologies have not been used in the United States to create more efficient vehicles; instead, they have been used to produce less efficient but more powerful vehicles. In other words, the products or manufacturing processes that are most environmentally sensitive are often not the ones chosen by corporations that are self-regulating.

Speth (2008) in his most recent book, *The Bridge at the Edge of the World*, tackles the issue of pricing the environment into the economy head on. On this front, he has two main conclusions that I greatly simplify here. In relation to the environment being priced into the economy, Speth (2008) expects environmental pricing will alter our current socio-political system by pricing certain activities out of reach and opening up space for other more environmentally-sensitive processes. He also expects that appropriate technological advancement will result from including environmental degradation in the cost of producing certain goods and services. He also contends that market tools are only one of several ways to protect the environment; other methods should be used in conjunction with environmental pricing. Speth (2008) made an excellent case for increased government intervention as a means for pricing the

environment and, thereby, protecting the environment. In short, Speth (2008) argued that government intervention, in the form of regulation on activities that harm the environment and degrade social conditions, is imperative for altering current patterns of production and consumption in order to become more ecologically sensitive.

In addition, the ecological modernization approach does not address injustices produced by the capitalist system such as unemployment, lack of health benefits, or environmental racism (i.e., low-income people bear a disproportionate burden of environmental damage such as polluted air and water, and lack access to important environmental benefits such as “complete streets” that give equal access to all modes of mobility including biking and walking, parks, and open space) (Bullard 1994; Foster 2000; Foster 2002; Harvey 1996). Despite the harsh criticisms of ecological modernization, it still occupies a prominent place in the sustainability policy discourse.

### **Redefining Economic Prosperity**

Similar to proponents of ecological modernization, Paul Hawken, author of *The Ecology of Commerce* (1993), also argued that businesses can play a lead role in transforming to a sustainable economy. However, Hawken (2001) called on businesses to be much more directly responsive to the needs of society and the environment: “corporations, because they are the dominant institutions on the planet, must squarely face the social and environmental problems that afflict humankind” (392–393). In his essay “A Declaration of Sustainability” (2001), Hawken (2001) spotlighted stellar socially responsible companies, such as Ben and Jerry’s ice cream. Ben and Jerry’s “puts ice cream shops in Harlem, pay[s] outstanding benefits, keep[s] a compensation ratio of seven to one between the top of the organization to the bottom, seek[s] out vendors from disadvantaged groups, and donate[s] generous scoops of their profits to others” and still Ben and Jerry’s was one of the market leaders in their category (392).

Unlike ecological modernization theorists, however, Hawken’s argument began with an acknowledgement of the fact that capitalism, unfettered, will over-consume

resources, degrade the environment, and deteriorate social conditions for the majority of people (2001). Accordingly, Hawken (2001) also placed his theory for change within the larger context of social change — “as hard as we may strive to create sustainability on a company level, we cannot fully succeed until the institutions surrounding commerce are redesigned” (394). Hawken (2001) went on to say that the notion of a socially and environmentally responsible company that will also be able to grow economically is impossible; instead, this notion simply provides a false rationale for “companies to produce, advertise, expand, grow, capitalize, and use up resources” (394).

Hawken (2001) proposed a system of sustainable commerce that would significantly restructure the current system. Among numerous important changes outlined in his “A Declaration for Sustainability” (2001), he pointed out that citizens need to take back the charters of corporations because corporations are supposed to be under the control of citizens. Accountability, citizen involvement, and learning are fundamental components of corporations’ operation and if corporations do not meet citizens’ needs and desires, they should be disbanded, sold to other companies, and employees employed by the new owners. Hawken (2001) also called for prices to be adjusted to reflect cost— “every purchase must reflect or at least approximate its actual cost, not only the direct cost of production but also the costs to the air, water, and soil; the cost to future generations; the cost to worker health; the cost of waste, pollution, and toxicity” (395–396). Another important aspect of Hawken’s (2001) strategy for sustainability involved drastically reforming the current tax system: the current system incentivizes what we don’t want — waste and overconsumption, disincentivizes what we do want — jobs, creativity, real income and payrolls, and ignores harmful activities — pollution and degradation of the environment (396). Other objectives in Hawken’s (2001) system included high-quality employment for all people, a drastic reduction in energy and natural resource consumption, and a “self-actuating as opposed to regulated, controlled, mandated, or moralistic” system (394).

Like Hawken, Daly (1973) has also contributed significantly to the thinking on how to build a sustainable economy, one that better reflect the needs and desires of people and the environment. Daly (1973), along with scholars like E.F. Schumacher and Boulding, built on John Stuart Mill's (1848) discussion of a steady-state economy (Daly, 1973). In the 1970s, Daly argued that an economy based on endless economic growth was impossible. Instead, he called for a steady-state economy based on qualitative growth rather than quantitative growth. For most societies, economic prosperity is only measured by Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and private consumption but, as Daly (1973) pointed out, there is little evidence that economic growth is positively correlated to social and environmental well-being. A more critical look at economic growth reveals that welfare is not inherently connected to economic growth and, in fact, greater economic growth may actually reduce the well-being of the environment and people. In *Turning Point*, Ayres (1998) concisely pointed out the relationship between economic growth and well-being:

The primary muddle is a confusion of economic growth (i.e., more money and the things money can buy) with increasing welfare (i.e., greater utility or a better way of life). What is a better way of life is, of course, mainly a matter of personal values. But the question is, do we as a society need to have, produce and trade more goods in order to live better? (104).

Without overcomplicating the situation, suffice it is to say that welfare essentially equates to happiness — whether a person or society is well depends upon whether they are happy. Therefore, the next logical question is: does a person's or society's happiness depends upon economic growth? Overwhelmingly, surveys conducted in many countries have not shown any correlation between happiness and wealth and income (Ayres 1998: 104; McKibben 2007). For example, low income groups are not significantly less happy than average income groups and wealthy groups are not significantly happier than average income groups. Some studies have found:

[A] slight correlation between happiness and wealth when countries are compared....However, the observed correlation between national wealth and perceived happiness is probably mostly due to the fact that wealthy countries are

more likely than poor ones to practice democracy, protect civil rights, secure public health, and increase literacy. These attributes tend to increase people's control over their own lives. They also tend to promote optimism. Though I do not want to stress the point unduly, this chain of linkages implies that governments have much more to contribute to welfare than merely providing an arena in which laissez-faire capitalism may thrive (Ayres 1998:105).

In 1989, in response to the inadequacy of using GDP to measure social and environmental health, Daly collaborated with Cobb to develop an alternative to GDP, called the Index for Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW). The ISEW reflects a broader range of social and environmental well-being indicators (Daly and Cobb 1989; Daly 1996; Redclift 2000). The ISEW measures human and environmental well-being through distributional inequality, costs of pollution, depletion of non-renewable resources, the value of household services, public expenditures on health and education, and net capital growth (Daly and Cobb 1989). In other words, economic prosperity or wealth is defined much more broadly than it is through Gross Domestic Product. Daly's and Cobb's (1989) argument was that it is only by attaching weight to social and environmental well-being in our measures of how our economy is serving society that we can begin to truly focus on meeting social and environmental needs without subjugation to the needs of the economy.

### **A Paradigm for Socially Just Sustainability**

Agyeman (2005) developed the "Just Sustainability Paradigm" in direct response to what he saw as the need to solidify social justice's place within what he calls the "environmental sustainability" discourse. Agyeman (2005) described the Just Sustainability Paradigm as a bridge between the Environmental Justice Paradigm: "a framework for integrating class, race, gender, environment, and social justice concerns," and the New Environmental Paradigm (Catton and Dunlap (1978)), which focused on environmental stewardship and a sustainability agenda and guides the majority of environmental and sustainability-focused organizations in the United States (Agyeman 2005:3). According to Agyeman (2005), the main deficiency of the New Environmental

Paradigm is its neglect of equity or justice issues. Agyeman (2005) developed the Just Sustainability Paradigm in an effort to demonstrate that “an area of theoretical, conceptual, and practical compatibility” exists between environmental justice and sustainability (3).

Agyeman’s (2005) definition of “just sustainability” was built on the more common WCED definition: “the need to ensure a better quality of life for all, now and in the future, in a just and equitable manner, whilst living within the limits of supporting ecosystems” (5). Agyeman’s (2005) definition emphasized the central role equity and justice should play within the sustainability discourse, and highlighted how the environmental sustainability movement has neglected the interconnectedness of justice and environmental conservation. In *The Death of Environmentalism*, Shellenberger and Nordhaus (2004) clearly demonstrated the interconnectedness of environmentalism and social justice:

Why, for instance, is a human-made phenomenon like global warming—which may kill hundreds of millions of human beings over the next century—considered “environmental”? Why are poverty and war not considered environmental problems while global warming is? What are the implications of framing global warming as an environmental problem—and handing off the responsibility for dealing with it to “environmentalists”? (12).

Furthermore, Torras and Boyce’s (1998) global research showed that nations with a strong commitment to social equity and less social inequality also have a greater commitment to environmental quality. In the United States, Morello-Frosch (1997) did a study of California counties and found that there were higher levels of hazardous pollutants in counties with high levels of class, race and income segregation.

Agyeman (2005) argued that the Just Sustainability Paradigm is an emerging discourse in the field of sustainability, but one that needs to be widely accepted if sustainability is going to have a more transformative potential:

Our present green or environmental orientation of sustainability is basically about tweaking our existing policies. Transformative or just sustainability implies a paradigm shift that requires sustainability to take on a redistributive function. To

do this justice and equity must move center stage in sustainability discourses, if we are to have any chance of a more sustainable future (6).

In his own research, Agyeman (2005) found only a handful of environmental justice organizations in the United States that are intermittently conducting their work in alignment with the Just Sustainability Paradigm, and he found that local governments — which were identified under the UNCED, Local Agenda 21 (United Nations 1992) to carry out urban sustainability efforts — were not making as much progress towards including equity in sustainability efforts as non-governmental organizations (Agyeman 2005). Agyeman's (2005) claims were backed by other's research on equity and sustainability: Warner (2002) studied sustainability efforts in the largest U.S. cities and found environmental justice was rarely mentioned in relation to sustainability. The Environmental Law Institute's (1999) review of the Environmental Protection Agency's 1996 Sustainable Development Challenge Grant Program found that of 579 applications submitted, fewer than 5% included equity as a goal.

From a theoretical perspective, as mentioned earlier, Agyeman (2005) viewed the Just Sustainability Paradigm as a bridge between the Environmental Justice Paradigm and the New Environmental Paradigm because the two movements differ significantly in terms of demographics, discourses, and movement-building practices (Agyeman 2005). There are a few reasons for these distinctions. First, the two movements have very “different approaches, tactical repertoires, and languages/vocabularies” due to their different backgrounds (Agyeman 2005:79). As I said before, the Environmental Justice movement reacts to external threats through grassroots, popular, community or bottom-up structures. Conversely, the sustainability movement, based in the New Environmental Paradigm, proactively advances a sustainability agenda through a more exclusive, top-down approach, utilizing “expert international processes and committees, governmental structures, think tanks, and international NGO networks” (Agyeman 2005:80).

There is a long history of mistrust between the environmental justice movement and the mainstream environmental movement (from which the sustainability movement

in the United States emerged) due to the mainstream environmental movements' exclusive focus on natural resource preservation, rather than how environmental threats affect certain social groups more than others. In addition, the mainstream environmental organizations themselves tend to be far removed from community concerns, focusing more on national legislative issues.

The composition of the environmental justice and mainstream environmental organizations are different in terms of their racial, social location, and demographic composition. The big "beltway" environmental organizations tend to lack representation by people of color and low-income people on their boards of directors and staff, and have a high proportion of people with college or postgraduate degrees (Agyeman 2005). In contrast, the composition of environmental justice organizations' boards, staff and membership is often diverse in terms of race, gender and educational attainment (Agyeman 2005; Taylor 2000).

Participants in environmental justice and other social justice movements are often reluctant to participate in sustainability efforts because they perceive the work of the sustainability movement as pertaining to exclusively white, middle to upper class issues (Agyeman 2005). Interestingly, even when environmental justice and sustainability advocates are working on the same issues, they often use different discourses to describe and advance their efforts. The environmental justice movement, using lessons from the civil rights movement, has "(re)framed the discourse of traditional or reform environmentalism" with a more inclusive coding; "the framing of environmental justice has thus created a very accessible communitarian discourse that those in disproportionately affected groups can identify with, mobilize around, and, more important, act upon" (Agyeman 2005). On the other hand, the sustainability movement's use of academic language and framing is less accessible to people with less experience working in formal policy-making arenas or with less education (Agyeman 2005).

In response to the main differences between the Environmental Justice and New Environmental paradigms, Agyeman (2005) identified four main elements of Just

Sustainability. These areas of theoretical compatibility between the paradigms are: quality of life; present and future generations; justice and equity; and living within ecosystem limits (79). Like Daly and Cobb (1998), Agyeman (2005) also argued that wealth and well-being need to be measured by some other standard than Gross Domestic Product. Agyeman (2005) has supported both the ISEW and the Genuine Progress Indicator, which uses a multitude of measures to evaluate people's experience of the economy, including personal consumption data, unpaid work (such as volunteer work), and negative activities (such as underemployment and environmental degradation) (Agyeman 2005).

The second element of the Just Sustainability Paradigm is "present and future generations." On this point, Agyeman (2005) built on Haughton's (1999) identification of five equity principles that need to be included in the development of sustainable communities: "intergenerational equity (the future principle), intragenerational equity (social equity or social justice); geographical equity (or trans-boundary responsibility); procedural equity (open and fair treatment); and interspecies equity" (Agyeman 2005; Haughton 1999).

The third principle of the Just Sustainability Paradigm is justice and equity. As stated earlier, this point simply refers to the need to make equity and justice center stage in sustainability efforts. This commitment includes procedural justice (around decision making) as well as distributive and substantive justice regarding people's basic needs and desires — affordable housing, healthy neighborhoods, good jobs, etc. (Agyeman 2005).

The final component of the Just Sustainability Paradigm requires us to live within ecosystem limits. This component highlights the importance of our lifestyle choices being made in the context of environmental limits. And although this point refers to environmental limits, there is still an important equity dimension to it for Agyeman. Agyeman (2005) introduced the concept of "sufficiency" to this discussion:

This is the equity-based sustainability message that less can be more. It will be of increasing importance in the coming years, especially in the [Global] North, as we begin to develop demand-management policies in order to limit our resource

consumption by those amounts suggested by McLaren et al.'s (1998) environmental space calculations, so that [Global] Southern countries can consume their fair share of environmental space—commensurate with improving their standard of living—and, thereby, their quality of life. *Sufficiency* complements but also contrasts with the environmentalist-based sustainability concept that runs through the heart of the European environmental modernization agenda: *efficiency*, or doing more with less.

### **Other Theoretical Contributions to Sustainability and Social Justice**

In addition to the direct contributions of Hawken, Daly and Agyeman to the conceptualization of sustainability and social justice, two other main ideologies contribute to the thinking around sustainability and social justice — radical feminism or eco-feminism, and Marxism or eco-socialism.

Eco-feminism's contribution to sustainability began in the 1970s when French feminist writer, Francoise d'Eaubonne (1974), argued that the same social hierarchy, created by patriarchy and capitalism, that leads to the domination and oppression of women, leads to the degradation of the environment (Mebratu 1998). Shiva and Mies have also contributed significantly to the eco-feminist literature by arguing that if an activity is not considered an export or is not contributing to GDP, then it is not considered valuable to society. Examples of such activities are work that women often perform (work within the home, work within the informal sector, etc.) or activities that harm or rehabilitate nature (deforestation and forest conservation) (Mies and Shiva 1993; Shiva 1998). Like Hawken, Daly, and Agyeman, Mies and Shiva called for a redefining of what economic activities contribute positively and/or negatively to society (1993). Taking it a step further than did Hawken, Daly, and Agyeman, Mies and Shiva pointed out that counting only those activities that contribute to GDP disproportionately devalues the work of women, which more often than not does not involve an exchange of money (Mies and Shiva 1998).

There are several different schools of thought within eco-feminism, including feminist environmentalism, ecofeminism and feminist political-ecology (Visvanathan, Duggan, Nisonoff, and Wiegiersma 1997). However, feminist political-ecology has

addressed the issues of justice and equity within sustainability more than any other group (Rochelau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari 1996). In short, feminist political ecology has argued that gender, along with class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and orientation, is a determinative factor in enabling access and control of natural resources as well as in a community's decision-making process on sustainable development (Rochelau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari 1996).

According to eco-feminism, creating a system to measure wealth that will adequately recognizes women's and nature's contribution to society's activities is integral to sustainable development. Valuing the work traditionally done by women, as well as other activities that do not rely on a financial exchange, is also important to women being central actors in the decisions to define and pursue sustainability (Rochelau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari 1996). In terms of eco-feminism's contribution to sustainability today, without doubt, it has been instrumental in formulating what is generally known as a "strong" definition of sustainability; a definition that calls for systemic change of the current social, political and economic system. From this perspective, a healthy environment will be achieved only when the social system is restructured to be more egalitarian and, from this, an economy is created that does not exploit the environment and/or certain social groups.

Also integral to the conceptualization of sustainability and social justice, and "strong" definitions of sustainability," is eco-socialism or Marxist ecology. From the eco-socialist perspective, sustainable development has been defined by the dominant interests in society as increasing, or at least keeping constant, growth of Gross Domestic Product or consumption per capita; in other words, an ecological modernization approach to sustainability (Foster 2000; Foster 2002; O'Connor 2001). Marxist ecologists, such as Foster, concede that under ecological modernization small tweaks to the capitalist system may be made, such as internalizing environmental costs, but the underlying emphasis remains on maintaining current levels of economic growth (Foster 2002). In contrast, eco-socialists' underscore the conflict between economic growth and social and

environmental well-being, or sustainable communities (Foster 2002; Beneria 1997; O'Connor 2001).

Capitalist economies are geared first and foremost to the growth of profits, and hence to economic growth at virtually any cost—including the exploitation and misery of the vast majority of the world's population. This rush to grow generally means rapid absorption of energy and materials and the dumping of more and more wastes into the environment—hence widening environmental degradation (Foster 2002:10).

Because capitalism is based on private ownership and control of the means of production, social decisions are based on private interests, not social or public interests. This means that if private and social or public interests conflict, then social/public interests related to people's and the environment's well-being are neglected, or even harmed (Beneria 1997; O'Connor 2001).

Rather than completely abandoning the idea of economic development, Foster (2002) explained that communities around the world must ask themselves, “what kind of development do we need and want?” and “how do we want to develop?” Foster went on to describe what he called an “ecological form of social development”:

It must have as its first priority people, particularly poor people, rather than profits or production, and must stress the importance of meeting basic needs and ensuring long term security. Above all, we must recognize the old truth, long understood by both romantic and socialist critics of capitalism, that increasing production does not by itself eliminate poverty (81).

The solution for achieving sustainability, according to eco-socialism, is centered around a change in our mode of production: a shift from private to public, more democratic ownership of the means of production so that the needs of producers are fulfilled; and a reorientation of production so that it meets human and environmental needs rather than meeting the bottom line (profit) (Clark 2001; Foster 2002; Mebratu 1998; O'Connor 2001).

Production can be said to be nonalienating only if it promotes the welfare of every individual as the way of promoting the welfare of all, and only if it fulfills the human need for a sustainable, and in that sense nonexploitative, relation to nature (Foster 2002:40).

Given that the capitalist system not only degrades living conditions for the majority of the world's people but, also, degrades the environment, eco-socialists advocate for environmental, urban, labor, peasant and other social movements joining together to demand environmental justice through democratic ownership of the means of production (Foster 2002).

### **Conclusion**

At the inception of sustainability, the UN Brundtland Commission purposely defined sustainability loosely in order to gain wide political support for the concept. The widespread use of the term confirms that this was a good political strategy; indeed, it has gained broad political support. Moreover, the concept encapsulates a vision for the future that broadly addresses the major problems of our era — vast social inequality and environmental degradation. As a result of its popularity and vague conceptualization, I would argue that sustainability is one of the most politically contested terms in use in the United States today. The contestation around sustainability has been further catapulted into the limelight with the 2008 election of President Obama. His election, along with his campaign focus on a green economy and green jobs, in combination with the rising strength of the environmental movement, has created a convergence around the idea of addressing social and environmental issues simultaneously — in short, sustainability.

The political clash/contest over sustainability has practical repercussions for how it is conceived and implemented in policies and programs such as the Eugene SBI. But, more importantly, this political contest over the meaning of sustainability gets at deeper tensions between the meaning of economic prosperity and its compatibility with environmental and social sustainability. Above, I explored the ideas of different sustainability theorists. The predominant approach to sustainability — ecological modernization — relies on economic prosperity as economic growth to meet social and environmental needs. Yet other sustainability theorists, such as Hawken, Daly, and Agyeman, saw a fundamental contradiction between the current capitalist, political-

economic system with its focus on economic growth, and social and environmental imperatives. These theorists explained that economic growth comes at the expense of the environment and well-being of the majority of the population. Thus, when economic health, defined as ever-increasing economic growth, is the paramount concern of sustainability programs, social and environmental sustainability is undermined.

This chapter has attempted to show that sustainability is a highly contested political term and that the conflation of economic health and economic growth is the result of a deliberate political strategy by corporate power brokers to maintain political support for the current political-economic system. And it is within this highly politicized context that sustainability initiatives and programs, such as the Eugene SBI, are embedded.

The underlying dimension of these discussions on development and meeting social and environmental needs is economics. On the economic dimension of sustainability, the main question to be answered is: “are existing concepts of economic development compatible with the notion of finite environmental resources and reducing existing inequality?” It is on this point that the various conceptualizations of sustainability significantly diverge. As a result, the prescribed actions that flow from these conceptions also differ, and thus, the pursuit of social equity, environmental health, and economic prosperity through sustainability initiatives, such as the Mayor’s SBI, gets very murky.

### CHAPTER III

## SUSTAINABILITY AS AN “URBAN FIX”: THE POLITICS OF THE MAYOR’S SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS INITIATIVE

*“All environmental-ecological arguments...are arguments about society, and therefore, complex refractions of all sorts of struggles being waged in other realms” (Harvey 1996:372).*

*“The 20<sup>th</sup> century has been ‘the’ century of urbanization...The future of the most of humanity now lies, for the first time in history, fundamentally in urbanizing areas. The qualities of urban living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will define the qualities of civilization itself” (Harvey 1996:403).*

### **Introduction**

The combination of ambiguity regarding the meaning of “sustainability” and the desire to define this highly popularized term for one’s own purposes has created a political struggle between various interest groups as to how it will be defined and branded. This chapter examines the subtler, yet more determinative interactions between the Sustainable Business Initiative Task Force (SBI TF) members around social equity. The sixteen-member SBI TF, comprised of individuals from the environmental, business, and social justice communities, with guidance from Mayor Piercy and SBI coordinator Bob Doppelt, was the main body controlling the direction and development of the SBI.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, this chapter examines the political struggle that occurred within the TF as to how sustainability should be defined and pursued. Who were the main actors and interest groups involved in the SBI? What were their visions, goals and strategies for social

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<sup>14</sup> See Table 1 for list of SBI TF members.

equity and sustainability? The discussion of these questions provides insight into the main challenges that city officials and citizens face in attempting to balance the social, environmental and economic components of sustainability and, ultimately, in implementing sustainability programs and policies.

Eugene Mayor Kitty Piercy created the SBI TF in April of 2005. Piercy launched the SBI because she wanted to address some of Eugene's most pressing social and environmental problems and, at the same time, build relations with the business community in order to shed her image as an anti-business Mayor and develop an economic development strategy that strived to meet a triple bottom line: people, profits, and planet, rather than just profit (SBI TF 2006a). This sixteen-member group, comprised of seven individuals from the business community, two labor leaders, two environmental leaders, one educational leader, and four individuals representing different local nonprofit agencies from Eugene, was charged with supporting and proposing "deliberate and thoughtful steps to strengthen the local economy in a manner that fits the community and can make Eugene one of the nation's most sustainable mid-size communities by 2020" (SBI TF 2006a:8). The TF members from the business community were mostly small and medium-size business owners in the food, landscaping and forest, advertising, construction, and real estate sectors. The TF members from the nonprofit sector worked for organizations that addressed educational needs for immigrants, housing and vocational needs for low-income families, economic development issues for businesses, and civic and social issues for native youth. At the first meeting of the SBI TF, the Mayor charged the TF with several objectives. Related to social equity, these included determining how to "identify ways in which social equity measures such as good wages, adequate health care, affordable housing, and other actions can be incorporated into sustainable business retention, expansion, recruitment, and cluster development" (SBI TF 2005b). At the same meeting, the Mayor expanded on her intent to address the triple bottom line. She stated that she believed the Eugene "community could have a strong economy and take care of its workforce" (SBI TF

2005b). The SBI TF spent one year formulating the initiative. This process involved assistance from the University of Oregon Resource Innovations program roundtable discussions with 50 community leaders, and a 50-member Technical Advisory Committee (SBI TF 2006a). At the end of this period, the SBI TF produced a report that outlined the recommendations for SBI content and implementation (See Table 2, above).

The SBI recommendations were categorized into three different sections: recommendations for the Eugene City Government; the private sector and nonprofits; and other local government and educational institutions. Eleven recommendations were made for the Eugene City Government, seven for the private and nonprofit sectors, and four for other local governments and educational institutions (SBI TF 2006a).

Since the SBI was initiated by the Eugene Mayor, as opposed to being citizen- or private sector- initiated, many of the recommendations are aimed at the Eugene City Government. The SBI Task Force also mentioned in the 2006 report that it consciously chose to make “incentive-based” recommendations, rather than “regulatory” recommendations in order to encourage positive cooperation among the various participants. This decision will be explored below in detail in conjunction with an examination of the goals of the SBI, however, it is mentioned here in order to contextualize the TF recommendations.

One of the main recommendations made to City Government was its establishment of an Office of Sustainability, as well as a Sustainability Board or Commission. Both the Commission and the Office of Sustainability were subsequently established by the Eugene City Council in 2007. Several of the other recommendations to City Government addressed governmental support for sustainable businesses through the city’s purchasing choices, following a “triple bottom line” approach for all policies and actions, and developing a system for measuring sustainability. The final recommendation to city government involved educating city staff and partners about sustainability.

For the private and nonprofit sectors, the Task Force's recommendations centered on assisting local businesses and nonprofits to obtain information, tools, and financing for implementing sustainable practices. It also recommended that business and organizational networks be created among those pursuing sustainability in an effort to support each other. Last, it suggested using public campaigns to "grow the local market for sustainable products and services" (SBI TF 2006a:6). Recommendations for other local governments and educational institutions involved coordination between local governments and educational institutions to educate the public on sustainability. The TF proposed the creation of consortiums charged with overseeing the move toward carbon neutrality and zero waste to landfills by 2020.

Social equity recommendations, however, presented a more complex challenge for the SBI TF. The Report (2006a), explained that although social equity is one of three major components of sustainability, it was the most difficult to address:

The Task Force found it much easier to identify mechanisms to promote the economic and environmental aspects of the Triple Bottom Line than the social equity components...In the end the Task Force determined that it had just scratched the surface on social equity issues...The SBI Task Force encourages Eugene City Government and the community at large to pursue additional actions to address social equity issues (SBI TF 2006a:9).

TF members had identified several potential ways to include social equity in the SBI. The possibilities primarily revolved around educating community and business members on the benefits of paying employees at or above living wages, providing health care and retirement benefits, flexible work schedules, opportunities for career advancement, and supporting workers' rights. Yet the only social equity-related recommendation adopted in the Final Report was a vague call to "establish a private-public task force to continue the dialogue on how to incorporate social equity issues into sustainable business and job development" (SBI TF 2006a:12).

This final recommendation on social equity — to create a private-public task force to study it further — was made despite the SBI's social equity sub-committee (within the TF) issuing very specific recommendations for including social equity within the SBI.

The sub-committee was comprised of four members of the TF: Lynn Feekin, Labor Education and Research Center (LERC); Claire Syrett, Eugene Springfield Solidarity Network; Deborah Noble, West Wind Forest Products; and Lisa Arkin, Oregon Toxics Alliance. In order to reinforce the importance of addressing the social side of sustainability within the SBI, two members of the social equity sub-committee, Lynn Feekin and Claire Syrett, together with Bob Bussel from LERC, undertook a separate study on community members' attitudes and expectations for social equity and sustainable business development. This report, entitled *The Social Equity Factor: Community attitudes, expectations, and priorities for Eugene's sustainable business development* (Bussel, Feekin, and Syrett 2006), did not have the intended impact upon the SBI TF.

The social equity sub-committee presented its final document to the SBI TF. The report explained the importance of social equity to sustainability and included six indicators for assessing workplace social sustainability and five indicators for assessing community social sustainability. The sub-committee defined social sustainability as follows:

Social equity is important as a component of sustainable practices because it encompasses the human aspects of the "triple bottom line". This cluster of indicators focuses on the consideration of worker and community interests that need to be protected and enhanced, as part of an overall program for sustainable business practice. Social sustainability is connected to how we choose to treat other human beings in our communities – the workers and other businesses we deal with and the community as a whole – in order to maximize individual and community well-being (Bussel, Feekin, and Syrett 2006).

The workplace indicators revolved around wages, benefits, participation/communication, fair treatment, safety and health, and opportunities for career advancement. The indicators for community social sustainability were community health, education and training, affordable housing, corporate social responsibility, and transportation. (See Tables 3 and 4 for a more detailed explanation of these indicators.) The study on social equity and sustainable business development, which included conducting focus group interviews with union and non-union workers, reinforced the

importance of the social equity indicators advanced by the SBI TF social equity sub-committee. Analysis of the interviews revealed that having health benefits, flexible work schedules, a living wage, and opportunities for career advancement were the most important social equity indicators in the workplace. Having work that was satisfying and socially valued, full-time work rather than part-time employment, adequate retirement benefits, and a guarantee of non-discrimination, equal opportunity, and respect for diversity were also important social equity issues for those interviewed. However, even with the specificity of social equity indicators proposed by the TF sub-committee as reinforced by the study on social equity and sustainable business, the TF merely recommended that the issue be studied further.

One SBI TF member representing the business community, who agreed with the poor response given to social equity, stated “My honest opinion is I think that was just sort of throwing them a bone and to the best of my knowledge that’s the last time I ever heard of [social equity]” (Ransom 2008). This same TF member often reminded other TF members that decisions needed to be made as to whether to provide a small number of high-quality jobs (good wages, health benefits, etc.) or to provide a larger number of low-quality jobs (low wages, no health benefits, etc.). While this TF member’s opinion of social equity’s place in the SBI was not shared by all TF members, it highlights the tension that existed within the SBI TF and points to the reason for the TF’s inability to offer any meaningful social equity recommendations. Initially, several factors seemed to indicate that the SBI was on a path to successfully engage social equity: the Mayor was well known for her commitment to social issues and the SBI was the *Mayor’s* SBI; the Mayor pushed the use of the triple bottom line approach to sustainability, which equitably highlighted the social, environmental and economic aspects of sustainability; and the Mayor selected experienced and well-connected individuals from the social justice and labor communities to serve on the TF. Given this foundation for the SBI, why did the TF struggle and eventually fail to make any reasonable social equity recommendations?

Certainly the political-economic context from which the SBI emerged is an important component for understanding why the TF was unable to address social equity. The business community's aversion to regulation, and specifically taxation, the city government's decreasing tax base and loss of federal funding, the city government's retreat from social spending at the same time that social inequality among residents was increasing, and a call for the city government to be both more entrepreneurial and monitor social and environmental concerns, set the stage and created the landscape for the SBI TF's political struggle over social equity and sustainability. The following chapter will discuss the role of these political-economic factors in influencing the direction and actions of the Mayor, the TF, and others. These factors paint only half the picture of social equity and the SBI. The other half involved how the Mayor, city officials, the TF, and others chose use the SBI as a means to address local, national and international political-economic forces. For example, the TF social equity sub-committee made incentive-based, rather than regulatory-based, recommendations for social equity because it recognized the traditional business community's deeply entrenched aversion to regulation. Moreover, each SBI TF member had very specific and nuanced interests in the SBI. Some examples are that the Mayor wanted to build a working relationship with the traditional business community; the traditional business community was interested in monitoring and shaping economic development policy, of which the SBI was a part; and the social justice advocates were attempting to sculpt economic development policy to include the concerns of workers and their communities. A closer look at the SBI TF members, and the interest groups to which they were connected, shows how each interpreted the purpose and goals of the SBI, how these interpretations affected each member's ability to influence the final recommendations and, ultimately, how a city, recognized for its sustainability efforts, led by a social justice-oriented Mayor committed to a triple bottom line, and including strong social equity representatives, could almost completely neglect social equity in its final recommendations. Could these diverse interests have been negotiated in a way that balanced social, environmental and economic

concerns, or were their visions and goals for social equity and sustainability incompatible? The answer to this question affords insight into a much larger debate—how to integrate an economic development agenda with social and environmental goals.

The lessons drawn from the SBI TF can inform sustainability advocates on the ingredients that Eugene lacked in its process to embrace social, environmental and economic sustainability. The lessons learned from Eugene's experience can be used to improve the pursuit of socially just sustainability in other cities; this is especially useful as other studies have found that many cities struggle to implement sustainable development agendas that retain social equity dimensions (Agyman, Bullard, and Evans 2005; Gibbs 1997). Most cities implement a sustainable development agenda that relies on a weak definition of sustainability, in which market forces and technological advancements are expected to improve social and environmental conditions, and no specific or realistic social and environmental goals are set. Identifying the challenges to and opportunities for implementation of sustainability programs that contain strong social equity and environmental dimensions is important because the number of cities and institutions developing and implementing sustainability programs continues to grow (Agyman, Bullard and Evans 2005).

I identify four major facets of the SBI TF's struggle over sustainability and social equity. These facets are based on my in-depth interviews conducted with the Mayor, SBI TF and Technical Advisory Committee members, and primary data analysis of SBI TF documents. They broadly include: (1) the Mayor's intentions and goals for the SBI, or what I call the Mayor's political strategy for the SBI; (2) the impact of the composition of the SBI TF and other SBI participants upon how social equity was dealt with; (3) the relationship of each TF member to social equity and; (4) how public involvement in the SBI affected its outcomes. All four components played a major role in shaping the political struggle that took place over defining, measuring and implementing the social equity component of sustainability.

### **Sustainable Business Development to the Rescue: The Political Strategy of the Mayor's SBI**

The Mayor first began considering an SBI-like initiative in 2004 during her mayoral campaign. Her opponent in the mayoral primary, Nancy Nathanson, a library program manager and long-time Chamber of Commerce member, had the backing of the majority of the business community (Pittman 2004). The amount Nathanson and Piercy spent on their election campaigns far outspent any previous Eugene mayoral races. Piercy spent over \$142,000 in the primary, while Nathanson spent over \$93,000 (Russo 2004) After Piercy defeated Nathanson in the primary with a majority, Piercy was elected to Mayor through ratification. Four years later, in the next election cycle, Mayor Piercy was challenged by former mayor Jim Torrey. Torrey, a Republican and Chamber of Commerce-backed candidate, had served as mayor of Eugene from 1996 to 2004 (The Register-Guard 2008). The amount of money spent on this election more than doubled from the previous election (Pittman 2008). Because neither Piercy or Torrey gained a majority vote in the primary, they had to have a run-off election in November. As a result, their election campaigns lasted longer than most and Torrey reported raising \$528,000 and Piercy \$395,000. Prior to Torrey's first mayoral election victory in the late 1990s, mayoral races often cost less than \$50,000 (Pittman 2008). Such increases in the cost of elections often require candidates to access large pools of money from businesses, special interests and wealthy individuals, which often opens channels of influence into politics for these donors (Logan and Molotch 1987; MacLeod 2002; Portney, et al. 2009).

In her race against Nathanson, Piercy reported 553 donations of \$50 or less for a total of \$22,000. In contrast, the total of Nathanson's small contributions only totaled \$1,400, while the majority of her support came from real estate speculators and developers, construction companies, local land and timber barons, and the Chamber of Commerce.<sup>15</sup> Also in contrast to Piercy's mainly local financial support, one-fourth of

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<sup>15</sup> The Chamber of Commerce Political Action Committee (PAC) raised \$40,000 for the election campaigns of Nathanson and other business-friendly people running for City, including the re-election of Scott Meisner (Pittman 2004).

Nathanson's campaign funding came from companies and individuals outside of Eugene. (Pittman 2004). The larger and more powerful businesses in Eugene (construction, building, logging, and sand and gravel extraction) were supporters of Torrey and Nathanson. Their sizable donations to the Nathanson and Torrey campaigns demonstrate that businesses and their associations (such as the Chamber of Commerce) are keenly aware of the importance of gaining political influence at the local level. City government has the unique ability to significantly affect the business climate in which a business operates (Bassett 1996; Cox and Mair 1988; Logan and Molotch 1987). In this sense, campaign contributions and the ballooning of the amount spent on city-level elections reflects what Logan and Molotch (1987) term the "urban growth machine." Given Kitty Piercy's lack of financial and, therefore, political support from the mainstream business community, she hoped that as mayor, she could forge better business relations (The Register-Guard 2004). In particular, Piercy hoped to develop relations with members of the business community who were concerned with improving the environment and benefiting the local community. Gaining greater support from the business community by demonstrating her concern for creating a healthy economy was a strategic decision that Mayor Piercy recognized could be integral to moving her main campaign agenda items through the Council as well as with her re-election to Mayor for the next term.

This strategic decision by Mayor Piercy coincided with the increased city-level political-organizing capacity of business organizations and associations over the past couple of decades (Cox and Mair 1988). Business' desire and ability to exert political influence over city politics is reflected in how much is spent on city political races today, even in a small city such as Eugene. Candidates and their business association supporters feel it is very important to gain political influence at the local level because they recognize that city government has the ability to significantly affect the business climate in which they operate (Bassett 1996; Cox and Mair 1988; Logan and Molotch 1987; Dean 2009). Reporter Alan Pittman highlighted the stake of local businesses in the 2004 mayoral and City Council elections in Eugene as follows:

A city council vote can lead to tens of millions of dollars in freeway construction money to local contractors and sand and gravel companies. A new road, rezoning, or growth boundary extension can dramatically increase the value of the land, giving a huge windfall to speculators. Taxes can be lowered for businesses or millions of dollars of tax breaks and other subsidies given (2004).

Indeed, during his time as Eugene City Councilor in 1996, Jim Torrey was very supportive of Hynix, a semiconductor manufacturing company, locating in Eugene and receiving millions in tax breaks through its inclusion in a state enterprise zone. Similarly, in his second term as mayor, Torrey supported the controversial construction of a highway to be built through the protected wetlands of West Eugene.

In her 2004 mayoral campaign, Kitty Piercy attempted to differentiate herself from her opponent, Nancy Nathanson. She did this by highlighting and criticizing the support Nathanson received from the business community and conservative then Mayor Torrey. However, in the process of challenging Nathanson's funding from the business community, and by promoting herself as a mayor who would be not only concerned with economic issues but also with social and environmental issues, Piercy felt she divorced herself from the business community, the Chamber of Commerce, and other business associations (Piercy 2008b). Some of Piercy's main campaign issues that were perceived as not being business-friendly included enhancing alternative transportation options in Eugene, repairing existing roads instead of building new ones, limiting big box store development, increasing funding for the homeless and for the public libraries, progressive tax reform, and a public financing system for electoral campaigns (Pittman 2008b). As a result, she was effectively cut her off from a very powerful interest group in Eugene — the traditional business community. Not only did Piercy fear she would lose the election without at least some support from the business community, she also knew that if elected, without any business support, her time as Mayor could be very difficult. Accordingly, she worried that she would be unable to implement any of her campaign promises (noted above) without support from at least three "business-backed" city councilors (Piercy 2008b). However, such support was not forthcoming. Almost immediately after Piercy

was elected as mayor in 2004, the Chamber of Commerce and other business associations began strategizing around who they would have run against Piercy in the next election (Dunlap 2008; Piercy 2008b).

Piercy attempted to differentiate herself from Nathanson and typical business interest candidates by putting forth an agenda that balanced environmental, social equity, and economic issues. In a city and state that had perpetually struggled with high unemployment and other major social issues, such as homelessness, unaffordable housing, underemployment, a large percentage of uninsured residents, and more, she knew that she would have to have sound economic principles to bolster her credibility. Accordingly, she ran on an alternative economic development platform, which she called a sustainable business/green economy platform. This platform included the social and environmental issues mentioned above as well as the SBI. The SBI was the centerpiece of her plan to build a sustainable economy, and it was coupled with a focus on promoting a clean energy economy, energy efficiency in residential and commercial buildings, green building standards, and downtown revitalization. In her 2008 campaign, she added to this list the goal of making Eugene a model for best practices on sustainability, to include a “Sustainable Eugene” website that would provide local businesses, nonprofits, and the larger community with information on sustainability (Piercy 2008a).

In contrast, Nathanson and Torrey both expressed their primary interest as creating a pro-business climate in Eugene. As mentioned before, in Torrey’s last four years as Mayor, he actively pursued a pro-development agenda, which included building the West Eugene Parkway through the wetlands of West Eugene. Torrey and other proponents of the West Eugene Parkway argued the new highway would help alleviate traffic problems in West Eugene. It is no coincidence that many of the same companies that would benefit from the highway construction — sand and gravel, construction companies, real estate developers, and more — heavily supported Torrey in his election campaigns. Torrey created a citizen’s Committee on Economic Development that aimed to “simplify land use rules,” assist businesses with navigating the City’s bureaucracy for

permits and information, and created an enterprise zone in West Eugene “where qualified companies could get tax breaks in exchange for creating jobs” (Register-Guard 2004:D3). Nathanson expressed interest in following these business-friendly recommendations during her election campaign for Mayor (Russo 2004:C1). In addition to the contention with respect to expanding economic development opportunities (tax breaks) for businesses and building the West Eugene Parkway, Torrey and Nathanson, unlike Piercy, also supported expanding the urban growth boundary, a limit beyond which certain types of development are prohibited. The urban growth boundary issue exposed deep fractures that existed within the city between pro-growth and anti-growth groups. Such development projects stem from what Logan and Molotch (1987) call the “urban growth machine.” The urban growth machine refers to an organized lobby of business interests found in most U.S. cities that are locally dependent upon increased urban growth and development (Logan and Molotch 1987; Jonas and Wilson 1999). The urban growth machine is comprised of businesses and elite individuals who benefit from new urban growth and development, such as road and building contractors, real estate investors and agents, resource extraction industries, and various other businesses that benefit from increased consumption. Such an urban machine was clear in relation to the West Eugene Parkway lobby, as well as in the proposed expansion of the urban growth boundary. Piercy, due to her lack of support from the urban growth machine lobby, lacked support from some of the wealthiest and most well-connected businesses in Eugene. Those businesses with which she had good relations tended to be small businesses with an interest in producing organic, natural products, whose owners were more politically aligned with the left, and also who were not well-aligned with the Eugene Chamber of Commerce (Piercy 2008b). These businesses, therefore, lent less credibility to Mayor Piercy than would have an alliance with the business community at large.

Mayor Piercy won the election against Nancy Nathanson in 2004 with just 51.56% of the vote (Nathanson lost with 45.69%). Such a margin of victory hardly evidenced a mandate from the citizens of Eugene (Lane County 2004). It is within this

political context that Piercy introduced the Mayor's SBI. Mayor Piercy had laid out the prototype of her SBI proposal in her 2004 election campaign Economic Plan, and her narrow victory only made it clearer to her that she needed to find some way to work with the business community (Piercy, McLauchlan and Teninty 2004). In her interview with me (2008), she said that during her campaign she had worked with several individuals on her campaign in messaging to the business community. These same individuals encouraged her to implement something akin to the SBI once she became mayor. Later, these people became members and leaders of the SBI TF, namely David Funk (co-chair of the SBI TF) and Bob Doppelt (coordinator of the SBI). Four years later, when Mayor Piercy ran for reelection against former Mayor Jim Torrey, she won the primary with an even smaller margin — she had 48.8% of the vote against Torrey's 47.42%; Piercy won the November 2008 election against Torrey with 51% of the vote, Torrey received 48% of the vote (Lane County 2008). Again, she did not have the mandate to go it alone and continued to reach out to the business community through the SBI and other business-oriented plans for building a sustainable Eugene economy (Piercy 2008a).

Mayor Piercy's decision to pursue the SBI was predicated on five issues, and was connected to her overall desire to win reelection in 2008 and advance her political agenda during her first term as Mayor. Briefly, these issues were: (1) establishing links to the business community; (2) forging a relationship between the business, environmental, and social justice communities and between the business community and the City Government; (3) expanding her own political image beyond that of an individual myopically interested in social service and social justice issues; (4) riding Oregon's tide of national recognition as an emerging leader in sustainability; and (5) her desire to have the SBI institutionalize sustainability within the City Government (in the form of a city department or citizens commission on sustainability) (SBI TF 2006a; Register-Guard 2004; Dunlap 2008; Krall 2008; Piercy 2004, 2008b, 2010). Mayor Piercy commenced work on these goals after she was elected in 2004, working closely with advisors whom

she had selected to help promote and set up the SBI TF and the Technical Advisory Committee.

Mayor Piercy wanted to develop better connections with the business community not only to increase her chances of being re-elected, but also to more fully address other social and environmental issues such as homelessness and climate change.<sup>16</sup> Piercy was aware that such issues could not be addressed in isolation apart from Eugene's ailing economy. Yet, while the Mayor alluded to her belief that drastic action was needed to mitigate Eugene's current environmental and social problems, she was very aware of the political and economic context in which she was operating and, accordingly, felt that taking incremental steps was the best route. For these reasons, she sought to work with the business community to address the environmental and social issues affecting Eugene and its residents. From this framework, the SBI and an alternative economic development agenda were born. Her hope was that a business *and* environmental initiative could achieve many of her overlapping goals.

In order to forge a relationship with the business community, the Mayor was personally invested and directly involved in developing the SBI:

In my case I wasn't a member of the TF so I could have just said go do that, but I felt so much like I needed to show my commitment to what they were doing that I tried to be there at almost all the meetings because I felt that was sort of a necessary push for me, and especially since in the beginning when I first brought it up I was too new as Mayor (Piercy 2008b).

Based on the 2004 election campaign, Mayor Piercy was aware of the divisions between the business and environmental communities in Eugene. As a political candidate who was touted as being supported by many environmentalists in Eugene, she assumed that many members of the business community automatically viewed her with suspicion. The *Register-Guard* editorial board, which endorsed Nathanson, quite accurately described Piercy and Nathanson's campaign positions as follows:

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<sup>16</sup> In her first few years as mayor, Piercy joined the Mayor's Climate Challenge, signed a resolution, *Mayors for Peace*, in response to the Iraq War, and made the commitment to Eugene's officially becoming a Human Rights City (Piercy 2010).

Both Nathanson, 52, and Piercy, 61, are struggling against the fierce gravitational pull of strong constituencies that want the campaign to divide neatly along ideological lines. Piercy, seen by the city's liberal-progressive voters as their standard bearer, knows she must reach beyond that base to win a citywide race. Likewise, Nathanson hopes to convince voters she is an environmentally-conscious moderate who won't rubber stamp the Chamber of Commerce's agenda (2004).

Piercy was endorsed by the Oregon League of Conservation Voters, and the Oregon Natural Resources Council Political Action PAC (Pittman 2008c). Piercy had been involved for decades in Oregon politics, including a stint in the Oregon legislature, making her acutely aware of how Eugene politics have been stymied by this dynamic of polarization:

And for me, I would say I too would like to have us be the most sustainable community. I would also like people to be able to see that you don't have to make enemies of the environment and business and I would like these people to see that these don't have to be conservative-liberal divisions, that there are places for us all to move forward together (Piercy 2008b).

Piercy felt strongly that Eugene needed to find a way to move beyond divisive politics and set an agenda that allowed the business community, the environment, and the people living in Eugene to thrive — and sustainability was the key.

When I was running for office, even my close associations, very pro-environment folks would say, whatever you do don't talk about sustainability. That's a killer. You won't win the election if you do that...And some people still say that. But I found when I knocked on doors that people were really ready for that discussion. They really wanted Eugene to live up to its reputation and move in the direction that we are already moving in. We just needed to bring the full triple bottom line into the conversation...Then [my advisors] helped to write our economic plan which incorporated this notion of having a sustainable business initiative. The reason we chose it, is sustainability is huge, huge, huge so we could have chosen any number of things but we decided that if we wanted the conversation to be about how in the triple bottom line it is about people, planet and profits all together we had to be part of trying to move that discussion (Piercy 2008b).

Sustainability indeed became a tool for rallying multiple sectors of society. In some ways, it was a politically expedient tool that could be used when most advantageous. For example, when the Mayor was speaking with the business

community, sustainability was marketed as a way for businesses to save money on energy and other resources costs. In this way, the Mayor was able to demonstrate that she cared for Eugene's businesses and the economic struggles they faced. Furthermore, she was able to use sustainability in a way that demonstrated she was trying to build environmental awareness into Eugene's economic system. And, since sustainability was already being proposed worldwide as a framework to address urban areas' complex social, environmental and economic problems, Piercy knew she could draw on the public's growing familiarity and comfort with the concept in order to aid her in obtaining support for the SBI (Whitehead 2003; Krall 2008; Nichols 2008; Piercy 2008b; City of Eugene 2005).

The SBI was instrumental in Mayor Piercy achieving her second goal of forging a relationship between the City and the business community. Because the City is the entity that ultimately implements or enforces regulations and incentives for business and the environment, it is often positioned at the center of conflicts between the environmental and business communities. Moreover, the City Government has what Cox and Mair (1988) call "twin local dependence" — an electoral dependence whereby the government must respond to popular democratic and populist movements and an economic dependence whereby it must respond to local business groups to protect its local tax base (315). However, most of the business community views City Government and its staff with suspicion and sees them as playing an unaccommodating or even obstructionist role vis-à-vis businesses; for example, one of most common complaints from the business community during the SBI process was that the City Government created standards for businesses but did not assist in their meeting the standards (City of Eugene 2005). In this respect, the Mayor wanted the SBI to demonstrate that the City was assisting rather than hindering the business community.

The Mayor's third goal, to make inroads into the business community, was embarked upon by her attempting to shed her image as a Mayor concerned only with environmental and social issues:

Well, you know I'd been in the legislature for six years as a State Representative and I had always taken on more the human rights, human services kind of issues, children and families, all of those kinds of things so I'm probably more the social equity piece of the sustainability thing. I, of course, realized that what I needed to do was convince the community that I understood about a good business bottom line as well, so that just made sense for me in that respect... But in terms of my background, I've always been a strong environmentalist and a strong social service advocate, probably not as strong on the having to make money kind of end (Piercy 2008b).

This image of the Mayor was coupled with the 2001 economic slump that had led to a high degree of unemployment, underemployment, contingent work, and low pay, among other issues, in Eugene and Oregon at large (Oregon Center for Public Policy 2006, 2007). As a result, no matter how much Mayor Piercy wanted to focus on remedying the City's social and environmental problems, she realized that the economic woes of the City were of equal import. This need for a balanced approach to environmental, social and economic issues is echoed nationwide. Such an approach, in fact, has led to the now widespread, international discussion of "green jobs" and green jobs policy (Cox and Mair 1988; Logan and Molotch 1987; Dean 2009). The prevalence of the current neoliberal economic development paradigm, which seeks to spur business development as the primary means for addressing social and environmental problems, ensures the domination of neoliberal economic development policy over all other concerns. Some would argue that it is neoliberal economic development policy, as part and parcel of the capitalist economic system, that is causing the social and environmental problems we are currently facing (Foster 2002; Daly 1996; Harvey 2005; Logan and Molotch 1987; Ayres 1998; Evans 2002; Bullard 2005). To significantly address these issues requires a different economic system, rather than a balanced approach to an inherently unsustainable economic system. This issue will be discussed further in the next section in conjunction with the examination of the implications of the Mayor's goals for the SBI.

Piercy's fourth goal was to harness the power of the "sustainability movement" (which is more of an idea than a coalesced movement) to make Eugene one of the most

sustainable cities in the country.<sup>17</sup> Piercy wanted to build on this momentum to address Eugene's problems. She wanted Eugene to be at the forefront of marketing itself as a mecca for sustainable businesses. Other Oregon cities, such as Portland, were already marketing themselves as good places for sustainable businesses and, by 2004, Mayor Piercy had tapped into a nationwide discussion on green jobs:

And I would say that this has all gotten kind of mixed together between climate change and sustainability discussions. They're all kind of woven in together right now. So when I went to the Climate Summit in Seattle and heard Clinton and Gore, and everybody talk I was kind of excited by the green jobs concept because to me that meant that these big guys were finally getting the fact that you can provide, like, solar jobs and do the good environmental work and provide good jobs for people. That's what we should be trying to do (Piercy 2008b).

Such an ideal is quite difficult to implement, as the business community is often highly opposed to regulations, such as mandatory payment of living or prevailing wages, which would ensure that any jobs created are good jobs. The business-oriented SBI TF members expressed their opposition to wage regulations, despite the evidence that successful programs to stimulate the clean energy economy while providing good, green jobs, such as Germany's massive home weatherization program, required government regulation of environmental harm (in Germany's case, carbon emissions) and government investment in or financing of the program.

Piercy's interest in building a sustainable Eugene economy also stemmed from statewide momentum to use sustainability as "an important component of Oregon's economic development efforts" (Oregon Business Association 2010). The idea was that Oregon could put itself in a "good position to take advantage of shifting national policies related to renewable energy and to become a leader in innovative initiatives that address

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<sup>17</sup> In 2000, Governor Kulongoski issued a Sustainability Executive Order that called on the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department to "develop a range of resources to support organizations adopting sustainable practices. These resources may include training and educational opportunities, electronically available information and case studies, and other services of great value to businesses, communities, and other organizations." There are also numerous sustainability organizations in Oregon, including the GreenLane Sustainable Business Network, and the Sustainable Advantage (formerly called the Sustainable Business Symposium) in Eugene (Oregon Department of Administrative Services 2009).

climate change and other critical issues” (Oregon Business Association 2010). Mayor Piercy saw this as a window of opportunity for Eugene to take advantage of and develop an economy that balanced environmental, social and economic interests. The desire for businesses to locate themselves in a city that has an environmental awareness was reinforced by a SBI TF member specializing in Eugene’s economic development, who explained that many businesses that looked to locate to Eugene did so in part because of its perceived environmental awareness and the sheer number of businesses in Eugene that already practice some form of sustainability (Ransom 2008).

The Mayor’s fifth and final goal was to use the SBI to create a structure within the City Government that would ensure the City’s ongoing engagement with sustainability. In her interview with me, she pointed out that this might be the most important thing the SBI TF could do because it would ensure that the City kept working on issues of sustainability beyond her tenure as mayor. It would create an avenue for citizens and the government to continue working on sustainability issues. This was especially important to the Mayor because she knew that the SBI’s accomplishments would be limited by its time frame – 18 months – and its funding – \$5,000 (Piercy 2008b). In the end, the SBI TF recommended to the City Council that it establish an Office of Sustainability (as a City department) and a Sustainability Commission. Both recommendations were approved by the City Council (City of Eugene City Council 2007; City of Eugene Sustainable Eugene 2010).<sup>18</sup>

The fact that the SBI was a central component of the Mayor’s political strategy greatly impacted the ways in which social equity was addressed through the SBI. The Mayor’s need to develop relationships with the business community led to the development of the SBI in the first place, but subsequently led to a shifting of the process and methods for organizing the SBI. It influenced the goals she envisioned for the SBI, which in turn affected the selection of those with whom she worked in proposing and developing the SBI formulation process. In short, because it was the Mayor’s SBI, her

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<sup>18</sup> The Sustainability Commission is run by citizens and was created March 2007 by Ordinance No. 20379 (City of Eugene Sustainable Eugene 2010).

varied interests and goals for the SBI shaped its foundation and its results. Yet her attempt to balance the interests of the various interest groups in Eugene had positive consequences beyond the SBI. In Mayor Piercy's reelection campaign, her opponent, Jim Torrey, discussed environmental sustainability issues in his platform as well, evidencing a clear shift in the acceptability of sustainability (Oregon Secretary of State 2008). Of this, Mayor Piercy said:

At first [Torrey] was kind of like they were all treating it like, oh, that's the fluffy stuff she does. Then they realized that it had legs and they wanted to try to own it (Piercy 2008b).

### **Implications of the Mayor's Political Goals on the Formation of the SBI Task Force**

The Mayor's five main political goals for the SBI drove the formation of the SBI itself and had significant implications for how the SBI ultimately dealt with social equity issues, such as wage requirements and greater respect for unionization efforts.

Her first political goal, creating inroads into the business community, had perhaps the broadest impact on the SBI process. First, if she was going to make inroads into the business community with the SBI, she needed members of the business community not only involved but leading the SBI. As a result, the TF was chaired by two members of the business community, one of whom was well connected to the Eugene Chamber of Commerce; the majority of the members of the SBI Task Force and Technical Advisory Committee were from the business community. The co-chairs were instrumental in setting the agenda for meetings and producing materials for the SBI.

**Table 3.** SBI TF members, staff and professional affiliations.

<b>SBI Task Force Members</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Lisa Arkin	Oregon Toxics Alliance
Josh Bruce	Rainbow Valley Design and Construction, Inc.
Julie Daniel	BRING Recycling
Roger Ebbage	Lane Community College
Lynn Feekin	Labor Education and Research center, University of Oregon
Dave Funk	Funk/Levis & Associates, Inc. (Co-chair of TF)
Kartar Khalsa	Golden Temple
Terry McDonald	St. Vincent Depaul Society of Lane County
Mark Miksis	Arlie and Company
Deborah Noble	West Wind Forest Products
Scott Pope	Sustainable Wealth Management
Rusty Rexus	Rexus Company (Co-chair of TF)
Jack Roberts	Lane Metro Partnership
Randy Ross	Honoring Our Native and Ethnic Youth (HONEY); Landscaping
Claire Syrett	Eugene-Springfield Solidarity Network/Jobs with Justice
Claudia Villegas	Downtown Languages

<b>SBI Task Force Staff</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Bob Doppelt	Director of Resource Innovations (TF Coordinator)

(SBI TF 2006a).

Due to the apparent control by traditional business interests over the SBI, contrary issues related to social equity, such as wage requirements, were extremely difficult to address. The main social equity issue proposed to the SBI TF, implementing a living wage ordinance, was marginalized by the business community SBI TF representatives throughout the SBI process (Ransom 2008; Dunlap 2008; Nichols 2008; Bell 2008; Fenton 2008).

Mayor Piercy's second goal, to forge a relationship between the business, environmental and social justice communities, as well as between the business community and the City, ended up resulting in perhaps the majority of the tension on the SBI TF. In order to fulfill this second goal, the Mayor needed to make sure that all communities were represented on the TF and the Technical Advisory Committee. She ensured that prominent members of the business, environmental, social justice and labor communities were represented. By attempting to bridge these distinct communities, the TF brought together individuals with very different ideas about the SBI. The representatives from the social justice community focused on wages and the right to unionize, key issues for the social justice community, but highly controversial in most business circles. In short, the social justice representatives' pursuit of their own version of sustainability was problematic for the representatives of the business community, the primary community with which the Mayor was attempting to forge relations.

The Mayor's third goal for the SBI, to expand her image from that of the "social justice-environment Mayor," to the "Mayor for all of Eugene," pushed her to pursue results that were beneficial to the business community. Such results could not be regulatory, as that would have cemented her political place as anti-business. Instead, the results had to focus on incentives and encouragement for sustainable business practices. Yet, the attempt to balance several conflicting interests will often leave all parties feeling short-changed. Despite her encouragement of a business-friendly SBI, according to two representatives from the business community, her efforts fell short of placating their concerns (Ransom 2008; Nichols 2008).

Piercy's fourth goal was to build on the existing momentum of sustainability locally, statewide and nationally. This goal provided a foundation and legitimacy for the SBI, however its direct impact was minimal. The momentum and energy springing from sustainability can be somewhat infectious, and it no doubt encouraged the Mayor to press forward with the process, providing hope throughout the fractious process. There was a certain degree of danger in the Mayor's investment in the SBI process. Given the wrong

balance of participants, the SBI could have been commandeered by any one interest group, further undermining her already fragile mandate to run the City. Furthermore, a failed SBI would have provided ample fodder for a victory by an opposing candidate during her then upcoming mayoral reelection campaign. So, it was in part the hope of maintaining and enhancing Eugene's position as one of the most sustainable cities in the nation that motivated the Mayor to pursue and continue her quest to create a successful SBI.

The Mayor's fifth goal, to create a permanent sustainability department or citizen's commission within 18 months of convening the SBI process, led to two primary results. The first stemmed from the fact that all SBI TF members were volunteers, most held full-time jobs, and most volunteered in the community outside of the SBI. The 18-month time frame for a group of volunteers was exceedingly ambitious, if not unrealistic. The decision-making structure for the TF was consensus-based. Given the 18-month time frame, the TF was forced to preclude discussion of highly contentious issues that could not be resolved quickly and to focus instead on those issues that would tend to garner unanimous support. This process led to a situation in which the TF only dealt with issues that represented the group's lowest common denominator, which ultimately benefited the business community. Referring to this, one TF member commented:

But since we were trying to operate on a more or less consensus basis and keep everybody on board there really wasn't any way to keep the business people there if you tried to have these very strict rules. So that [social equity] did get subordinated in fact, if not in our verbiage. We all, I think, at the end of it recognized we had not really done that piece the justice that some would have liked us to (Ransom 2008).

Based on this comment, it would appear that the representatives from the business community felt they held some degree of power over the process that other groups lacked, and the short lifespan of the SBI only made this power more evident: they had to move forward with consensus and could not do so without business on board.

The second implication of the Mayor's desire to establish some sort of permanent sustainability entity within the City by the end of the 18 months was that it provided an

“out” for the SBI TF with respect to difficult issues. If the TF could not deal with certain contentious issues, namely social equity, in their 18-month tenure, they could proffer the excuse that these issues could be dealt with by the Office of Sustainability or the Sustainability Commission, after the SBI TF’s time expired. When I interviewed one of the co-chairs, who was sincerely upset by the TF’s neglect of social equity in the SBI, he pointed out several times that the TF had an informal agreement to make sure that social equity “received its day” in the Commission or the Office of Sustainability (Nichols 2008). In short, the combination of a time crunch and the expectation that the City’s sustainability work would continue through another entity provided the TF with a safety valve concerning their neglect of social equity issues.

Economic development initiatives focused around sustainability can speak to a multitude of groups and address several issues simultaneously. This is the beauty and the danger of a sustainable economic development agenda. In other words, sustainability has enormous political malleability. The use of sustainability to meet multiple goals is not unique to Mayor Piercy or Eugene’s politics, yet examining how it has been used in the case of the Mayor’s SBI provides detailed insight into the roots of the conflict over sustainability. Having addressed the political context from which the SBI emerged and the Mayor’s goals for the SBI, the discussion will now turn to the second main component of the SBI’s micro-political context: how the composition of the SBI TF isolated and undermined social equity.

### **The Players: Members of the SBI TF and Other SBI Participants**

There were several different groups involved in the early stages of forming the SBI. A few individuals who later became SBI TF members and the Mayor’s advisors helped to spark the original idea for the SBI and then to define its purpose and goals so that the Mayor could begin the process of raising awareness and soliciting TF members. The City Council approved the individual members of the TF and allocated \$5,000 to develop the SBI. It was also the City Council who approved the TF’s final

recommendations and created the Sustainability Commission and the Office of Sustainability. The Mayor scheduled several roundtable meetings and online forums to gather input from the general public. The TF organized meetings with environmental and business groups to ensure that their particular interests were heard. Over the course of 18 months, the SBI TF attended every SBI meeting, and ultimately defined, developed and led the implementation of the SBI. This sixteen-member volunteer group, led by two co-chairs from the business community, was composed of three sub-committees that mirrored the triple bottom line: social, environmental, and economic. The SBI was staffed by a few people, selected by the Mayor, who exerted a great amount of influence over the process. The main person staffing the SBI, also known as the Coordinator of the SBI, was Bob Doppelt, the Director of the University of Oregon Resource Innovations program. He was assisted by a few University of Oregon graduate students (Resource Innovations 2010).

### **The SBI Coordinator's Emphasis on Two Legs of the Sustainability Stool: Economy and Environment**

Bob Doppelt, the coordinator of the SBI, played an important part in the SBI's failure to adequately address social equity. He was selected by the Mayor to coordinate the initiative for a few reasons. His connection to the University of Oregon gave him access to resources (material, human, and educational) that were very useful to developing the SBI. With only \$5,000 to develop the initiative, the SBI TF could not pay an individual or organization to develop materials specific to the SBI; therefore, access to Doppelt's resources was very valuable to the TF (Piercy 2008b; Krall 2008). In addition, Doppelt was one of the individuals who first approached Mayor Piercy about participating in the SBI; he had experience with sustainability that was invaluable to the process (Piercy 2008b). He had spent many years working with businesses nationwide on how to make their operations more sustainable, and was well-known in the Eugene community for similar work. During their interviews, several SBI TF members

mentioned that they had had positive previous experiences with him (Ransom 2008; Fenton 2008; Nichols 2008). One such TF member stated:

I wanted to be involved in it [the SBI TF] because before taking this job I'd had some conversations with Bob Doppelt who, of course, does a lot of work in that area and who I've known for many years. And I was really impressed by his approach to sustainability, not so much as a regulatory matter but really as a way of showing people how you can do business better from an economic as well as an environmental and other standpoints (Ransom 2008).

Doppelt and his graduate assistants staffed the SBI (Krall 2008; Piercy 2008b). They prepared background materials on sustainability, organized presentations for the TF during almost every meeting, which served to prime TF members for the topic of the meeting, and summarized each meeting for TF members. At the first TF meeting, Doppelt gave each TF member a binder with information on sustainability that combined research conducted by the coordinating team, the Roundtable preparatory interviews, the Roundtable participant feedback, and public and business surveys. The topics covered by this information were varied, but followed the topics that were discussed during the Roundtables, which were convened as an early step in the SBI process to ensure broad public discussion and participation. These topics included green building, education and technical assistance for business, reuse and recycling, finance and funding, biofuels, renewable energy, natural and organic foods, among others. Doppelt and his assistants conducted literature reviews and gathered case studies of sustainability and then passed this information on to the TF. Doppelt also invited experts on sustainability to meet with the TF. Guests and topics included Gary Liss from Loomis, CA, speaking on zero waste; and Ralph Groschen from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture speaking on biofuels. Other topics presented by experts involved green mortgages, city efforts to educate the public on sustainability, alternative energy education campaigns, and green-building recommendations from the City's technical advisory committee. After each meeting, Doppelt and his group drafted summaries of what had been discussed at the meetings and culled useful information for the TF. With input from TF members, Doppelt also planned

the agenda for future meetings, including the topics to be discussed and the amount of time allotted for discussion (Krall 2008; Fenton 2008; Ransom 2008).

Doppelt clearly held considerable control over the activities and direction of the SBI TF. This is important to understanding the way in which the SBI TF addressed social equity. Doppelt's role in the SBI TF influenced the weight given to social equity in three main ways. First, he assisted Mayor Piercy in selecting members of the TF. He, along with others, approached the Mayor with the idea of launching something like the SBI while Piercy was still on the campaign trail in 2004. After she was elected, they met again to begin planning the details of the SBI, including discussions of who would be important to have on the TF (Krall 2008; Piercy 2008). Several of the individuals discussed during these early meetings did, in fact, become TF members.

Second, Doppelt provided the TF members with much of the information on sustainability to which they were exposed, as discussed above. After one social equity representative on the TF complained to him that social equity wasn't being addressed in the roundtable meetings, Doppelt said that there wasn't a way to have separate roundtable meetings on social equity because equity wasn't a specific industrial sector (Fenton 2008; Bell 2008). As a compromise, Doppelt agreed to raise the issue of social equity within each roundtable meeting. One social equity representative, remarking on the failure to have a social equity roundtable, explained:

I said this earlier about how we wanted to do a roundtable on social equity and [Doppelt] said no, it has to cut across all sectors. So Doppelt would say in the roundtables...what about social equity? What about the wages and benefits in this? And people are there and they're so thrown off by this because they're there to talk about their work and they're there to talk about what would make their work grow. And now you're talking about wages and benefits and it sort of does not compute...so even though social equity was raised in every round table, it went nowhere (Fenton 2008).

According to several TF members interviewed, including the social equity representatives and Doppelt himself, raising the social equity piece in the roundtables was always awkward and caused the discussions to stall. The social equity TF representatives felt

that the social part of sustainability needed to be built into the discussion at the roundtables from the very beginning — on equal footing with the economy and the environment — and that the importance of dealing with social equity issues needed to be emphasized in the TF’s presentations to the roundtables. Instead, social equity was brought up as “an add-on” in the roundtable discussions, rather than as a central element of sustainability (Bell 2008; Fenton 2008). As the primary planner and discussion leader of the roundtable discussions, Doppelt made some critical choices about how or how not to incorporate social equity into the roundtable discussions. The social equity representatives, as well as other TF members, commented that Doppelt’s expertise was in the environmental aspect of sustainability, not social equity (Bell 2008; Fenton 2008; Doyle 2008). Regarding Doppelt’s actions around social equity, one social equity representative commented:

Again, it’s this thing of—I witnessed this and I thought hmm, I see this happening but don’t know how to solve this and Doppelt doesn’t have [social equity] as a mandate, geez, I have to solve this. He feels like, I’m doing what [the social equity representative] asked me to do, I’m raising social equity stuff every single meeting. It’s not that he had some ill motives about it, but just that he didn’t care enough or that it wasn’t essential. He didn’t see it as, I have to get something through here on social equity (Fenton 2008).

Doppelt, however, wasn’t alone. The social equity representatives on the TF also struggled with how to talk about the social equity aspect of sustainability. In the end, while Doppelt did not refuse to include social equity in the discussions, the structure and process he created did not engage roundtable participants on social equity and may have done significant damage to its potential inclusion in the final recommendations. Like Mayor Piercy, Doppelt was invested in producing concrete results by the end of the 18-month period. The lack of financing for the SBI, as well as the constant sense that the business representatives could walk out of the SBI process, which would have resulted in great damage to the Mayor’s image, may have encouraged Doppelt to avoid bogging the process down in conflict related to social equity (Krall 2008; Fenton 2008; Bell 2008; Ransom 2008). Ultimately, the roundtable discussions and the notes taken on them did

not demonstrate that addressing social equity was deemed an essential aspect of being sustainable. In a few rare cases, members of the Eugene labor community did attend roundtable meetings and attempted to make social equity an issue, but given that social equity was not presented as being on equal footing with the economy and the environment, their comments were viewed as those of outliers by Doppelt and the rest of the TF (Fenton 2008; Bell 2008).

The third way in which Doppelt influenced the inclusion of social equity in the SBI TF was through his role as the person tasked with analyzing the information collected from all SBI TF meetings. These meetings included the TF's own meetings, the TF's meetings with organizations in the community (environmental groups, the Chamber of Commerce, and others), the Roundtables, and other public forums (e.g., an online survey). One social equity TF member shared the following as an example of Doppelt's control over the process:

You know, Doppelt had enormous control over what got boiled down at a Roundtable. There's just too much paper and we all know it and we got drowned in the amount of stuff. I went to almost every Roundtable, but then there's minutes and then what are you going to take from it and how do you decide the import of all the stuff. There's all this process but really, it's Doppelt sifting (Fenton 2008).

This same TF member pointed out an important structural challenge within the SBI. Doppelt wasn't only in charge of sifting through information; he took on a great deal more responsibility simply because the TF members were volunteers, most of whom had full-time jobs outside of the SBI (Dunlap 2008; Jackson 2008; Doyle 2008; Resource Innovations 2010). The combination of Doppelt's position as coordinator of the SBI and other TF members being overwhelmed with the amount of work the SBI process required of them, led to Doppelt being almost the exclusive link between the information they gathered and its presentation to the TF.

In addition to the primary ways in which Doppelt influenced the TF — by helping to choose TF members, preparing select materials for the TF, and culling information from the public outreach process for the TF — Doppelt was viewed as an expert on topics

relevant to the SBI. His designation as an “expert” allowed him a higher degree of freedom in his methods and actions, as well as a greater degree of responsibility and authority within the TF. At one point during her interview, the Mayor said: “I tried to keep my hands off because I wanted them to do their [work] — I’m not an expert anyway — and Bob [Doppelt] did a terrific job” (Piercy 2008).

The failure to appoint a coordinator who brought skills in all three aspects of sustainability, or alternatively the failure to appoint three different coordinators, each an expert in one of the three aspects of sustainability, may have doomed social equity from the outset. However, this may point to a larger problem, that sustainability is a relatively new field and that few people are adequately skilled and experienced to present with equal weight the three aspects of sustainability. Finally, higher wages and the right to unionize, in the short run, cost businesses money. In contrast, environmental sustainability, such as saving paper and turning off lights, saves businesses money. This simple discrepancy creates constant tension between businesses and social equity proponents, such that a coordinator of a sustainability initiative would have to forcefully place social equity at the forefront of the agenda in order to ensure it survived the impending conflict.

### **The SBI TF Co-Chairs**

In selecting co-chairs for the SBI TF, the Mayor tried to balance her interest in reaching out to the business community with keeping progressive politics in play, especially those related to social and environmental issues. As a result, the Mayor selected one co-chair, Rusty Rexus, who she believed represented the more traditional sector of the business community. Rexus owns a forest products business and was President of the Chamber of Commerce during the initial stages of the SBI (another SBI TF member succeeded him as Chamber President when Rexus’ term ended). The other co-chair, David Funk, held values similar to the Mayor’s. Funk owns an advertising firm called Funk, Levis and Associates. Although the co-chairs had divergent political views,

both emerged from the business community. Therefore, from the outset, business interests were over-represented in the leadership of the SBI TF. With regard to the selection of Rexius, who represented the traditional business community, the Mayor said:

He contacted me and he was talking to me about this eco-berm that [his forest products company] had invented in construction to prevent erosion. The [conventional landscaping industry] just used plastic and silt which isn't a very environmentally good practice. So they had invented, and were using one at the [his company] site, a biodegradable eco berm and were frustrated because ODOT [Oregon Department of Transportation] only would buy conventional berms and the City wasn't taking advantage of this opportunity, and he was frustrated. I just said, well, Rusty you're just the poster child of what I'm interested in because it's a sustainable product, you're a local business, and it's environmentally sound. So that's the whole concept. So I asked him if he would be willing to co-chair this TF and he said yes. I think he'll tell you he took some heat for doing it (Piercy 2008).

In fact, when I asked one SBI TF member who represented the business community to comment on how the larger Eugene business community responded to the SBI when it was first proposed, his answer was short and to the point: "Uh, the initial reaction was extreme pessimism and speculation and suspicion. I wouldn't get into details here but I was told several times the folly of my ways for even getting involved with this" (Nichols 2008).

As for the other co-chair she selected, the Mayor said: "Then David Funk agreed to be [co-chair], which nobody was surprised because David was a big supporter. Rusty, I'm sure, probably didn't support me when I ran for Mayor and David did. So that was a really wonderful combination" (Piercy 2008). After interviewing business representatives with various political leanings, it was obvious to me that their political orientations colored their relationship and approach to the SBI and particularly to social equity. During one interview, a TF member named Nichols adamantly pointed out how difficult it was for him to be a member of the TF. From his perspective, he was part of a long line of family business owners who did not appreciate the City interfering in business practices. Furthermore, for him, being sustainable was just good business practice; if a business owner wasn't being socially, economically or environmentally

sustainable, then that business would not be last long. For Nichols, it was trying to run his business in the most efficient and effective manner that led him to sustainability. Despite his practical approach to sustainability, he adamantly opposed the city government dictating sustainable business practices — sustainability, according to Nichols, should occur naturally, the result of a business being run properly. In other words, he believed that the free market would ensure that sustainable practices prevailed, because such practices make good business sense. Therefore, his vision of sustainability did not include city-mandated wage requirements but, rather, focused on incentives to encourage such business conduct. However, during his interview, Nichols did vacillate to a degree on this point. He confided during his interview that sometimes it may be prudent to regulate business, as sometimes businesses need to be forced into doing the right thing (2008).

Those with a different political leaning, on the other hand, lent a sympathetic ear to the social equity representatives throughout the SBI process. In an interview with me, one TF member (who had represented the social equity community) regretted not having more forcefully asked the co-chairs and others to utilize their power as leaders to raise social equity issues (Fenton 2008). Yet, those who supported social equity may not have had a level of support to match the level of opposition to social equity. This imbalance was aggravated by the dearth of social equity representatives on the TF as a whole. With the rest of the TF weighted towards the more the traditional “chamber of commerce” business community, those who supported social equity felt outnumbered (Dunlap 2008; Bell 2008; Fenton 2008).

It is important to note that the two co-chairs, both business owners, ran very different types of businesses, which meant they had different individual stakes in the SBI social equity outcome. Funk ran a small company that employed a small number of highly skilled employees. Rexus ran a much larger business that relied on hundreds of workers, a good deal of them low-skill workers. Clearly, the effects of addressing social equity issues would have been felt more severely by Rexus. This is particularly true in

relation to the issues pushed by the TF social equity representatives: mandated wages, benefits and unionization. Most of Funk's employees were white-collar workers who made above the livable wage and had good benefits. Coupled with this is the fact that a small business is a less likely prospect for unionization. In contrast, many of Rexius' workers likely earned below a livable wage and were not unionized (although Ray never discussed his workers' wages in interviews or in the TF meetings, the wage level for workers in the forest products industry is, on average, low). Among those on the TF with larger crews of workers, one stated that he provides health benefits to the majority of his workers (Nichols 2008). Despite this, that TF member did not feel comfortable allowing a wage, benefit and unionization discussion to take place in the SBI because of its potential cost implications for his own business (Fenton 2008; Bell 2008).

The co-chairs were the main public face for the TF and part of the coordinating team for the TF, along with Mayor Piercy and Bob Doppelt. Therefore, the co-chairs played an important role in how the TF addressed social equity. As described above, Rexius had a personal and ideological stake in not drawing the TF toward workplace equity issues. Furthermore, Rexius had strong connections to the traditional business community and its associations in Eugene, particularly with the Chamber of Commerce. These connections may have hampered his ability to advocate for incentives or regulations related to wages, benefits and unionization. In Funk's case, not only did he have little to lose as a business owner through implementation of social equity standards, he also ideologically supported Mayor Piercy and many of her goals around social and environmental issues. Yet, because Funk was not directly connected to the traditional business community, he did not have the powerful support behind him that Rexius did. This support added a great deal of power to Rexius' and others on the TF who sought to avoid any recommendation that required regulations related to social equity.

### **The SBI TF**

The TF members were strategically chosen by the Mayor and her advisors. The individuals who agreed to participate were then approved by the Eugene City Council. The Mayor had a few goals in selecting members of the TF, one of which was that she was seeking a diverse group of TF members. City governments have been heavily criticized over the last ten years for not being inclusive enough in their decision-making processes; this criticism has pushed many city officials to be inclusive in terms of race, class, experience, gender, etc. when putting together committees that will inform city decision making (Howard, Lipsky and Marshall 1994; Thomas, 1995). Describing the process of organizing the TF, the Mayor explained:

[W]e very carefully sat down around this table and tried to figure out how to put together a broad-based TF...to encourage and support businesses that produced sustainable products, encourage and support every business adopting sustainable practices, and elevating the discussion of sustainability in general. And the TF was very good. They worked very hard. Everybody was committed (Piercy 2008b).

Although the Mayor strove for diversity, ultimately, the makeup of the TF was relatively uniform in terms of race, class and gender. (See list of TF members and affiliations above.) Out of sixteen members, nearly all had professional occupations, six were women, and only a small minority were people of color. Eight members were from the business community (people who ran their own businesses, represented business associations, or represented the business for which they worked). Of the other eight members on the TF, six were from the nonprofit sector, and two were from colleges and universities. Of the six nonprofit members, four represented social justice nonprofits (although one was also a business owner) and two represented environmental nonprofits. While the Mayor expressed a desire for the TF to be broad and diverse, it was still mainly composed of professional white men. Interestingly, of the six women on the TF, five represented nonprofits or universities, while all but one of the businesses were represented by men (Resource Innovation 2010). DeFillippis and North (2004) point out that there are several barriers to including a diverse cross-section of people in decision

making, specifically, that individuals from more disadvantaged groups, such as people of color, working class people, and women, may not have the time to contribute to volunteer work due to work, family, or other constraints. Mayor Piercy, commenting on the time commitment required of the TF members said: “Oh my gosh, I think they thought they were signing up for like, four meetings and ended up having tons of them. They worked really hard, spoke at so many groups. I think they did a great job and really helped move our community along a lot” (Piercy 2008b). The TF had anywhere from one to four meetings per month, and meetings were often in the middle of the day. This made it nearly impossible for those with inflexible work schedules at full-time day-jobs to attend meetings.

Interfacing with the city system requires its own set of skills. Bringing in people as members of the TF who are not familiar with a formal decision-making process would make it difficult for both the individuals on the TF as well as the city officials and others trying to make sure the SBI process succeed. Being familiar with the city decision-making process involves familiarity with following agendas, speaking in turn, voting processes, such as Robert’s Rules of Order, and consensus building. It also involves having a broader awareness of Eugene politics and how the TF’s outcomes could impact different aspects of the community. Accordingly, most of the TF members had previously served on City committees in some capacity. Having familiarity with the city process and being an empowered community member was an important factor in the self-selection of most TF members, as expressed during the interviews. Therefore, those on the TF tended to be from an empowered class of community members, who unintentionally blocked access to the TF by disenfranchised community members.

In a similar vein, the business community has a distinct advantage in city processes, as business representatives are often compensated by their business or business associations for the time they spend on city task forces and committees (Irvin and Stansbury 2004). Furthermore, businesses and their associations interact regularly with the city government regarding incentives, taxes, permits and regulations, among other

things, gaining skill in navigating the city process. These factors become all the more important when viewed through the lens of businesses' emphasis on city level governance as a vehicle for improvement of the economic environment for business growth (Cox and Mair 1988; Bassett 1996). Therefore, business owners are not only aware of how city decision making works, but also how to influence such decision making.

Those representing nonprofits and universities and colleges were also professionals. One of the social equity representatives taught university level courses. Similarly, most of the other representatives from the environmental and social justice communities were executive directors of their respective nonprofits. Yet, at its core, the SBI was a business initiative and, consequently, half of the TF consisted of business people. However, not all TF members from the business community were business owners. Some were consultants to businesses on sustainability, some managed businesses, and one was in charge of economic development activities in Lane County; these individuals were not actual business owners but they all worked very closely with the Eugene business community and the Chamber of Commerce, and as a result, spoke with significant authority on the concerns and desires of Eugene business owners. Mayor Piercy explained that those who were chosen to be on the TF were in part chosen to influence City Council members to encourage adoption of the TF's recommendations:

So the recommendations came out of each of those round tables [and the Task Force] then they worked those through a process and eventually came down to those 22 recommendations that went to Council. The strategy of putting the [Task Force] together was not only that they had expertise but that there would be somebody on the Council that each of them would listen to. And the same thing when they brought the recommendations to Council. They all showed up so that all those Councilors saw somebody out there that they felt responsible to and connected to. And [Council members] were very supportive (Piercy 2008b).

The composition of the City Council required the Mayor to seek out several TF members who would gain the ear of the more conservative Council members. The overarching goal of the SBI was to develop an alternative economic development agenda, which was

less likely to be supported by conservative Council members. If the Mayor was unable to gain the support of these Councilors, the SBI recommendations might not be adopted by the Council, and the Mayor would be in danger of failing to achieve her goal of forging a relationship with the business community.

The responsibility to advocate for social equity in the SBI process rested on two TF members. There were four members chosen from the social justice community, however, one of these, an executive director of an affordable housing nonprofit, rarely attended meetings and therefore was not a factor in the process (this is a phenomenon that will be discussed further on). Another TF member represented a social justice nonprofit as well as a small landscaping business that he owned. Throughout the SBI process, he aligned with the business representatives over the hardships of being a small business owner rather than with the social justice representatives around workplace equity. It seemed that it was hard for individuals who managed employees themselves to see equity as a structural issue rather than an individual workplace issue where small business owners struggle to keep their businesses solvent. Admittedly, the two advocates of social equity were experienced activists and advocates on the issue, but they were simply outnumbered on the sixteen-member TF.

The fact that TF members were appointed by the Mayor, rather than selected to participate by their respective constituencies, had a disproportionately negative impact upon social justice interests vis-à-vis business or environmental interests. The business representatives had the support of the Eugene Chamber of Commerce, an organization that can organize and influence the business community as a whole. This organization creates a greater sense of cohesiveness, as well as accountability, within the business community. Also, the majority of business representatives were white males and therefore were, to a large extent, representative of their business constituency. In contrast, the social equity representatives, although most were women, were professional as well as white, and thus did not truly represent their diverse constituencies. The social justice community also lacked an equivalent overarching organization to ensure

accountability and unity. With the great diversity of interests within the social justice community — from labor unions to domestic violence prevention organizations — it was, and as a general rule is, more difficult to build a sense of cohesiveness and accountability.

The role of broad-based, labor-community coalitions in city sustainability efforts (explored in Chapter IV), may have been one of the essential missing ingredients in the SBI. One of the few effective ways to represent the broad range of social justice interests in city sustainability efforts is through a broad-based coalition. A labor-community coalition has the resources and clout to counter the political advocacy of business associations such as the Chamber of Commerce. Irvin and Stansbury (2004) point out that as an alternative to labor-community coalitions, citizen participation in city decision-making processes can occasionally create the space for divergent interests to be represented. However, they adamantly stress that effective citizen participation requires extensive effort, coordination, and financial resources on the part of the city. Citizen participation became routine following the urban protest movements of the 1960s, and many people began to believe that city-facilitated public participation was a tactic by city governments to assuage public anger and to avoid litigation by dissatisfied residents or interest groups (Irvin and Stansbury 2004). Furthermore, Irvin and Stansbury (2004) found that citizen participation is often unsuccessful unless several factors are present. One such factor is that the city must have significant financial resources to invest in designing and carrying out the citizen participation process:

Although comparative costs have not been subject to close scrutiny, the low end of the per-decision cost of citizen-participation groups is arguably more expensive than the decision making of a single-agency administrator, even if the citizen participants' time costs are ignored (Irvin and Stansbury 2004:58).

Second, unless there is a sense of crisis that drives citizen participation, they are unlikely to sufficiently invest their time in the process. A lack of commitment by community stakeholders can lead to harmful conclusions being reached, or may simply

result in significant expenditure of funds that could have been used for another purpose (Irvin and Stansbury 2004).

Finally, if the decisions that citizen participants arrive at do not carry authority, they are unlikely to fully invest themselves in the process either: “If citizen participants are misled into thinking their decisions will be implemented, and then the decisions are ignored or merely taken under advisement, resentment will develop over time” (Irvin and Stansbury 2004:59). Therefore, proper time and resources should be invested in the design and implementation of citizen participation processes such that their final conclusions may be implemented with authority.

Unfortunately, the structure of the SBI’s decision-making process fails on all three of Irvin and Stansbury’s (2004) measures for effective citizen participation. The SBI process had very limited financial resources with which to invest in extensive outreach, design and implementation of citizen participation. The topic of the SBI did not engender a sense of crisis to spark broad-based citizen participation. And, finally, the decisions that the SBI TF reached were only recommendations. The City Council had the ultimate authority to reject or adopt the TF’s recommendations. Thus, based on Irvin and Stansbury’s (2004) standards, the SBI citizen participation process did not meet the measures necessary to ensure broad-based citizen involvement. Although there were many opportunities for citizen involvement through the round table process and other forums, the dedicated effort required to bring diverse citizenry to the SBI was lacking. Such effort would have required outreach to disenfranchised community members, the length of time dedicated to developing the SBI would have had to be extended, the balance of representation on the SBI TF would have needed to be different and the stakes around the SBI recommendations would have needed to be higher so that citizens felt that real, lasting change was a possible outcome..

To summarize how the TF composition may have affected SBI outcomes, particularly with respect to social equity, several points are important. First, because most TF members affiliated with the business community were either members or

officers of the Chamber of Commerce, I argue that the business representatives on the TF were part of a cohesive and accountable business community. On the other hand, the social justice community in Eugene lacked an equivalent overarching organization and, accordingly, TF members selected from this community were not accountable to a unified constituency.

In the end, the domination by the business community over the TF played a significant role in the TF's recommendations. These recommendations served to marginalize social equity issues to outside the scope of the SBI discussion. A recent study by Portney et al. (2009) reveals that the predominance of traditional business representation around sustainability efforts is not unique to Eugene. Portney et al. (2009) found that business coalitions were much more likely to participate in city decision-making processes and interact with city council members regarding sustainability issues than were other interest groups. Indeed, it is likely that the predominance of business coalition members on the SBI TF was not a phenomenon unique to Eugene but, rather, was in keeping with a trend among most U.S. cities in which the strength and resources of urban business coalitions and their familiarity with city decision-making processes were employed in order to influence policy outcomes that would affect their business operations (See Irvin and Stansbury 2004; Logan and Molotch 1987; MacLeod 2002; Portney et al 2009).

### **Tracing the Role of Social Equity Advocates on the SBI TF**

The central internal struggle between SBI TF members revolved around the inclusion of social equity in the SBI's final recommendations (Bell 2008; Ransom 2008; Jackson 2008). Three main issues intertwined to kindle this struggle and to define the respective roles of the social equity advocates: (1) the limited presence of social equity representatives on the TF, the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and later, the City created the Sustainability Commission; (2) the relationship between the social equity

representatives on the TF and Eugene's labor community; and (3) the influence brought to bear on the SBI process by Eugene's labor and social justice communities.

Several factors contributed to the lack of social equity representatives on the TF. These factors ranged from a lack of recruitment within the social justice community by the Mayor, to the social justice community's resistance to taking part in the initiative. Examination of each of these components provides insight into the social justice community itself, its connection to the issue of sustainability, and its relationship with City government and environmental organizations.

Mayor Piercy indicated in her interview with me that she did not do as much outreach as she could have to the social justice community; however, the social justice community was not entirely open to participation in the SBI (Piercy 2008b). Although Piercy has a long history of working in the social justice movement (serving with the HIV Alliance, the Wayne Morse Center for Law and Politics, Centro Latino Americano, the Lane County Commission on Children and Families, and Planned Parenthood), the SBI's orientation was toward encouraging green business practices, *not* equitable business practices. The Mayor was preoccupied with getting the business community to buy into concept of the SBI and her position as a "*Mayor for All Eugene.*" At the same time, representatives from the environmental community strongly advocated for their involvement in the SBI, creating a situation in which environmental representatives were overrepresented by virtue of their zeal in seeking to participate.<sup>19</sup> According to the Mayor, conducting outreach in the social justice community was not easy. She noted that the social justice community's goals for the SBI were not nearly as cohesive as the environmental or business community's (Piercy 2008b). Although there are dozens of environmental organizations in Eugene, they pursued implementation of the SBI with a unified agenda: that of creating the highest possible environmental standards for

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<sup>19</sup> Far more than any other interest group, members of Eugene's environmental community expressed interest in participating in the SBI. They showed up at public meetings of the SBI, and applied to serve on the Sustainability Commission (based on this researcher's participant observation at SBI meetings and roundtables; Krall 2008).

businesses (Smith 2008; Penner 2008). Facilitating this push was the fact that many environmental standards are cost-effective for a business. Similarly, the business community was almost unilaterally interested in ensuring that this process increased its competitive advantage while keeping costs low (Ransom 2008; Dunlap 2008). The various social justice organizations in Eugene, however, were interested in everything from affordable housing, to a living wage, to unionization in the workplace, to ensuring equitable access to sports for low-income children (Bell 2008). Unifying their varied agendas under the rubric of social equity in sustainability became an extremely difficult proposition.

In addition to the challenges the Mayor faced in reaching out to the social justice community, many members of the social justice community opt out of City-led work. Common conceptions and definitions of sustainability (e.g., the UN's definition, explained above), exclude or downplay the role of social equity in sustainability. Therefore, social justice advocates and experts rarely see sustainability programs as a meaningful avenue for addressing their social equity concerns. This is particularly true when a sustainability initiative is led by the government, rather than non-governmental organizations. Accordingly, very few people with experience in social justice issues applied to serve on Eugene's Sustainability Commission, even after Mayor Piercy and the TF expressly reached out to that community (Dunlap 2008; Piercy 2008b; Fenton 2008). Furthermore, nonprofit organizations that represent social justice interests can be wary of participating in city processes because they fear losing their federal tax-exempt status (Irvin and Stansbury 2004).

In addition to feeling as if social equity rarely has a place in sustainability discussions, some environmental organizations have the same problems with workplace equity and social sustainability as do for-profit businesses. Samantha Jacobs, who runs a nonprofit organization that mitigates environmental problems and employs many low-skilled workers, expressed this sentiment. She sided more with business owners on the SBI TF than she did with social justice representatives regarding the regulation of social

equity, particularly with respect to paying higher wages and providing benefits. That is to say that one of her primary concerns was the bottom line, which she felt she could not meet if she paid her workers a living wage (Jacobs 2008). Interestingly, Mayor Piercy noted this contradiction among some nonprofits:

To me there's another whole issue with that that's very hard to bridge and that is that almost by nature nonprofits exist to provide services cheaper and they often actually depend on an amount of inequity. They're trying to bring more equity to those that they're providing services to but we are often asking them to do that without having adequate benefits and wages themselves (Piercy 2008b).

Due to the lack of support for social equity, not only from those outside the movement, but often within the organizations that lead the movement itself, some social justice advocates self-select out of processes like the SBI. At the same time, historically, socially disadvantaged residents have been left out of such processes. For example, the planning profession comes from a Eurocentric background within which technical knowledge and expertise are valued, and socially disadvantaged residents are often seen as impediments to the planning process or are viewed as incapable of comprehending the technical aspects of City planning and the decision-making processes. (DeFillippis and North 2004). Furthermore, historical institutional racism within the planning bureaucracy has led to disproportionately small numbers of people of color, women and working class people attending graduate programs in urban planning, urban studies, and public policy (DeFillippis and North 2004). Consequently, although most city governments have attempted to make decisions in a more socially inclusive way, they still find themselves with a preponderance of white, male professionals in elected positions, city staffing positions, and on decision-making bodies like the TF.

DeFillippis and North (2004) point out that even after city governments have been able to make their decision-making processes more inclusive, socially disadvantaged residents often remain skeptical of participating in city processes due to lingering mistrust and disenfranchisement. For example, some labor leaders that I interviewed about the SBI said they didn't feel it was worth their time to engage in the SBI process because it

was highly unlikely that they would be able to get the TF to address social inequality even if they did actively participate in the SBI process (Doyle 2008). In short, many residents who have been traditionally marginalized by city processes are not interested in “working within the system”; these residents believe that in order to influence a city process, they will have more impact if they work from outside of the system. Working from outside the system primarily includes utilizing social movement organizations to engage in tactics such as lobbying, running public campaigns around a particular issue, and using civil disobedience to influence the city decision-making process (DeFillippis and North 2004).

In contrast, the environmental movement, in Eugene and nationally, has been successful at accessing and influencing city, state and national political decision making from both inside and outside the system. There are multiple reasons for the environmental movement’s greater success, but the most obvious is that unlike the members of many social justice movements, members of the environmental movement tend to come from more privileged backgrounds (DeFillippis and North 2004). Particularly in Eugene, the environmental movement is composed of primarily white, middle to upper class members (US Census Bureau 2000). The social status of the members of a movement is important because it plays a large role in whether or not they feel comfortable within, and have the free time to advocate for themselves within, government-led committees like the SBI TF. Moreover, the vast majority of environmental organizations in Eugene are focused solely on protecting the natural environment, rather than environmental justice.<sup>20</sup> As the name implies, environmental justice organizations have an inherent social justice element that is coupled with environmental preservation.

All of the above-mentioned factors created a situation in which there were only two advocates for socially just sustainability on the SBI TF, and a lack of interest in the

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<sup>20</sup> This conclusion was reached based upon extensive internet-based research on the various environmental organizations in Eugene, including their stated missions and the types of issues they primarily attempt to have an impact upon.

SBI from the social justice community at large. These TF representatives were outnumbered, and the issues they chose to press were highly controversial within the business community — the largest interest group on the TF. It is important to note that despite there being a lack of social equity representatives on the TF, social equity still remained a hotly debated issue within the TF. During their interviews, most TF members said that social equity came up in every meeting of the TF; the problem arose in relation to actually turning ideas regarding social equity issues into formal recommendations (Bell 2008; Ransom 2008; Jackson 2008). When the Mayor was interviewed and asked about this struggle, she said:

I think they agreed [that social equity was just as important] but they found it challenging. Even when we invited Portland, their Office of Sustainability people, to come down they found it much easier to do the two [economics and environment] rather than the third [social equity], but every meeting we had that discussion. Every meeting we'd recommit to putting it back in there and try to keep it in focus...it was something we unrelentingly worked on (2008b).

Other TF members confirmed that social equity came up every meeting, but these TF members were less optimistic about their own commitment to social sustainability. Business representatives on the TF especially downplayed the importance of social equity in sustainability. Instead, they focused on how challenging it would be to make any recommendations around social equity that would not significantly harm the viability of businesses in Eugene. For example, one of the business representatives responded this way when asked if and how social equity came up in TF meetings:

I think social equity as an issue came up at almost every meeting but it was never the dominant [issue]. I think only towards the end when folks were saying, hey, we're missing this piece that was made clear by some people who felt—you can't look at the report and not conclude that—[but] that was not an equal partner with the first two bottom line issues. But until then it was constantly being raised by people and some of them had probably had this experience before so I don't think they went in blind . . . they understood that this was going to be the toughest piece. But it did not get the main focus of our attention until right at the very end and the question came up, is there something we can do to really make that. The answer was, we tweaked the words a little but didn't really agree to any kind of hard standards (Ransom 2008).

The above statement is telling in several ways. For one, the fact that social equity came up every meeting shows the persistence of the social equity representatives on the TF. It also shows that the whole TF was aware that social equity was indeed one of the three legs of the sustainability stool. In other words, social equity did not slip through the cracks without anyone noticing; given its prevalence throughout the process, its neglect in the final recommendations appears to have been deliberate.

The statement quoted above also points out that even though the social equity representatives raised the issue of social equity constantly, it was never really embraced by the rest of the TF. In response to these circumstances, and as the end of the SBI process approached, the social equity representatives made a last ditch effort to include social equity standards in the recommendations. Through their workplace indicators and community social sustainability indicators, they highlighted those areas of business practice that needed regulation to be sustainable (See pages 136-137 for Table of Community and Workplace Social Equity Indicators). But what prevented the TF from including these proposals in the final recommendations?

A political struggle ensued with the TF, which itself was a microcosm of the state, national and international level struggles around the trajectory of economic development, protection of the natural environment, and concurrently addressing social equity. In the case of the SBI, the TF struggled to agree on the method by which to address social equity. The factors contributing to this problem included: (1) the social equity representatives on the TF represented the labor community, rather than a more broad array of social equity organizations; organized labor can be a contentious issue for many inside the business community because it often infuses the discussion with “class consciousness” (Cox and Mair 1988); (2) due to their connection with the labor community, the social equity representatives pushed the TF to focus on workplace equity issues, such as living wages and unionization, rather than more mainstream issues such as health care; and (3) in addition to being outnumbered on the TF, the social equity representatives, despite hailing from the labor community, lacked support from that very

community. A closer look at these factors will highlight the major tensions that exist between the business, social justice, labor and environmental communities in general and enable exploration of possible options for achieving progress in addressing social equity in sustainability programs. One of the few options available to these social equity representatives is to engage the larger social justice/labor community in the process, so as to increase their legitimacy and power on the TF. I will now turn to a more detailed examination of the social equity representatives on the TF, including an analysis of the role in the SBI of the larger social justice/labor community in Eugene.

### **The Pros and Cons of Labor Advocates as Social Equity Representatives**

The social equity representatives on the TF used their experience, skills and connections with workers and their unions to approach the social equity component of the SBI (Fenton 2008; Bell 2008). Because the SBI largely revolved around making businesses more sustainable, the social equity representatives advocated for a more equitable workplace, just as the environmental representatives advocated for reduction of the workplace's impact on the environment. Similarly, business representatives were busy trying to balance economic and social sustainability as well as the economic viability of their businesses. It is this notion of the "economic viability" of a business that caused the most divisiveness between the business and social justice communities, because workplace equity was viewed by business as a significant threat to economic viability. At the same time, the environmental advocates were able to couch their recommendations within a business-friendly framework — green practices in the workplace can reduce costs for businesses and therefore were perceived as less of a threat to businesses. Accordingly, the majority of TF members were able to find more common ground with the environmental recommendations than with the social equity recommendations (SBI TF 2006a).

Had social justice representatives from more diverse backgrounds been appointed and been active in the TF, the issues advocated with respect to social equity might have

been quite different. For example, an affordable housing advocate might have pushed for more city money for affordable housing projects or a larger percentage of affordable housing in new developments. Such a project would not have directly implicated the bottom line of business owners on the TF, making the proposal more palatable and also creating more of a voice and a space for considering social equity more broadly. Also active in Eugene are various organizations working to bring fresh, local and organic foods to low-income families; such advocates might have encouraged businesses with cafeterias or other food needs to purchase these products. Employment advocates working on issues, such as workforce development, might have pushed to have business involved in the SBI take on more apprenticeship programs and ensure local hiring. Other social equity organizations in Eugene include those that work on issues such as domestic violence, racial inequality, immigrants' rights, international human rights, opportunities for disadvantaged youth, and more. However, it was workplace equity that took center stage in the social equity discussion, primarily because labor advocates constituted the only two active representatives from the social equity community. The TF was never able to achieve a long-term vision for workplace equity, one in which a business would remain economically viable despite paying higher wages and increased benefits. Instead, workplace equity was consistently set up as antithetical to profitability.

### **Social Equity Representatives and Workplace Equity**

After being selected for the TF, and after participating in a few meetings to discuss sustainability at a more general level, the TF members began learning about each other's specific "asks" for the SBI. The business community was hoping to escape the SBI process unscathed and, if all went well, to develop incentive packages for environmentally friendly practices. The environmental community was exploring a number of ways businesses in the community could reduce their impact on the environment, either through altering the types of products they were creating, the materials they used, or limiting waste in the production process. For the social equity

representatives from the labor community, guaranteeing higher wages, benefits and the right to unionize were at the top of their list. From the perspective of the labor movement, these three issues define the quality of a job. Yet, unfortunately for the social equity representatives, the issue of higher wages had been contentious on a city level for some time prior to the SBI:

There had been an issue that had come up in the mayoral race before that had been before the council, [it] was this issue of should the city mandate living wage for anybody who is contracted with the city. That was a very contentious issue, even with some of the business people who were represented at this, who were general supporters of the sustainable initiative and all that sort of thing, but a lot of them were small businesses and they were saying, “we can’t pay you that wage. This will make it impossible for us to compete. That was the area that I think became the most contentious because it really was hitting some people. It was no longer just a theoretical thing; it was “wait a minute, we do work with the city and we can’t do that if we have to pay these types of wages (Ransom 2008).

One of the most significant attempts to address wages in Eugene was a 2003 ballot initiative, proposed by a coalition of labor, neighborhood and religious organizations, to create a living wage standard for all City of Eugene municipal employees and contractors. This initiative failed, yet the issue has not been dropped by these groups (Mosley 2003:A1). The SBI, with its proclaimed focus on social equity and social sustainability, seemed like a good place to resume this push. Upon hearing that a living wage might be a central aspect of the social equity community’s focus for the SBI, the business representatives became nervous about the potential social equity recommendations (Bell 2008; Dunlap 2008). Although any wage decision that came from the SBI TF could have been only in the form of a recommendation and would have had no legal weight, the recommendations could have indeed swayed future discussions and decisions in the city. Together with the living wage issue, the social justice representatives focused on the provision of benefits. The TF’s discussion of benefits only explored employer-provided benefits. Thus, this issue was quite threatening to many employers on the TF who feared the added costs of such a potential mandate (Fenton 2008; Nichols 2008).

Finally, the social equity representatives pushed for a recommendation that supported employees' right to unionize, and provided some degree of preference for unionized labor. Ultimately, the TF could not even agree to use the word "union" in the Final Recommendations Report (2006a), and many members felt that by recommending unionization as a path to achieving workplace equity, it made all non-union workforces look bad (SBI TF 2006a; Ransom 2008; Nichols 2008). For example, a TF member who was a prominent member of the economic development and business communities of Eugene looked at the union question this way:

Part of the fear was, and I was one of those outspoken on this, if you put something like [a preference for unionized workers] in what is in effect an official document it advertises to people who are looking at coming here that this is a very strong union place, and the reality is that Oregon, like most of the rest of the country, is not a strong union state outside the public sector. There are a lot of reasons for that and I'm not even convinced that that's a good thing but I do know that a lot of businesses that come here, that we talked to, we have to first get past the point that we're not a "right to work" state and we're not going to become a "right to work" state [and] that this isn't [a state] where you're going to have to worry about losing a lot of time through strikes or that sort of thing...Also, I think the last numbers I saw is that the non-governmental workforce is 7% union or something, and that's why, again, it also didn't make sense to us to say, well let's brand 93% of our workers as working in a bad workplace because they're not union. That one really became contentious (Ransom 2008).

Ransom was accurate in his assessment. The labor movement in Oregon is not very strong outside the public sector and there are many businesses, especially smaller businesses, that are not unionized.<sup>21</sup> Yet, from the perspective of the labor representatives on the TF, if the City was not even willing to mention unionization in connection with a business sustainability program, then workers in Oregon are in a truly

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<sup>21</sup> Unionization rates in Oregon have increased from 15.7% to 16.6% from 2000 to 2008, and the most rapid expansion of unionization has been in the public sector. Many states, in contrast to the private sector, "allow public sector workers an intimidation-free union selection process where a union may be certified once a majority of workers have signed a petition requesting a union. Union membership rates grew from 35.9 to 36.8 percent (275,000 additional workers) in the public sector during the past year, while membership in the private sector only grew from 7.5 to 7.6 percent (151,000 workers)" (Madland and Walter 2009).

troubling position (SBI TF 2006a; Fenton 2008; Bell 2008). In my interview with the Mayor, she commented:

I think each of those guys [SBI members involved in the Chamber of Commerce] would say they have a fundamental concern for the well-being of people who work for them. They want them to have good wages and benefits, and care about their families, blah, blah, blah. I think if you asked them if they wanted to be unionized they'd say, not in this lifetime, thank you very much. So from their perspective, they may be anti-union, pro-worker. The union may see that quite differently. And I would say, again, the big thing you notice, and I still think is true of the Chamber, they're very opposed to regulation. They consider that their duty. So even people who are pretty good on these issues can be very anti-union. I think that's a problem (Piercy 20008).

The TF members' level of discomfort with unions indicates that unionization is still viewed by employers as a chief challenge to the power differential between employers and employees.<sup>22</sup> Yet, based on the interviews conducted and meeting notes, it appeared that only two TF members were adamantly opposed to mentioning or discussing unionization; however, these two individuals held very powerful positions on the TF do not only to their positions in society but also because of their forceful personalities. Apart from a couple of other business people who were not keen on unions, virtually everyone else on the TF was neutral on the issue and would have gone along with what everyone else wanted to do. Consequently, the leaders among the business representatives spoke with significant authority and had great influence on the TF, as well as the co-chair, were able to convince the rest of the TF to steer clear of the union issue and, to a certain extent, the wage and benefits issues too.

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<sup>22</sup> For example, just in 2008 alone, the Chamber of Commerce-led business lobby has spent \$80 million fighting against card check legislation, which would allow employees to form a union if a majority of employees sign up for the union. This legislation proposed by the labor movement, called the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA), is one of the greatest efforts in decades forged by the U.S. labor movement to rebuild its member-organizing capacity. Conversely, the business lobby has been attempting to erode the power of the National Labor Relations Act, which, ever since it was passed in the 1960s, gives most workers in the United States the right to join a union (Fitch 2010).

In order to properly address all “three legs of the sustainability stool,” the SBI TF decided to set up sub-committees to address each leg. In addition to gathering input from a website survey and roundtables, each sub-committee was charged with formulating recommendations as to its “leg of the stool” for the rest of the TF (SBI TF 2006b). The social equity sub-committee was composed of four people: the two social equity representatives, a representative from the business community, and an environmental justice representative. Many SBI TF members, including a few of its leaders, praised the social equity sub-committee for the thoroughness and thoughtfulness of its work (Krall 2008; Dunlap 2008; Jackson 2008). The social equity sub-committee created a matrix based on the LEED Green Building Certification program<sup>23</sup> for social sustainability (See tables on next two pages).

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<sup>23</sup> LEED certification is a standard for measuring building sustainability. “Achieving LEED certification is the best way to demonstrate that your building project is truly ‘green.’ The LEED green building rating system -- developed and administered by the U.S. Green Building Council, a Washington D.C.-based, nonprofit coalition of building industry leaders -- is designed to promote design and construction practices that increase profitability while reducing the negative environmental impacts of buildings and improving occupant health and well-being” (Natural Resource Defense Council 2010).

**Table 4.** Social equity indicators: Workplace.

INDICATOR	LEVEL ONE	LEVEL TWO	LEVEL THREE
<b>1. WAGES</b>	A. Progressive Wage Schedule B. Median wage equals average state wage for the particular industry	A. Progressive Wage Schedule B. Median wage equals at least 105% of state wage for the particular industry	A. Progressive Wage Schedule B. Median wage equals at least 115% of state wage for the particular industry
<b>2. BENEFITS</b>	A. Accessible medical insurance coverage for employees B. Probationary period not longer than 6 months	A. Accessible medical insurance coverage for employees B. Full time employees provided at least three additional benefits from stipulated list C. Probationary period not longer than 6 months	A. Employer provides full insurance for employees, with option for family coverage. B. Paid time off provisions (holidays, vacations, sick time) C. Contribution to retirement D. Part-time benefits pro-rated
<b>3. PARTICIPATION/ COMMUNICATION</b>	A. Policies & Procedures are in writing and on file	A. Regular performance evaluations, with opportunities for training on problems B. Encourages discussion of workplace issues and ideas for improving.	A. Gets regular feedback from ee's B. Cultural sensitivity classes, when appropriate C. Willingness to work with inside or outside group to improve conditions D. Pledge of neutrality and good faith if workers want to unionize
<b>4. FAIR TREATMENT</b>	A. Rules in writing and given to each employee B. Rules applied consistently for all employees	A. Formal dispute resolution process B. Employer uses corrective discipline and is sensitive to issues beyond the workplace	A. Process of mediation/arbitration by 3 <sup>rd</sup> party neutrals
<b>5. OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCEMENT</b>	A. Established policy to support professional development, available to all full-time, non-probationary employees	A. Each year, at least 10% of employees are offered opportunities for professional development B. Each year, at least 5% experience actual advancement	A. Every two years at least 25% (or 40) of employees have been involved in professional development B. At least 15% experience actual advancement
<b>6. SAFETY AND HEALTH</b>	A. Educational safety and health materials provided, especially on chemicals or other toxics, and other tasks specific to the jobs.	A. Regular training on safe work practices. B. Joint worker-mgmt safety committee does periodic assessment, with recommendations C. Committee can intervene in unsafe conditions D. No retaliation (whistleblower protection)	A. Active involvement in improving worker safety and health, including process redesign

(SBI TF Social Equity Sub-committee 2006).

Table 5. Social equity indicators: Community.

INDICATOR	LEVEL ONE	LEVEL TWO	LEVEL THREE
<b>1. COMMUNITY HEALTH</b>	A. Complies with emissions standards B. Provides certified protective gear C. Equipment inspected periodically to assure it's in good working order	** 3 of 6 ** A. Installs max. emissions technology B. On-site water effluent treatment C. Hazardous waste trucked away D. Elimination of fugitive emissions E. Recycling areas provided F. Elimination of herbicides/pesticides in or around workplace	** 6 of 9 ** A. Installs max technology for zero emissions; tests for water/air quality B. Has toxics use reduction plan; identifies safe alternatives; has plan to divert waste from landfill C. On-site shower/change facilities; program to increase ee awareness D. "Retired equipment" take-back E. Utilizes renewable energy sources
<b>2. EDUCATION &amp; TRAINING</b>	A. Company participates in community education and vocational training programs.	A. Company promotes community education and facilitates participation of employees with community programs	A. Company dedicates staff time to development of and engagement with community education programs.  B. Company provides financial/technical support to vocational training programs
<b>3. HOUSING</b>	A. Provides information on programs for housing and energy savings assistance	** 3 of 6 ** A. Matching funds for energy assistance B. Matching funds for solar panels C. Subsidies for low income housing D. Subsidies for mortgages/home improvement E. Support of living wage legislation F. Fund for moving expenses/moving day with pay	** 1 of the following ** A. Percent of profits to Habitat for Humanity B. Cosigns on mortgage loan for ees C. Loans part or all down pmt of low-interest mortgage loan D. Actively advocates change in law to promote housing benefits
<b>4. CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY</b>	A. Demonstrated commitment to diversity in employment B. Actively seeks to use materials, products, and vendors that support sustainability	** 2 of 3 ** A. Seeks ways to incorporate more family time into ees' schedules –flextime where possible; \$\$ or time for family activities B. Employs and/or contracts with "outsider" population C. Demonstrated commitment with NGOs to meet social needs of community	** 2 of 3 ** A. Encourages ees' civic participation with paid time off for volunteer activities B. Co-sponsors events, performances, & groups that promote civic engagement C. One percent of net profits support Eugene's low income and vulnerable populations
<b>5. TRANSPORTATION</b>	A. Employer provides bike racks B. Provides "guaranteed ride home" in event of emergency or illness C. Assists in rideshare options, or arranges for public transit stop near workplace	A. Installation of weather-protected bike racks B. Subsidy of bus tickets (50% cost to ees) C. Set aside of premium parking spaces for carpool parking	** 4 of 8 ** A. Cash or other reward for not driving; flexible schedules to allow for bus/carpool schedule; participates in Park & Ride arrangements; provides van to and from Park & Ride B. Shower/changing facilities for bikers; excess parking to other uses C. Alternative fuel in company vehicles; plug-ins for electric cars

(SBI TF Social Equity Sub-committee 2006).

The sub-committee created social equity indicators both for the community and the workplace. The community social equity indicators centered around five issues: community health; education and training; housing; corporate social responsibility; and

transportation. Within these five areas, there were more specific indicators such as: compliance with emissions standards and providing employees with the appropriate training and resources to meet those standards; company commitment of staff time to community education; company commitment of matching funds for energy assistance; company use of materials, products and vendors that support sustainability; and installation of weather-protected bike racks (SBI TF Social Equity Sub-Committee 2006). Workplace equity indicators comprised six issue areas: wages; benefits; participation/communication; fair treatment; opportunities for advancement; and safety and health. These areas included specific indicators such as a progressive wage schedule; accessible medical insurance coverage for employees including a probationary period of not longer than six months; regular feedback from employees to the employer; employer use of corrective discipline and sensitivity to issues beyond the workplace; each year, at least 10% of employees are offered opportunities for professional development and 5% experience actual advancement; and employees are actively involved in improving worker safety and health, including process redesign (SBI TF Social Equity Sub-Committee 2006). Like the LEED system, businesses were to receive silver, gold or platinum ratings based on the level of the social equity standards achieved. The system was set up to be entirely voluntary and if businesses achieved silver, gold or platinum certification, they were to receive an incentive of some sort. Based on their experience throughout the TF process, the social equity representatives knew they would not stand a chance of success in being able to recommend a regulatory regime for wages or benefits unless they were prepared to launch a full-fledged campaign within the labor and social justice communities to advocate on their behalf. This point was confirmed by one of the business representatives on the TF:

But I was never very optimistic that [the TF social equity sub-committee] was going to come up with anything that was going to be acceptable to the group as a whole, just because of the nature of what they were trying to do. It's not a reflection on them; it's just that I don't know how you'd do it. I don't know how you'd come up with really meaningful measures or criteria that you would get everybody to buy into....I remember they came back and they had a number of

things and we talked around about it. Because I think they were sensitive to overreaching, they were never going to get anywhere, so they tried to, I don't want to say water it down, but they tried to come in with fairly moderate steps of things they would suggest. But my recollection is, it still didn't really go anywhere and it was clear that if that was pushed too hard that would have probably broke up the whole deal (Ransom 2008).

But the traditional business representatives' cold response to the social equity certification program calls into question the whole manner in which social, environmental and economic sustainability was approached through the Mayor's SBI. If a program to address social equity issues, which was voluntary and incentivized, was rejected by the traditional business community, what would be an acceptable way to address these issues? As mentioned earlier, the traditional business representatives pointed out in their interviews that they would have preferred to have the program run by an entity from the traditional business community, such as the Chamber of Commerce. However, if a traditional business entity was to run the program, there might be more buy-in from the business community, but there might also be little accountability.

### **TF Social Equity Representatives Lacked Outside Support**

A major stumbling block for the TF's social equity representatives was their lack of support from the broader labor movement. As explained above, given the social equity representatives' position on the TF — both outnumbered and trying to push controversial workplace equity issues — they needed all the outside support they could muster in order to shift the dialogue toward social equity. Outside support, in the form of political pressure on the SBI TF through letters and phone calls to the TF, Mayor and/or Councilors; statements at public TF meetings; or newspaper editorials on including equity in the SBI recommendations might have signaled to TF members that social equity was an important issue for the community.<sup>24</sup> However, the Lane County Labor Council

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<sup>24</sup> Only one op-ed appeared in the Eugene *Register-Guard* outlining the importance of including social equity in the SBI recommendations (Bussel and Syrett 2006).

(LCLC), the organization most capable of utilizing its power to push a labor agenda on the TF, was unsupportive of the SBI (Doyle 2008).

Central Labor Councils (CLCs), of which the LCLC is one, provide an umbrella organization under which a variety of unions from a particular region can join together to advocate for workers issues. “As local federations organized on a regional basis, central labor councils are responsible for unifying local unions, long separated by craft and industrial jurisdictions, around common legislative, political and economic goals” (Ness and Eimer 2001). CLCs function very differently across the United States. They vary according to the issues they focus on, their methods of action, leadership structure, etc. The LCLC represents most of the unions in Lane County, including those in Eugene, but historically has been unsupportive of addressing workers issues beyond wages and benefits (Doyle 2008; Fenton 2008; Bell 2008). Consequently, although the two social justice representatives on the TF were from the labor community, they supported broader workplace equity issues than did the LCLC leadership. The LCLC was involved in the SBI — the President of the LCLC was on the SBI Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), as were a couple of union leaders from the Building Trades — however, this did not serve to increase the weight of social equity in the SBI (Doyle 2008, Resource Innovations 2010). Instead, it served to illuminate the misaligned interests within the labor community on the nexus of equity, environmental and labor.

The leaders from the Building Trades conducted a presentation to the SBI TF on a campaign they were running called Build Oregon Responsibly<sup>25</sup> (Eugene-Springfield Solidarity Network 2009). They believed their campaign addressed social equity in a way that could be replicated by the SBI, and recommend that the TF adopt the Build Oregon Responsible agreement. Essentially, the campaign defined what constituted a responsible contractor, and encouraged cities and other local and state entities to purchase

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<sup>25</sup> The Mission Statement states: “Being a responsible contractor, contracting agency, or project owner is defined as providing family/livable wage jobs, full family health care, a trained and qualified workforce, quality/professional workmanship, and a safe work environment” (Eugene-Springfield Solidarity Network 2009).

goods and services provided by responsible contractors. One Building Trades member explained that it was a voluntary program, and that hiring responsible contractors would serve and sustain the community (SBI TF 2006b). However, the Building Trades members' presentation was not warmly received. TF members were not fervently opposed to the idea, but no one seemed excited to pick up and run with the idea either (Bell 2008; Fenton 2008; SBI TF 2006b). In fact, the social equity representatives on the TF said they felt badly about the reception given to this presentation because the people who created it had put a lot of work into it and barely received any response from the TF (Bell 2008; Fenton 2008). The presenters even explained to the TF that the Build Oregon Responsible agreement did not mandate the use of union contractors, yet the response to this option was still not favorable (SBI TF 2006b). Aside from this unsuccessful attempt to advance a labor issue in the SBI, there was hardly any contact between the organized labor movement and the SBI TF.

The LCLC during that time had a very narrow focus on traditional union issues such as wages and improved unionization conditions (Doyle 2008). The LCLC's focus was so narrow that it had not even supported Eugene's Living Wage campaign, despite the fact that the campaign had been organized by Jobs with Justice, a community-labor coalition. One of the social equity representatives on the TF said this of the LCLC and the Living Wage campaign:

We thought we would have won the Living Wage ordinance. We should have won it...but [with] no help [from] the Labor Council. And the leader[s] of the LCLC felt about a living wage ordinance, like what does that do for unions? That isn't a union thing (Fenton 2008).

This statement highlights the LCLC's unwillingness to support any campaign that would not directly improve its ability to organize workers, even if the campaign had broader implications for the working class. The statement also reveals that the LCLC had not changed its stance by the time of the SBI — it maintained its narrow focus on union issues rather than larger social equity issues. Accordingly, the LCLC failed to be an ally of the larger social justice community. And an ally was precisely what this larger community

sorely needed. One labor representative on the TF mentioned in an interview that those who wanted the Labor Council to address broader social equity issues had been prevented from attaining leadership positions in the LCLC and, eventually, were shut out of the organization. Seeing no opportunity for leadership within the LCLC, proactive union leaders often left the regional union in order to assume higher positions in national unions, creating a vacuum of progressive leadership within the LCLC. With great disappointment, this SBI labor representative concluded: “So the labor council is a big problem and a big problem is thinking about how to move forward” (Fenton 2008).

Reflecting on her experience of the SBI, and focusing on the lack of LCLC support for social equity within the SBI TF, one social equity representative on the TF said that this factor significantly undermined labor’s power in the SBI. And while this TF member admitted that it may have not changed the outcome regarding the TF’s lack of social equity recommendations, she still felt that the issues proposed by the labor representatives (a living wage, benefits, and other social equity indicators) would have been taken more seriously had the LCLC supported them (Fenton 2008).

Without the support of the LCLC, the only other method for bringing labor power to the table in the SBI process would have been for individual unions to rally support. Such support was not forthcoming. In the case of the Living Wage campaign, individual unions, through Jobs with Justice, were supportive of the campaign. But the SBI, unlike the Living Wage campaign, was not empowered to produce binding obligations, it could only make recommendations. Accordingly, the actual impact of the SBI was more difficult to gauge and, therefore, presented a more complicated organizational task. This obstacle proved too great, and individual unions did not factor into the SBI power structure.

The last groups, aside from the LCLC and individual unions, that could have been rallied to support social equity concerns within the SBI process were the labor-community coalitions and individual advocates for social equity. Supporters of the previous Living Wage ordinance campaign, which included individuals and labor-

community coalitions, were in the planning stages for a renewed campaign. Therefore, these advocates were not interested in expending a great deal of time in the SBI process, which, at best, could result only in *recommendations* for a living wage (Bell 2008). Accordingly, the labor-community organizations did not put their time and energy into the SBI process; instead, they focused their energy on passing a living wage ordinance directly through the City Council (Piercy 2008). Accordingly, there was little outside support brought to bear on inclusion of social equity in the final recommendations of the SBI.

### **A Union Centered Vision for Sustainability**

The social equity representatives' struggle on the SBI TF to gain outside labor support for social equity's inclusion in the SBI mirrors a global phenomenon. Worldwide, the labor movement has failed to develop a vision for worker or union-centered sustainability, and thus has failed to truly engage in the sustainability dialogue (Sweeney 2009). Particularly in the United States, where the labor movement has faced sharp declines in its membership and often must focus on survival rather than new areas of engagement, asserting a labor vision for sustainability, or working to bridge labor issues with environmental issues, has been a low priority for most national level labor leaders (Sweeney 2009). At the local level, there have been some breakthroughs, as will be highlighted in Chapter V, but these are isolated cases. In Eugene, there has been very little contact between the labor movement and the environmental movement. Without a substantial relationship to build upon, the two labor-social equity representatives on the TF were essentially on their own in terms of developing and advocating for a strong social equity dimension in the SBI. In short, there were few models in place that these representatives could use to shape their own version of sustainability. The Mayor touched on this challenge in connection with the discussion of the TF's failure to address social equity adequately. She stated that even the labor representatives "themselves haven't figured out how to fit into this [sustainability] discussion in a real way" (Piercy

2008). This inability to create a vision of social equity on sustainability that others could buy into follows the trend where the social justice community self-selects out of sustainability work: it is unlikely that anyone would participate in a process from which they cannot envision any positive outcome.

Although Eugene's labor community might be disadvantaged in the sustainability discussion because it has not typically engaged in issues broader than workplace equity, it is not alone in its lack of vision for sustainability. Across the United States, sustainability discussions are taking place, most of them without a labor or social justice orientation (Sweeney 2009). Select think tanks around the country are working with the labor movement to help it to better understand what stake it holds in sustainability dialogues, but for the most part, many labor organizations remain focused on more short-term, parochial issues that reflect individual unions' self-interests (Sweeney 2009). Joe Uehlein, Director of the Labor Network for Sustainability, summed up the state of unions and sustainability in a recent talk. He explained that if labor isn't making its voice heard on sustainability issues, then sustainability will be defined and implemented without the least regard for the concerns and desires of workers and their unions (Uehlein 2009).

### **What We Have Here Is a Failure to Communicate: Business and Social Equity**

The business representatives on the SBI TF were indeed cognizant of social equity within the larger realm of sustainability, but what aspects of socially equitable sustainability were they receptive to, if any? How did they respond to the social equity/labor representatives' proposals for addressing social equity? Generally, the business representatives on the TF were not receptive to addressing social equity issues in the SBI, and especially not in the manner advocated by the social equity representatives. A few main factors help to explain the business representatives' relationship to social equity issues on the TF: a general failure to associate sustainability with social equity; an assumption that the economic leg of sustainability is defined solely as increased economic growth and profitability; and difficulty defining and measuring social equity.

At the end of this section, I turn to the ways in which the business representatives on the TF responded to the only tangible proposal raised by the social equity sub-committee — the social equity standards certification program. Finally, I explore the TF's missed opportunity to successfully address at least one aspect of social equity — health care. Health care was an issue upon which many overlapping interests existed between the social equity, environmental and business communities. Addressing health care in the SBI would have recognized a major social equity concern for workers, and could have provided assistance to employers in providing a benefit that has become extremely costly.

As I discussed extensively in Chapter II, outside of academic circles social equity is rarely equated with sustainability, and based on my analyses of the interviews with TF members and TF documents it appears that this was true for most of the TF members as well. Sustainability was and continues to be seen solely as an environmental and economic issue. I argue that this results from the strength of the environmental movement in the United States and the subsequent success of businesses in coupling environmental sustainability with businesses innovations and good will. In the case of the SBI, organizers of the SBI enticed business owners to participate in the process with the promise that such a program could reduce operating costs. As a result, many of the business leaders, as well as environmentalists on the TF, did not come into the SBI process thinking that social equity would be a central component of sustainability, let alone on par with the environment and the economy.

Mayor Piercy cited as an example a business owner on the SBI TF who produced natural products, and who did not associate sustainability with social equity:

He told me ... he had thoroughly thought about the bottom line and the green product. He's natural foods and all of that. But he hadn't really looked at how he treated his employees as part of the same thing and it really shifted his way of looking at what he needed to do in his own business with his own employees in terms of the social equity piece. That's what we [the Mayor and others who organized the SBI] would hope would happen (Piercy 2008).

Other business owners on the TF also stated during their interviews that the SBI helped them to see their own business differently, through the lens of a triple bottom line

(Jackson 2008; Jacobs 2008; Penner 2008; Dunlap 2008). However, no business owner specifically stated in his or her interview that the SBI process resulted in specific changes to business behavior that reflected social equity. Thus, some business members of the TF were receptive to exploring the connections between sustainability and social equity, even in the context of their own workplaces, but they were not willing to incorporate such changes into their actual business practices. Other business members said in their interviews that social equity was a small piece of sustainability, particularly within the context of the SBI and, accordingly, should not be given weight equal to that of the economy and the environment (Nichols 2008; Ransom 2008).

The strained relationship between the goal of the Mayor (to strengthen her relationship with the business community) and the goal of social equity ideals began to become quite clear. She could only forge relations with the business community by catering to their interests. As a result, while most business representatives were willing to pay lip service to the rhetoric regarding the triple bottom line — social, economic and environmental — in practice, they never expected social equity to be a factor in the SBI TF's final recommendations. One of the leaders of the SBI TF commented that the hope was that through the SBI, other sustainability factors would be addressed, but that these factors were to be addressed under the rubric of economics and business prosperity:

I mean, in the confines of a business initiative...there was some discussion about social equity and the environment and all of that was part of the discussion, but it was part of the discussion under the heading of a business initiative. So that was important because, I think, in the end what Kitty, what the Mayor had hoped to accomplish was to really put out there a legitimate effort to identify and then promote, support, encourage, a particular segment of the business world that was focused on sustainable products, sustainable services, and in general the notion of sustainability. And I think that was her goal. I think that's what in the end she hoped we could look back and say, here are several sections of the business community that are related specifically to sustainability and here are a set of things within the business community that is already here, sustainability can be an everyday part of their business life. That was her goal. I think she accomplished it (Nichols 2008).

This SBI TF member, who is also a business owner, chose to understand the SBI solely as an attempt to expand the number of environmentally sustainable businesses in Eugene. This was the goal that business owners clung to and used to justify the preeminence of their own agenda. Ironically, this same SBI TF leader and business owner later on in his interview spent considerable time explaining the essential role of social equity in his workplace:

And for me, just personally as a business person in the community, [social equity] is a significant component always of what we do in order to be profitable and sustainable and achieve longevity. If we're not extraordinarily aware of our employee base and the needs that they have and the right that they have and those sorts of things, then the rest of that stuff, frankly, doesn't matter a whole lot. So for me, and I think any business person would say, that's just sort of an inbred, ingrained part of their thinking. Others would disagree with that. Others would say, no, you guys never think about that stuff. You care only about profits, which I mean, that's a different conversation we could have another day (Nichols 2008).

The underlying thread running through this comment seems to be that the government should have no role in mandating such workplace practices. This perspective does not take account of the fact that often, in the short-run at least, treating employees poorly may be grounded in employers' financial incentives. Consequently, the claim that the government need not regulate workplace equity because it is in an employer's best interest to do so falls flat (Bell 2008; Drier 2002). Furthermore, this type of laissez-faire approach to workplace equity does not acknowledge the idea that employees should have the power to identify for themselves what their primary needs and desires are, rather than have their employer do it for them. Nonetheless, several business representatives on the TF concluded that the SBI was not a forum adequate equipped to deal with workplace equity issues (Ransom 2008; Nichols 2008).

### **The Triple Bottom Line, or Just the Bottom Line?**

The bottom line, simply understood as the dividing line between profit and loss, is an economic calculation. Sustainability, however, seeks to develop a more sophisticated bottom line, one that incorporates environmental, social equity, and economic

considerations. Yet even the economic bottom line of sustainability can be defined in a variety of ways. On the one hand, it can be defined to mean ever-increasing economic growth and profitability. On the other hand, it can be defined as general economic health, referring to a greater number of businesses remaining financially solvent in a community, and providing jobs, services and goods that are important to the community. In other words, economic health does not necessarily mean continually expanding the size and profit margin of the business. Some theorists, such as Daly (1996), argue that a more holistic version of economic health can be achieved by surrendering economic growth to social and environmental goals. This is not to say that economic growth is irrelevant; rather, it holds that the economic component is not the dominant factor defining sustainability. The foundation for economic growth should be social equity and the environment. For many of the business representatives on the TF, economic growth and profit were the most important factors in the SBI; this was stated many times in my interviews with business representatives on the TF. I argue that an interpretation of economic growth centered around profit contributed significantly to the marginalization of social equity within the SBI. The dominance of business representatives on the TF who saw profitability as the central component of sustainability, coupled with the ease of connecting environmentalism with profit and the difficulty of connecting workplace equity with profitability, marginalized social equity in the SBI.

The environmental component of sustainability, although to a much lesser extent than social equity, was also marginalized in the SBI when proposed environmental measures could potentially undermine profit. The environmental measures that were warmly received by nearly all SBI TF members and made part of the official recommendations of the SBI were: helping interested local firms learn about the business benefits of sustainability and the practices that produce them; committing to expand sustainable business clusters; recruiting businesses to fill niches and create dynamism within existing sustainability clusters; and improving access to loans, grants, and other forms of business financing. The recommendations that required more specific actions to

reduce environmental impact were made for City of Eugene facilities and operations, not for private businesses. These specific actions included recommending a plan for becoming carbon neutral by 2020, developing a Climate Action Plan, purchasing and using sustainable practices and local products and services, and developing a strategy to achieve zero waste (SBI TF 2006a).

Similar to social equity issues, the business representatives on the TF were not interested in discussing environmental measures that required action unless such actions were incentivized by the City government, voluntary in nature, increased profit, or were only directed at the City of Eugene itself. There is no question that the City's commitment to reduce its own environmental impact is important for the larger community, first because the City sets the example, and second because the City's demand could spur demand for sustainable products and services, thereby encouraging the expansion of the market for these goods and services. Yet, the recommendations did not speak to the social equity component of sustainability, even when it came to the City (SBI TF 2006a). Had the TF recommended the City commit to reducing social inequity by contracting with businesses that paid a living wage, provided benefits, and training opportunities, or had they recommended that the City develop a strategy to achieve 100% health benefits coverage, the market for these goods and services might have been spurred, facilitating access to that market for the private sector. In short, in the same way the TF recommended the City set a standard for reducing emissions or waste, it could have recommended the City take a leadership role on social equity issues.

### **Clear-Cut or Mysterious: Defining and Measuring Social Equity**

One of the integral factors leading to the marginalization of social equity in the SBI, as cited by TF members, was that social equity is extremely hard to define and measure.

The social equity side is particularly tough because you're often trading off someone else's social justice issues for your profitability and how do you weigh all that and how do you make that work. So that's what gets really tough when

you start talking about these things, is getting past the rhetorical recognition to how do we measure them and how do we figure out how to maximize that bottom line, and how are each of those weighted. That's the toughest thing, I think, that businesses have. It's not that they don't want to, it's kind of like how are we keeping score, so we are playing a game where no one has told you how to keep score so you don't know how to do it (Ransom 2008).

Definitions are foundational; a problem cannot be tackled until it has been understood. For example, one of the co-chairs explained that, for him, profitability was the easiest component of sustainability to understand. He explained that for others on the TF, it was easy to understand the environmental component. "Social equity was, from my perspective, and I think anybody would agree with this, the most difficult of the three legs to figure out. So first of all, what is it? And then secondly, what do we actually do to help accomplish it?" (Nichols 2008). Another business owner on the TF made similar comments:

Since we were such a diverse group, it was difficult to figure out; ok, what is social equity and how do you get there? And so it's easier to say that we all agree that good companies are ones that look out for the best interests of their employees, their customers, the community they live in, and as a general [rule] that all makes sense. On specific decisions it gets harder. The classic tradeoff is do we want to have fewer better paid employees or do we want to try to have a broader base of employees, recognizing if we do that we won't be able to pay as much or provide as good of benefits (Ransom 2008).

Admittedly, there are few examples of a comprehensive definition and measurement of social equity, let alone good examples in practice of such. To date, research has revealed no city that has or is comprehensively addressing social equity in its sustainability work. As a result, the SBI TF had little in the way of successful examples from which to draw. Indeed, the TF attempted to find cities taking a more comprehensive approach to sustainability in other parts of the country, but found none (Krall 2008; Fenton 2008; SBI TF 2005a). Just as the social equity representatives took a more labor-focused approach to social equity, many other sustainability projects in other cities have addressed specific aspects of social equity within sustainability. For example, Burlington, VT addressed youth involvement in sustainability, and San Francisco addressed environmental justice

in sustainability (SBI TF 2005a). These examples highlight the fact that social equity can have a very broad definition, one that encompasses too many issues to be comprehensively addressed in a sustainability program. When I asked one of the business TF members if he had any ideas for how social sustainability or social equity could have been better addressed in the SBI, he said:

For me, I think there is a clearer and more well-established nexus between business activity and environmental impacts and trying to force the companies to internalize their costs or to recognize the cost component of that and trying to improve the way they do business, that's understandable. The social equity piece, while businesses have some impact on that, there are a whole lot of other things they could do as well, so singling out business activity as the way to try to address that is a problem for me. So I have a difficult time trying to figure out how to tie this together and make that work. So I don't have any great ideas (Ransom 2008).

While many of the business representatives on the TF referred to a lack of clarity around social equity, the social equity sub-committee of the TF created a clear and understandable definition and measurement for social equity. The social equity sub-committee produced a table of social equity indicators and generated a simple method for measurement (See Table 5). A comparison of the work produced by the social equity, environmental and economic sub-groups shows that the social equity sub-group provided as much, or more, clarity on social equity than did the other sub-groups on their respective issues (SBI TF Social Equity Sub-committee 2006).

Further investigation as to why SBI business representatives found it difficult to address social equity issues revealed that they felt threatened by the costs related to social equity measures. The same SBI leader who cited the difficulties of defining and measuring social equity aspects of sustainability later admitted in a conversation about health care that his concerns were based more upon cost:

I know from a business person's perspective, it's fine for people to sit around and say that a business ought to pay for the health care of its employees. In fact, I can't imagine any business owner who would disagree with that. It's quite another to actually do it. And not only is it quite another thing to actually do it but it's an entirely different thing to do it and survive economically. You just simply can't afford it, in many cases, to do it... if you require that little

organization to pay health care benefits, much as they would like to and probably are aware of the need more than anybody, we're out of business (Nichols 2008).

This SBI leader underscored the fact that, despite business owners' interest in providing health care to employees, it is simply not always economically feasible to do so. Although, many business owners in Eugene provide social benefits to their employees, such as health care, a living wage, or some other form of benefits. However, the issue of business owners providing employees with health insurance is a huge, nationwide problem that is demonstrated by the intense debate that occurred over national health care legislation in the winter months of 2010.

One business representative on the TF framed social equity according to a classic conundrum of economic development: a community must either choose to have *few* good, high-paying jobs (socially equitable sustainability), or *many* not-so-good, low-paying jobs (socially inequitable sustainability) (Ransom 2008). In short, the social equity components of sustainability were framed in the SBI in the same way that environmental issues are often framed in economic development discussions — jobs versus the environment. This framing is commonly used to undermine any push to include environmental, social or community concerns within a given project. In a society in which employment is essential to individual and community well-being, any threat to employment, whether legitimate or not, has a dramatic impact upon the direction of the discussion, just as it did on the SBI.

In the end, while it may be true that social equity is difficult to define and measure, I don't think defining social equity was the major challenge for the SBI TF. The social equity sub-committee provided a definition and method for measuring social equity that rivaled any proffered by the other sub-committees. The underlying failure was in not presenting a convincing argument that by creating the triple-bottom line, a business can still retain a profitable bottom line. Businesses rarely want to appear to the public as entirely profit-driven, and so, they may rely on the argument that the failure to include social equity in the SBI was due to its complexity and vagueness, whereas, in reality, it was simply the business sector's fear of losing profits.

### **The Business Community as Environmentalist?**

Since some of the business representatives on the SBI TF played such a major role in how social equity was addressed in the SBI, it is important to look at these individuals' previous work on sustainability, and their motivations for serving on the TF. The majority of the business representatives on the TF had been involved in incorporating environmentally sustainable practices into their business operations. In this sense, Mayor Piercy did not solicit business owners for the SBI who were not already involved in some way with environmental sustainability. When asked during his interview to comment on the backgrounds of the other business representatives on the TF, one business representative confirmed that they were environmentally oriented, and that to have selected individuals who were opposed to environmentalism would have undermined the purpose of the SBI. "There were no nay-sayers and that wouldn't have made sense. I mean, there wasn't enough time to try to fight those battles" (Nichols 2008). However, it is essential to keep in mind that these businesses were selected to participate on the SBI TF based upon their environmental practices, not their social equity practices.

My interviews with SBI business leaders revealed that many of them had a deep personal commitment to running their business in ways that benefited the environment. In addition, as environmental sustainability has become more popular, many business owners are recognizing that marketing their products as sustainable could have significant financial benefits. For example, one of the main economic development leaders in Lane County said:

[M]ost of the businesses that have survived [in Eugene] have recognized that this is the way of the future, we need to get ahead of it, and increasingly they're trying to go out and use their own public relations and resources to get the credit for doing good things, and I think the public is starting to respond to that. For a long time they didn't (Ransom 2008).

His comment alludes to the attractiveness of profit-making in the environmental sustainability movement. However, he quickly followed up this comment by stating that publicizing environmental sustainability depends on the type of business. Recounting a conversation he had with another local business owner about the environmental practices used in that business owner's manufacturing process:

[I said to him] that must be a great selling point with your customers. He said, you know, what we've learned is that we don't bring [our environmental practices] up unless they do because as soon as we start telling them how green it is they assume that it's more expensive and we're not, we're very competitive but people just assume that (Ransom 2008).

On the one hand, some businesses are using sustainability as a marketing tool to attract consumers. On the other hand, some businesses are addressing sustainability because it reduces their operating costs or they believe in it, but do not want to associate with it publicly because they fear consumers will think their products are more expensive than traditional products. Similarly, during her mayoral campaign, Mayor Piercy's advisors recommended she not use the word "sustainability" at all, due to its varied meanings and potential to alienate certain constituencies. The different ways that business owners related to sustainability reflect the thin line the Mayor was attempting to walk throughout the SBI.

Ultimately, it appears the Mayor was hoping that the SBI process would encourage better business practices and greater cooperation and support from the business community for her larger political agenda. However, she does not appear to have anticipated the strong connection business representatives would make between environmental sustainability and profitability, as well as the even stronger connection they would make between equity issues and unprofitability. With more and more sustainability initiatives like the Mayor's cropping up around the country and the globe, sustainability will continue to grow more popular with the general public. Consequently, in the future, more business owners will likely see the benefits of marketing their businesses as sustainable. However, the much more challenging task is not to broaden the acceptability of environmental sustainability but, rather, to convince business owners

that social equity is essential to being truly sustainable, and that social equity is profitable as well.

### **The Failure of the Proposed “Social Equity Certification Standards” Program**

The Social Equity Standards Certification program, devised by the SBI TF’s social equity sub-committee, was the only tangible social equity proposal that emerged from the TF. The proposed certification program elicited a variety of responses from business representatives, the majority of whom were unsupportive. The strongest response centered on opposition to an aspect of the program that purported to incentivize certain business operations:

I don’t really see any of these as ones that I would say, yeah, this is something we could do, even such small things as participatory communication...I still think a lot of businesses would be very nervous about that...I think it’s very intimidating to a lot of businesses, and sets a tone that makes them feel uneasy about their relationship with their governing bodies, if that’s where it’s coming from (Ransom 2008).

TF members representing the business community said that they would be more supportive of a social equity program run by an entity other than the City, preferably a business friendly entity such as the Chamber of Commerce:

I think that [incentivization] works much better, particularly if the awards are not given, let’s say, by the government and have some other group that does that. Now, Oregon Business Magazine gives these awards for best employers. It’s not as clear cut of criteria as those [proposed by the social equity sub-committee]. In fact, most of what it is, is it’s self-nominated by the employees and then they put together a package and all this stuff then they go and compete for it and they get awards...I think those kinds of things can be really good if they’re perceived as being on an objective basis (Ransom 2008).

Not all aspects of the proposed certification program were criticized by the business representatives on the TF. They were supportive of a proposal to give awards to any businesses that were able to meet the proposed social equity standards:

The thing I like about the LEED standard is that you’re not competing with anybody else. If you meet it, you meet it and you would be recognized as a certain type of an employer if you met those standards. I think that would have

real value. But again, as a nongovernmental way and done in a way that it gets enough positive publicity that businesses see that as something that they should be striving for (Ransom 2008).

The aversion to a government-led competitive awarding program was based in part on a view that the City government would not establish objective criteria for the social equity program. The advantage of the “LEED-modeled” social equity program was that the standards were already set and thus were very clear and easy to understand. Businesses would be aware of exactly what they needed to do to achieve the certification recognition. However, the business representatives on the TF still would have preferred the certification, whether LEED or otherwise, to be designed and operated by an entity more friendly to the needs and issues of businesses.

In a step that could be seen as peremptory, shortly after the SBI process was completed the business community created its own sustainability program through the Chamber of Commerce. The business community’s relationship to sustainability, viewed through the lens of its reaction to the SBI, is quite transparent. As long as such a program was designed to increase profit, it was acceptable to have it administered by the government. However, if such a program’s proposals might have an impact on profit or regulation of conduct, then should be administered by a business-led organization, and participation should be voluntary. The business community’s relationship to sustainability was one in which they wanted all of the pleasure and none of the pain.

The influence of the SBI process on business may be considered large, given that after the co-chair of the SBI TF completed his term as Chamber of Commerce President, another SBI TF member assumed control as President of the Chamber. In addition, at least two other TF members became Chamber board members after completion of the SBI process. This could signify a shift in the orientation of the Chamber toward sustainable business practices, and that indeed is the hope of Mayor Piercy. However, the orientation of the business community towards sustainability may be more about co-optation and control, rather than acquiescence. A social equity representative on the TF described the post-SBI business community’s engagement with sustainability this way: “I

think that they'll look at these ideas for sustainability and think, what can we take from this and how can we do whatever . . . gives us the label as long as we can control it" (Fenton 2008).

For many in the business community, the Chamber of Commerce is a good host for sustainability programs because the Chamber can ensure such programs will not be implemented in a way that mandates conduct or has an impact upon profitability. In addition, when operated by the Chamber, the sustainability measures can be more focused on the interests of business rather than on environment and social equity.

### **Health Care as the Middle Ground for Socially Just Sustainability**

Business representatives on the TF may not have responded poorly to all social equity issues put forward by the social equity sub-committee. Yet the sub-committee did not propose a health care recommendation, which may have provided an area for collaboration. During the interviews with TF members after the SBI final recommendations had been made, members were asked if there were any social equity issues that were acceptable to all TF members. The majority of TF members replied that pursuing health care was a missed opportunity in terms of addressing social equity. For example, one of the business representatives on the TF immediately gravitated toward health care:

You can certainly question whether or not employment is the best way to deliver health insurance coverage....But that's the system we have today and for most people if they're going to get health insurance coverage that's where they're going to get it. So I can understand that there are some small businesses that just don't have the ability to do that and that's fine, but then I don't think that the community ought to be putting a lot of time, energy, and resources into trying to promote those types of businesses (Ransom 2008).

The same individual went on to say:

But it is a huge issue. Most of the other ones [such as wages and benefits] you can make arguments, like I said, about "well, does somebody who's a part-time second need to get the same kind of income, but no one can argue that you don't need health insurance. Everybody needs it and we ought to find a way to get everybody covered (Ransom 2008).

The second statement makes clear that this SBI TF member recognized that health insurance was an issue that created a nexus between businesses and social equity advocates. The national crisis around uninsured and underinsured individuals and families in the United States as well as skyrocketing costs to employers has forced many business owners to take a second look at potential solutions to health care issues. Given that health insurance is typically provided to Americans through their employers and, at the same time, the cost can be virtually prohibitive for many businesses, the business community is more willing to work with the government to develop a solution.

One possible solution for the health care situation in Eugene is one that only a few cities have been able to coordinate: City-administered health care consortia. Through these consortia, business owners with small numbers of employees can pool together with other small businesses to purchase health insurance. The city simply helps administer the consortium, which creates a larger pool of employees purchasing health care, bringing the cost down for each employer who joins. A city-led consortium for health care would make sense for Eugene, which has a large number of small businesses and therefore a high number of uninsured workers.<sup>26</sup>

When I asked one of the co-chairs in an interview if the TF dealt with health care and if he had heard of other city governments forming health care consortiums, he responded:

Um, no. I actually—it didn't come up and I think it probably could have gained some traction. Um, actually, I happen to deal with all of the health care issues with our company and so I'm painfully aware of that ominous task of securing health benefits at all under the current climate....I remember that we talked about that but that probably would have been something that we all would have agreed upon and would have probably welcomed the opportunity to discuss that. I've never heard of the City actually organizing such a consortium....But if it's been done and successfully, especially in today's climate, I think that would be an awesome thing that the City could do (Nichols 2008).

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<sup>26</sup> According to the Office for Oregon Health Policy and Research, one in five working age adults lack health insurance, and one in three 18- to 24-year-olds lacked health insurance in Oregon in 2006. (Profile of Oregon's Uninsured, 2006; Office for Oregon Health Policy and Research.)

One of the social equity representatives on the TF also responded positively to the idea of a health care consortium in Eugene. But, for a variety of reasons already mentioned, little effort was made to find the lowest common denominator for social equity.

### **The Business Community's Overall Reaction to the SBI**

Based on the interviews conducted during this study, it is clear that by and large the business representatives on the TF were relieved that the SBI did not result in any major changes to business operations in Eugene (Nichols 2008; Ransom 2008). Ultimately, the recommendations that came out of the SBI were uncontroversial and, as a result, the business community at large was unconcerned with the recommendations and, in some cases, were completely unaware of the SBI. For example, a business representative on the SBI TF said:

I'm not sure most of them are even aware of it. I don't know if it's affecting them. I think if you went out and talked to the average business person they would not even know what you're talking about. And that's not all bad because the way those things become well known is they become controversial, and the fact that this did not become controversial is good. I don't think that they would be surprised to learn [of it]. They all recognize that Eugene has a reputation for being environmental and I think the initial reaction from a lot of business people is okay, so how much more is this going to cost me or are you going to try to tell me how to run my business, or whatever. The fact that it hasn't done that and it hasn't been either a cost or an imposition is really one of the more positive things to say about it (Ransom 2008).

That the SBI process brought together three of the most politically and ideologically divergent groups in Eugene (environmentalists, social justice advocates, and the business community) and did not lead to any controversy worthy of the general public's awareness may be just as much a tribute to its success as to its failure. The larger business community's lack of awareness regarding the SBI was likely a direct result of the recommendations involving only voluntary compliance through incentives and technical support (SBI TF 2006a). Such unenforceable recommendations were the primary aim of the traditional business community members involved with the SBI and

they indeed were successful in achieving this goal. This outcome was facilitated by the Mayor's goal of improving her relationship with the business community, and the reaction to the SBI by the business community was probably what she had hoped would result. The SBI process had potential to undermine the Mayor's credibility in all of the communities it sought to represent, yet, for the most part, it remained out of the limelight. Had the SBI made recommendations that required regulated or mandatory conduct, the business community would have surely been angered, solidifying that community's opposition to her reelection. Instead, the SBI simply helped the business community to envision new paths for sustainable economic development – a valuable endeavor, but certainly not a bold one.

One member of the TF who was closely affiliated with the Chamber of Commerce described the overall effect of the SBI on the business community as follows:

And then as we finished I think people thought, well, that was fairly harmless. The Chamber of Commerce really got on board. They actually have since then begun to continue to promote the notion of sustainability and the advantages of that to the business community. There still is, and I would agree with this, there still is a sense of, well, that was fine and that's actually somewhat helpful. But in terms of actually promoting and securing, reaching out to new business to get folks that are not currently doing business here to come and do business here in the world of sustainable business products, for example, we haven't really seen anything that's been very helpful there. We haven't noticed a great wave of business startups here in town. And so to the extent that was supposed to happen and the business community saw that as an example of success...that hasn't happened yet (Nichols 2008).

The statement commends the City for essentially doing nothing. Because the SBI failed to produce any mandatory programs, it garnered Chamber support and was considered a success. But the statement simultaneously blames the City for not directly benefiting the business community. This puts the City in a position whereby the only way it can placate business is through direct economic support and the absence of regulation. Neoliberalism is indicated as the ideal economic model in this argument.

Ultimately, I would argue that some business owners participated in the SBI to keep an eye on the process and ensure it would not have a negative impact upon

businesses. The process was educational for them in terms of providing a better understanding of sustainability. Once the key issues, challenges, opportunities, etc. were identified, they attempted to co-opt the process by creating their own Chamber-led sustainability program to strengthen their ownership of the idea. Although this program does not appear to be functioning as an alternative to the Sustainability Commission, it points to the goal of the Eugene Chamber, to control any process that impacts business to ensure a pro-business climate despite the impact on community and environment.

### **SBI TF Environmental Representatives and the Marginalization of Social Equity**

To paint a full picture of the marginalization of social equity in the SBI process, the discussion must now turn to the role of the environmental representatives on the TF. Unlike the social justice community, the environmental community in Eugene was much more practiced in participating in City governmental processes. In fact, the environmental community's desire to participate in the SBI was overwhelming. During almost every public comment period in the initial stages of the SBI TF, the vast majority of comments were related to environmentalism and the SBI, not social equity (SBI TF 2005, 2006b). While there were many environmentalists willing to volunteer to participate on the TF, the Mayor had to actively seek out and solicit social justice representatives. The distinct responses from these communities toward the SBI reflect the strength of the environmental movement in Eugene, and the clear connection between sustainable business practices and environmentalism. Mayor Piercy highlighted the comprehensive approach towards the environment taken by the City of Eugene:

You saw [the City's environmental commitment] reflected in the Olympic Trials where we were trying to be a prototype for really green Olympic Trials. We're just doing that with everything. We're trying to ramp up our bike and pedestrian plan to keep it moving forward. Just on every level we're trying to bring these things along. We were working on a carbon emissions baseline and are working towards our goals for carbon neutrality and all those things. And City purchasing is, I think it's like 70-some percent local and 80-some percent within the State, so we are very conscious about the local purchasing. The work we recently did for

the Council offices was very green. We'll keep doing as much as we can (Piercy 2008).

However, within the environmental community in Eugene (and around the world), awareness often is limited with regard to how social location affects one's relationship with and experience of the environment. The Mayor pointed this out when she discussed some of the areas in which community dialogue often breaks down:

And then we have this other quality that I think is a tough one in Eugene too and that is, for lack of a better way to express it, there are some people who are involved in the environmental movement who don't have to worry about income very much. They may be trust babies. They may be people who are happy leading a kind of modest lifestyle. They're a little elitist about everyday people's lives and don't have much sympathy sometimes for people who are just struggling to feed their families and be able to get from one place to another and who either don't choose or can't lead the same lifestyle as some of the environmentally pure. I think each of these need a little bit more understanding of the values of the other....Somehow, being environmentally sound cannot just be the purview of the privileged and monied (Piercy 2008).

Reflecting Eugene's environmental community's focus on environmental issues relevant to middle- and upper-class families, the environmental sub-committee generated a list of indicators of environmental sustainability with no explicit equity dimensions. These indicators were location (maintaining a sustainable site), green building construction and/or renovation, water efficiency, energy use, atmosphere/ outdoor air quality, business inputs/outputs (materials and resources), solid waste, reuse and recycling, indoor air quality, and employee sustainability education and support.

### **Conclusion: Eugene's Unique and Significant Experience with Sustainability**

Recent literature suggests that city-regions are the main place to promote and sustain economic competitiveness: "[I]n the new economy city-regions will eclipse nation-states as the primary scale for promoting and sustaining economic competitiveness" (Krueger and Savage 2007:215; Scott 2001). But economic competitiveness is not just about production capacity, it is also about social reproduction, which includes maintaining or achieving a high quality of life for city residents. A high

quality of life can be achieved through “strategies for conserving open space, reducing commute times, delivering public transport, providing affordable housing, improving access to services (such as healthcare), and creating and preserving good wage-earning jobs for those not holding one of the city-region’s ‘signature’ jobs” (Krueger and Savage 2007:215).

It may be that Eugene’s attempt to provide for a wide variety of needs and interests created the landscape from which the sustainable development discourse emerged. City governments are attempting to “manage tensions around competitiveness and social reproduction,” and use sustainability as a way to address these often disparate needs and interests (Krueger and Savage 2007:215). Yet, the sustainability discourse is not solely top-down; in fact, the discourse is a dialectic between the government, interest groups, and individuals. Various interest groups use the sustainable development discourse to advocate for their own interests. For example, business coalitions tie sustainability to increasing profit through sustainability marketing; environmentalists associate it mainly with environmental conservation; and social justice advocates often seek to tie sustainability measures to alleviating social inequalities. (Krueger and Savage 2007:216) The strength of each interest group, the direction in which the government leads the process, and the force of individual personalities within the sustainability discourse often determine the outcomes of the process.

Nevertheless, there may be less wiggle room for social equity advocates within the sustainability discourse than might appear at first look. “[C]urrent constructions of sustainable development are inadequate to capture the broad array of social and economic issues found in the city-region” (Krueger and Savage 2007:216). These same authors (2007) describe current constructions of sustainability like this:

[S]ustainable development strategy as it actually exists, often amounts to little more than a spatial development strategy geared towards middle-class environmentalists or the aesthetic of some emergent “creative class.” While concepts of environmental and social justice do enter into some of these discussions, they usually do so at the organizational level among subaltern groups. In terms of policy, however, sustainable development remains ultimately

about environmental improvements and challenges, not issues of social justice per se (216).

Despite the relatively simple metaphor used to describe sustainability – the three-legged stool – and the well-developed scholarly work around “just sustainability,” it is clear that an environmental definition dominates (See Agyeman 2005). Krueger and Savage (2007) assert that while sustainability has professed a tripartite commitment to social justice, environment and economy, “as a development discourse and incipient set of policies [, sustainability] has yet to live up to its progressive potential: to bring together these issues in a holistic way” (216; Dobson 2003; Gibbs and Krueger 2007; Krueger and Agyeman 2005; Agyeman 2005).

Although citizen participation in city decision making processes has become a mainstay for many cities since the urban riots of the 1960s, this does not mean that citizens are effectively represented in city decision making. In fact, many urban scholars point out that citizen participation processes, such as city advisory committees and task forces, are often dominated by special interests. Most dominant among these interests is the urban-level business coalition, which has realized that influencing city policy making is critical to meeting its constituents’ business needs. Many businesses, despite the impact of a globalized economy, remain locally dependent. As a consequence of their local dependence, gaining power at the local level is very important to these firms. Attaining such power is largely intended to create a “business-friendly climate” in which they can operate. Businesses often claim that without a business-friendly climate, businesses will pick up and move to a more friendly locale, taking the jobs with them. (Cox and Mair 1988) Unfortunately, there has not been a corollary to business coalitions within progressive social movements. Labor unions would be the natural corollary, but they have often sided with business coalitions when jobs and the environment are pitted against each other (Cox and Mair 1988).

The city is often stuck between a rock and a hard place when it comes to balancing the interests of the community and environment with economic growth. This is due to the city’s “dual local dependence” on the electorate and the local economy.

Elected city officials must provide for community well-being and, at the same time, ensure that jobs are being created through economic development and that the tax base is expanded to fund projects related to community well-being. Given their dual allegiance to the electorate and the economy, city officials are often torn between meeting popular demands for improved quality of life (housing, transportation, services, jobs, clean and healthy environment, etc.) and business demands for a friendly business climate.

Complicating this dual local dependence is the fact that business coalitions have become more involved in city decision making, particularly around economic development. This is especially true as city governments make greater use of partnerships between the public and private sectors. Urban regime theory explains that city governments are “driven to cooperate with those who hold resources essential to achieving local goals, regime formation is essentially about building coalitions to improve the local state’s capacity to formulate and carry out strategies to cope with social and economic change” (Bassett 1995:548). Public-private partnerships are a form of coalition that have exploded in number as cities’ economic troubles have deepened, neoliberal policies have become more common, and cities have cut back on local authority powers. Currently, many U.S. cities are supplementing market forces with “a new support apparatus of non-elected agencies, such as Urban Development Corporations, designed (with the aid of public subsidies) to extend market processes into more marginal areas of the urban economy and land market” (Bassett 1995:540). Bassett (1995) elaborates on these private-public partnerships by saying that “Although partnerships may vary in size, number and organization in different cities, they usually represent a truncated range of local interests with a specific, market-oriented agenda. Lines of accountability are also often limited and confused” (541). Accordingly, in most U.S. cities today, a number of platforms exist from which business coalitions can influence and drive local policy, and sustainability is one such platform. Faced with these pressures, Mayor Piercy pursued the SBI as a strategy to address the economic competitiveness of Eugene, and to address a number of social reproduction issues that

were important to Eugene residents – affordable housing, access to open space, good jobs, etc. Like many other citizen participation processes in the United States though, the SBI TF opened the door for special interest views, specifically those of traditional business interests, to dominate the decision making of the SBI TF. The call for city governments to create a business-friendly climate is a nearly omnipresent demand of the business community, and this was no different in the case of the Mayor’s SBI. Thus, requests that the SBI TF address social equity invoked claims from traditional business interests that such proposals were anti-business and would result in job loss.

Krueger and Savage (2007) poignantly explain the common pitfall of the “sustainability fix,” even when city officials like Mayor Piercy have the best intentions in utilizing this unifying discourse in order to bridge disparate interests and goals:

The literature on sustainable development has long purported to focus on the tripartite relationship between economy, environment and social justice (internal citation omitted). Despite this somewhat tiring refrain (and accompanying political back-slapping), sustainable development as a development discourse and incipient set of policies has yet to live up to its progressive potential: to bring together these issues in a holistic way (internal citation omitted). It is an alluring concept to be sure, yet sustainability remains problematic both analytically and practically (216).

In the case of the Mayor’s SBI, sustainability was used as a framework for Eugene’s economic development strategy, but incorporating such a vision into practice will always be accompanied by struggle. Analyzing this struggle in Eugene has led to this study’s ability to pinpoint the successes and failures of the program and to call for improvements in implementation that might be useful for other cities, or Eugene itself, which plan to engage in a sustainability initiative. I will turn to these recommendations in Chapter V.

Eugene’s struggle with social equity in the SBI process is both unique and common to other communities. When asked if Eugene’s experience dealing with social equity was similar to other communities, a TF representative from the economic development community said:

I think so. As much as we’d like to think of ourselves as a unique community, I’m not sure we’re that different than a lot of other places in dealing with those

issues....Maybe the fact that we are a college town and we have groups here that keep raising those issues to the forefront makes us perhaps more aware of it than some, not all communities, but I don't know whether it helps us resolve them (Ransom 2008).

This TF member's comment highlights the fact that Eugene faces very similar economic development challenges to those of other communities. All communities in the United States operate within the same national economic sphere, which in general prioritizes economic growth over other factors, such as social or environmental conditions. These factors are nearly universally present in each community in the United States, thus although this research is limited to Eugene's SBI, it addresses issues faced by communities everywhere: how to balance economic, social and environmental issues in a capitalist economy. Commenting on this, an SBI TF member said:

But I think it would be fair to say that most of what we concentrated on was how can we improve our environmental record as a community without adversely jeopardizing the economic or financial one. There was an unspoken sense that the social part of it was, if not less important, less clear, therefore, it kind of did get shunted to the side...since we were trying to operate on a more or less consensus basis and keep everybody on board there really wasn't any way to keep the business people there if you tried to have these very strict [social equity] rules. So that did get subordinated in fact if not in our verbiage. We all, I think, at the end of it recognized we had not really done that piece that some would have liked us to (Ransom 2008).

This chapter has examined the more subtle and intimate face of the SBI, especially the SBI TF's relationship to social equity. The social equity representatives on the TF tried to keep social equity issues in play throughout the SBI process, but because their focus was primarily on labor issues, progress was difficult. Once the TF got going and everyone recognized one other's stake in the process, it was probably apparent on all sides that moving the social equity representatives' issues forward would be contentious. This was problematic because the social equity representatives did not feel they had sufficient support from the external labor or social justice communities to be able to really apply pressure to the SBI process. Although addressing social equity was one of the Mayor's goals at the beginning of the SBI process, pushing it forward became

problematic when contrasted with her goal of finding common ground among the different communities in Eugene. She did not want the relationships among these communities to fracture further. In addition, because she had gone out on a limb herself to get the SBI going, she did not want it to break down and thereby tarnish her legacy. While the SBI did not result in the perfect alignment of the triple bottom line, it was indeed an important step for Eugene's future as it heads down a path toward greater equality and prosperity.

**CHAPTER IV**  
**THE ENTREPRENEURIAL CITY: URBAN POLITICAL-ECONOMY**  
**AND SUSTAINABILITY**

**Introduction**

Policies to achieve urban sustainability, such as reducing a city's greenhouse gas emissions, creating good, green jobs, reducing urban residents' waste, or creating local, organic food sources that are accessible to all urban residents, require government action. Such action can take many forms and can be broad-based or quite nuanced. However, there are three overarching methods by which a government can implement sustainability measures. Government can fund and run a specific program to achieve sustainability goals; through regulation it can limit unsustainable activities in the private sector; or through incentives it can encourage sustainable practices in the community. The Mayor's SBI, as an initiative aimed primarily at changing the practices of the businesses community, could have utilized any three of the above methods, or a combination of all of them, in order to address the issue of sustainable economic development. Given the stated goal of the SBI, to create "a healthy economy that conserves the environment while providing equitable access to jobs with fair wages, benefits and other services crucial to families," the means to do so were open ended, in theory (SBI Final Report 2006).

Over the last couple of decades, responsibility for urban economic development strategies has largely shifted from public agencies to partnerships between the public and private sectors (Bassett 1996; Kearns and Paddison 2000). This shift is attributable to a broader shift in urban governance. Recently, various local interests and coalitions have demanded that city governments become more entrepreneurial, exploit competitive

advantages to attract investment from other cities, and play a role in the global economy similar to that of a nation-state; this shift in the role of urban governance is related to “the rolling back of national state regulation, the cutting loose of localities from centralized fiscal resources and controls, and the triumph of a neoliberal ‘growth first’ ideology” (White, Jonas and Gibbs 2004:549). The proliferation of public-private partnerships around economic development strategy has provided a vehicle for local business leaders and coalitions to influence urban politics and decision-making (Bassett 1996; MacLeod 2002). As a result, business coalitions have become much more involved in urban-level politics and, in many cases, have also become highly influential (Bassett 1996).

While the SBI was a *business* initiative that fell under the realm of economic development strategy, the Mayor and others who set the SBI in motion had explicit goals for the SBI to meet social and environmental needs in the Eugene community: “equitable access to jobs with fair wages, benefits and other services crucial to families” (SBI Final Report 2006). As a result, the recommendations born out of the SBI could have followed the typical economic development strategy- to reduce regulation on businesses, assist businesses in navigating the city bureaucracy, or provide loan and tax abatements to businesses (Gibbs and Jonas 1999; Kearns and Paddison 2000; Whitehead 2002). On the other hand, strategies to address social and environmental concerns often require regulation of action, such as housing codes, occupational safety and health laws, work hour limitations, minimum wage requirements, clean air and water regulation, endangered species protection, and other similar regulations (Gibbs and Jonas 1999; Harvey 1989; Valler, Wood and North 2000). In this sense, there were major contradictions between assisting businesses in creating a sustainable economy (economic development strategy) and addressing serious social and environmental problems in Eugene, such as high unemployment, underemployment, lack of health benefits, unaffordable housing, etc. In the end, the SBI TF’s policy development process for building a more socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable Eugene and, ultimately, its neglect of social equity, raised serious issues about the role of government

in achieving urban sustainability; namely, how should sustainable practices be achieved vis-à-vis local government- through incentives, regulation or some combination of these two? And, even more broadly, is it the responsibility of city government to regulate for social and environmental quality, ensuring a decent quality of life for all urban residents and a healthy ecosystem?

Some of the members of the SBI TF representing social and labor interests argued that addressing social justice issues in the context of sustainability would require the government to regulate certain issues, such as mandating that businesses that contracted with the City of Eugene pay a living wage- a higher minimum wage that allowed workers to meet their basic needs for food, shelter and other necessities<sup>27</sup> (Bell 2008; Fenton 2008). On the other hand, business owners and other representatives of the traditional business community adamantly demanded that the SBI not regulate businesses at all, but instead provide incentives to businesses that meet certain established social and environmental standards (SBI TF 2005e). However, even incentives were not popular among the traditional business representatives on the SBI TF because incentives created aspirations for social and environmental conduct, and businesses that did not meet such standards could be negatively perceived (Ranson 2008; SBI TF 2005e).

The conflict over whether to incentivize or regulate business' use of sustainability practices is particularly relevant to addressing social justice and environmental concerns, and is also quite intriguing given the 2008–2009 deregulation-induced financial collapse experienced in the United States. There is much evidence to suggest that reducing social inequality and protecting the environment is very difficult, if not impossible, without government's targeting certain business behaviors with regulations (Ayres 1998; Whitehead 2002; Jones 2008). For example, if the government sets a living wage standard or pollution cap, then businesses have no choice but to adapt. Incentives, like

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<sup>27</sup> According to ACORN, one of the main U.S. organizations that has worked to pass living wage ordinances in U.S. cities, “[t]hese laws set higher minimum wages for the employees of companies benefiting from public contracts, subsidies, or actions, and in some cases also for direct government employees” (ACORN 2010).

tax abatements or public recognition, may alter business behavior over time but, typically, not as quickly, as directly, or as significantly (Jones 2008). Some city officials and policy makers have chosen to regulate practices in order to achieve sustainability; for example, the Eugene City Council passed an ordinance requiring most new City of Eugene building construction to meet a silver level of certification under the U.S. Green Building Council's certification system (City of Portland 2010). Similarly, the City of Seattle passed an ordinance in 2002 that required a 5% fuel use reduction in the city's vehicle fleet by 2005 (City of Eugene 2010). The aforementioned policies only affect city government's action, however; actors outside of city government, like private businesses or nonprofits, are not affected by these standards. Others policy makers and officials have chosen a combination of regulation and incentives. Most urban sustainability initiatives, such as the Mayor's SBI, only recommend the use of incentives to encourage businesses to practice social, environmental, and economic sustainability, reflecting the influence on policy the traditional business community often wields over the development of sustainability programs (Gibbs 1997; MacLeod 2002; White, Jonas and Gibbs 2004). One of the incentive-based programs initiated by Eugene Mayor Piercy is the "Bold Steps Sustainability Award." Through this program, businesses are honored for making decisions "based on the triple bottom line: taking extra care in how they treat people and the planet, while supporting economic prosperity" (City of Eugene 2010). Businesses that are selected for the award are recognized on local radio and television networks for their sustainable practices (City of Eugene 2010).

The most contentious and regularly mentioned social sustainability issues the SBI TF discussed were the level of workplace wages and health and retirement benefits. Given that wages and benefits are also one of the major expenses for businesses, these are extremely sensitive issues, which many businesses are unlikely to address unless forced to do so. As a result, social justice representatives on the TF came to the conclusion that in order for social sustainability issues to be adequately addressed- including wage and benefit issues, the city government would need to assume some sort of regulatory role

such as adopting a living wage ordinance. This position was in stark contrast to that of the business community. While the purported goal of the SBI was to address environmental, economic *and* social sustainability issues simultaneously, ultimately, the SBI TF chose to only recommend the use of incentives for creating a more sustainable Eugene, and this was mainly in relation to environmental issues. Social justice issues were largely excluded from these incentive-based recommendations even though the Social Equity Sub-Committee produced a lengthy list of workplace and community indicators for social equity that could be incentivized. This led me to ask the fundamental question: Why, given that the goal of the SBI was to make recommendations for creating “a healthy economy that conserves the environment while providing equitable access to jobs with fair wages, benefits and other services crucial to families,” did the SBI TF choose to only make recommendations for a more sustainable Eugene that relied on incentivization? More importantly, is it possible to design an economic development strategy that addresses equally social, environmental and economic concerns? If so, what role does city government have in the development and implementation of urban sustainability strategy? What combination of regulation and incentives is necessary to truly address a city’s social and environmental concerns? And finally, how do recent national and international political-economic trends impact the possibility and nature of city-led socially just, sustainability efforts such as the Eugene SBI? Very few studies of urban sustainability look beyond the local arena to consider broader social, economic and political processes that shape sustainability efforts, in particular, how these forces shape urban governance and, as a result, dictate the relationship city government has with developing and implementing sustainability initiatives (Bulkeley and Betsill 2005; Whitehead 2003). In other words, very few studies of urban political-economy examine the internal features of local governance, such as organizational structure, policy styles and priorities, government-community relations, as I did with the SBI in the previous chapter. A ground-level examination of the internal features of local governance helps reveal the mechanics of business,

community, and city government in local economic strategy (Valler, Wood, and North, 2000). These internal features of local governance reflect and are shaped by the broader political-economic context of cities, including the forces of entrepreneurialism that impact the potential for and nature of socially just, sustainability measures. These broader political-economic forces and how they impact the nature and possibility of socially just, sustainability measures in Eugene are the focus of this chapter.

In this chapter, I argue that several major political-economic forces have shifted the role of urban government in the United States which, in turn, influence local government's role in sustainability initiatives. First, the triumph of neoliberal "growth first" ideology has bolstered the demand from traditional business coalitions for an entrepreneurial city government. An entrepreneurial city is one which includes the proliferation of public-private partnerships around economic development, the increased influence of traditional business coalitions on city policy, and increasing competition between locales to attract business investment. As part of the adoption of neoliberal policies at the federal level, localities have been cut loose from centralized fiscal resources and controls. This shift compounds the fiscal crisis facing most U.S. cities and creates a situation in which city governments attempt to fulfill social and environmental demands with limited city funding (Cox and Mair 1988; Kearns and Paddison 2000; Oregon Center for Public Policy 2006; Valler, Wood and North 2000).

In the 1970's, President Nixon implemented revenue-sharing between all levels of government, but in the 1980's Reagan swiftly dismantled this system and began shifting responsibility for key services from the federal level to state and local government (National League of Cities 2003). Since the 1980's, the administration of federal programs, like housing, job training, Headstart and Medicaid, has been shifted to state and local government without accompanying funds to administer the programs (National League of Cities 2003). In general the relationship between federal and state/local level government has been marked by unfunded federal mandates and tax cuts. An increase in responsibility for program administration along with limited funding from the federal

government had made U.S. cities particularly vulnerable during economic crises, like the 1991, 2000 and now the 2007 crisis, because without federal funding city governments are largely dependent upon three sources of income- property, sales and income taxes (National League of Cities 2003). When these taxes decline, city governments face serious budget crises. The 2007 economic crisis has caused cities across the country to lay off city employees (usually related to arts and recreation), sell off park land, cut direct services (like fire and police protection, trash pickup and library services), and make other budgetary cuts (Saulny 2008). A 2008 survey of 300 city finance officers by the National League of Cities found that 80% of city governments “would be less able to meet their needs in 2009 than this year [2008]” (Saulny 2008).

Second, another aspect of city government’s shifting role is the greater demand from the environmental movement for local government to regulate for environmental quality. In direct contradiction to business coalitions’ call for city government to limit regulation, the environmental movement, and to some extent the social justice movement, are asserting that it is the responsibility of local government to affirmatively regulate social and environmental standards. This contradiction is clear in Eugene where the environmental movement, particularly the radical environmental movement, has been very active in influencing local policy making and there has been significant tension between the environmental and business communities regarding how Eugene should develop. For example, in June 1997, Earth First!ers and Cascadia Forest Defenders (a radical environmental organization based in Eugene, OR) protested the cutting of 40 trees in downtown Eugene to make way for a parking garage and a new commercial and residential development (Abraham 2006). These environmentalists occupied trees in the area and had to be physically removed by the Eugene police in order for the trees to be cut (Abraham 2006). The confrontation between police and protestors ended with one protestor being violently dragged from a tree just before all 40 trees were cut (Abraham 2006). This case represents just one example of the hardened tensions between environmentalists, the city government and the business community in Eugene.

Third, the experience of the Mayor's SBI leads me to argue that most sustainability initiatives offer a compromise that charts a path somewhere in between the environmental and social justice communities' demands for greater regulation and the business community's opposition to regulation. White, Jonas and Gibbs (2002) refer to this compromise as the "sustainability fix" based on Harvey's (1989) notion of a "spatial fix"- an attempt to resolve tensions between capital and labor, and economic development and collective consumption (Harvey 1989; White, Jonas, and Gibbs 2002). According to White, et al. (2002), sustainable urban development is a way "to safeguard growth trajectories in the wake of industrial capitalism's long downturn, the global 'ecological crisis' and the rise of popular environmentalism" (551). In this sense, the notion of the "sustainability fix" attempts to "capture some of the governance dilemmas, compromises and opportunities created by the current era of state restructuring and ecological modernization" (Jonas and Gibbs 2002:551). Therefore, in this section, I examine how sustainability initiatives represent a compromise path for city government between the demands of traditional business coalitions and the environmental and social justice communities.

Finally, I conclude the chapter by exploring how social and environmental concerns may be combined with current economic development strategies, putting sustainable economic development on a trajectory for success (Krueger and Savage 2007).

### **The Triumph of Neoliberal "Growth First" Ideology: Local Government as the Final Frontier**

While the effects of neoliberal policies and broader trends of globalization on the social and political-economic situations of Global South countries have been well documented, the effects of these trends at the local or city-level have been less studied. However, neoliberal policy and globalization have significantly altered the political-economic role of local governments, and thus impacted the social condition of many U.S.

cities, just as they have affected the role of national and international institutions. Peck and Tickell (2002) describe neoliberalism as an “operating framework or ideological software for competitive globalization, inspiring and imposing far-reaching programs of state restructuring and rescaling across a wide range of national and local contexts” (380). Indeed, neoliberalism is now a strong and hegemonic discourse in most political spheres, and free trade, flexible labor, active individualism, business involvement and overall, an extension of markets and the logics of competitiveness, are hardly questioned (381).

Peck and Tickell (2002) identify two main phases of neoliberal policy that are closely connected with a changing role for local government in policy-making, service provision and, more generally, economic development and environmental protection efforts. The first phase, which began in the 1980s, was termed “roll-back neoliberalism” because it focused on deregulation and dismantlement of “Keynesian-welfarist and social-collectivist institutions” (384). Following “roll-back neoliberalism” was “roll-out neoliberalism,” which focused more on “purposeful construction and consolidation of neoliberalized state forms, modes of governance, and regulatory relations” (384). Prior to the first wave of neoliberalism, local government- including elected officials and city staff- was the main decision-maker, a regulator, and a service provider, and guarantor of a certain quality of life (Gibbs 1997).

Following the dismantling of local government’s Keynesian-welfare model, which mainly included a significant reduction in housing, job development, Medicaid and education programs, the second phase of neoliberalism was marked by local government’s role-shifting to one of “urban governance.” Valler, Wood and North (2000) describe urban governance as broad and fragmented, “extending beyond the formal agencies of local government to include a ‘wide range of other actors, institutional and individual, private and voluntary and public sector, which are involved in regulating a local economy and society’” (409, quoted in Imrie and Raco 1999:45). In this sense, the roles and responsibilities of local governments have expanded without local government gaining additional power or additional funds to accompany their expanded

responsibilities (Nicholls and Beaumont 2004). Accordingly, certain changes, such as more administrative and service provision by local governments, a shift towards consolidating local governments into metropolitan level governing bodies, and an increase in interest group involvement in city politics, has led to “an expanded and more perforated urban political opportunity structure” (123). This transformation in local governments has spurred urban interest groups and movements to organize and make demands upon city government (Nicholls and Beaumont 2004). As a result, many cities today face contradictory forces that greatly influence and shape their policies and actions. More of a burden has been placed on city governments to maintain the economic health of their cities with little assistance from federal and state funds (Logan and Molotch 1987). At the same time, various urban stakeholders and social movements recognize the political opportunity structure in city governments and therefore demand city governments be more responsive to their demands, including protecting the urban environment and addressing urban social problems (Agyman and Evans 2003). In short, city governments are charged with being good “entrepreneurial cities” in a globalized world, as well as a regulator of environmental and social health.

For example, the private sector, especially business coalitions, such as the Chamber of Commerce, have taken on various leadership roles related to urban policy, planning, education, housing, welfare, finance and transport, which were previously filled by local governmental authorities. This leadership is largely marked by the emergence of partnerships between local government and the private sector; in the economic development sphere, urban economic development policy is now almost exclusively directed by partnerships between business coalitions and local government (e.g., regional, nonprofit economic development agencies). The Lane Metro Partnership, represented on the SBI TF, is the organization in Eugene, OR that fulfills this public-private partnership role for economic development. Lane Metro Partnership describes itself as the “official source of economic development and business information for Eugene, Springfield and Lane County Oregon,” providing information on site locations and building, the cost of

doing business, labor force availability, education and training, and business and industry (Lane Metro Partnership 2010). In the previous chapter, I argued that business interests had significant influence on the SBI process and this corresponds to the shift to urban governance that creates space for greater influence by business in local policy making.

Beyond economic development policy, the shift to urban governance means that local governments have much less power to create policy and, instead, they act in more of a facilitating or coordinating role for these broader coalitions of local government and business interests attempts to “boost” capital development in the region, what Harvey and Logan (1989) and Molotch (1976) call the “urban growth machine.” It is important to note that labor unions have also often been a part of this so-called “growth machine” that encourages increased economic growth and development in the region, particularly the building and construction trades, which benefit directly from new development (Harvey 1989; Molotch 1976). Essentially, local government is leveraged by broader business, and sometimes labor interests, to gain outside sources of funding, new investment and new employment sources (Harvey 1989). Harvey identifies four main strategies for urban entrepreneurialism: 1) exploiting some labor or natural resource advantage for the production of goods and services, such as offering a package of assistance as an inducement to corporations; 2) a consumerist style of urbanization that markets the city as an “innovative, exciting, creative, and safe place to live or visit, to play and consume in” (1989:9). This may include improving and drawing attention to the environment of a region or highlighting its unique arts and culture to attract consumers and/or business investment (Kearns and Paddison 2000); 3) gaining headquarters or key command and control centers related to finance, government or other information gathering operations; and 4) obtaining key contracts from the federal government, usually pertaining to military and defense (Harvey 1989). Most cities pursue at least a couple of these strategies, if not all of them, in some shape or form.

The push for deregulation is part of what Harvey (1989) identifies as strategy number one – exploiting some labor or natural resource advantage – and is one of the

most common strategies pursued by cities under “roll-back neoliberalism.” It encourages localities to compete with each other by reducing social and environmental regulatory standards and, at the same time, be more entrepreneurial; in other words, “to facilitate, encourage and even publicly subsidize the accelerated mobility of circulating capital and resources” (Harvey 1989). Prior to the pressure for cities to be more entrepreneurial, local governments focused on providing their residents with necessary services, facilities and other benefits; under the ‘entrepreneurial city’ model, local governments instead focus their attention on fostering and encouraging economic and employment growth through local development (Harvey 1989). Under the entrepreneurial or economic development model of governance, entitlements are less available and services and benefits are less comprehensive and less adequate (Kearns and Paddison 2000). The push for local government to be more innovative and entrepreneurial is also exacerbated by the reduction in federal redistributions and local tax revenues under the neoliberal model. In fact, many cities do not feel the federal government can assist them with their fiscal austerity, thus cities actually try to “delink or decouple themselves from their national economies, sometimes outperforming the national state (Kearns and Paddison 2000).

Deindustrialization, widespread and seemingly “structural” unemployment, fiscal austerity at both the national and local levels, all coupled with a rising tide of neoconservatism and much stronger appeal (though often more in theory than practice) to market rationality and privatization, provide a backdrop to understanding why so many urban governments, often of quite different political persuasions and armed with very different legal and political powers, have all taken a broadly similar direction (Harvey 1989:5).

Local government’s reduction of its social and environmental regulations is a main neoliberal strategy for attracting capital and spurring local development. This model increases competition between locales, not just regionally but internationally as well, and is directly connected to a concurrent decline in the urban manufacturing base and a rise in the service sector. Overall, this “race to the bottom” has created a highly unequal economy in many cities (Brecher and Costello 1998; Sassen, 1990 and 2001). A growing service sector creates new wealth, but not for all people. Women, immigrants,

and people of color are often excluded from the benefits of a growing service sector and, instead, are marginalized to low-wage, part-time and contingent work within the service industry (Sassen 1990; 2001). The shift to a service sector economy has led to a vision for U.S. cities that focuses on the needs and desires of privileged residents, rather than the needs and desires of the majority of urban residents, many of whom are poor (Bayat 2000; Ruben 2001). An emphasis on real estate development also often accompanies a growing service sector economy, which increases the cost of living and, as a consequence, exacerbates low-income residents' economic insecurity (Sassen 2001).

It is within this broader political-economic context of the shift from local government to urban governance that the role of local government vis-à-vis the SBI must be viewed. This shift sheds light on the potential for and nature of local government's involvement in sustainability efforts, such as the SBI, and more broadly on the responsibility of local government to provide social and environmental quality. Neoliberal policy aims to reduce the social welfare provision role of government, including local government but, in the process of dismantling state and national level programs, has shifted more responsibility to local government to deal with the demands of residents and urban interest groups. Yet, local government has not been given the power or the financial resources to address these concerns. As a result, there is much greater interaction between local government, the private sector and a third sector regarding decision-making and policy creation. The business community has taken this opening to advocate successfully for its version of economic development, while the environmental community has advocated successfully for environmental regulation. In these public-private partnerships to address a myriad of urban issues, from downtown revitalization to climate action plans, local government now plays a more coordinating or facilitating role rather than a leadership role.

In terms of local government's need to be more entrepreneurial in order to fulfill its social and economic responsibilities to its residents and other stakeholders, local government tends to use a few different economic growth strategies, which were

identified by Harvey (1989). Eugene has by no means been immune to the pressure to become entrepreneurial but it also has, at times, asserted its power in this discourse; for example, Eugene bucked the hegemonic discourse around economic development when it passed a Toxic Right to Know law with the help of the environmental movement.<sup>28</sup> But in other aspects of economic development, Eugene has used deregulation as a strategy to attract capital and has engaged in competition with Springfield, OR to attract businesses.

In short, elements of both “roll-back” and “roll-out” neoliberal policy exist in most cities, including Eugene. Below, I explore some of the characteristics of neoliberal policy and the shift to urban governance, which emerged as prominent themes in the SBI process – the business community’s powerful call for local government to create a “business-friendly climate” through deregulation and lowering taxes, the effect of inter-urban competition between Eugene and Springfield on local government, and the Eugene city government’s financial austerity. Ultimately, my examination of these broader political-economic forces illuminates the diverse pressures that city government’s face, and specifically how the SBI process was impacted by these forces. In an increasingly competitive economy in which business interests lobby for government to be more entrepreneurial and social and environmental advocates demand local government meet local welfare needs, officials of local government feel the pressure of trying to fulfill two quite contradictory roles (Kearns and Paddison 2000). Essentially, the pursuit of sustainability measures both assuage and exacerbate local government’s ability to fulfill these dual roles, explaining the challenge local government faces in implementing sustainability programs.

### **The Political-Economic Context of Eugene’s City Government**

#### *Business opposition to government regulation*

Reflective of the broader neoliberal shift from local government to urban governance, two very prominent themes emerged in the SBI process. One, the traditional

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<sup>28</sup> The Toxic Right to Know law requires companies to report to the public what chemicals they bring into or emit in Eugene, OR.

Eugene business community, including the Chamber of Commerce, effectively lobbied the SBI TF to ensure that the SBI process did not result in any regulatory measures. Even measures to incentivize certain actions by the business community would not have been accepted by the business community *carte blanche*; instead, the business community would have wanted to be closely involved or actually implement the incentivization programs. The influence of traditional business coalitions on local policy making is not just an abstract aspect of the triumph of neoliberal “growth first” ideology; the Eugene SBI was a case in point.

Despite evidence that implementing social and environmental standards, or increasing taxation, may not sabotage a city’s economic development strategy, there is intense opposition to regulation, particularly environmental and social justice regulation, from certain segments of the business community. At the SBI TF’s meeting with the Eugene Chamber of Commerce, without any mention of the SBI introducing regulation, Chamber members emphatically expressed their concern that the SBI might result in the implementation of regulations.

The SBI coordinator began the meeting by discussing the SBI’s triple bottom line approach (environment health, economic prosperity, and social equity). The City’s record of the comments immediately following this introduction are as follows:

A member of the Chamber commented that people fear that the process will go to extremes. He hoped that the TF would produce something that was non-regulatory in nature, and that encouraged change rather than mandated it. He said that education was needed, and encouraged the TF not to move too far, too fast, or it would create a roadblock rather than a pathway (City of Eugene 2005).

Chamber members pointed out numerous times that the TF and the City government should reward businesses for implementing sustainable practices; the City should not be a rule setter or regulator. “When companies meet or exceed regulations, the community should find some ways to recognize them and publicize those efforts” (City of Eugene 2005). Continuing in this same vein, a Chamber member stated,

My family owns a golf course and has cooperated with the National Audubon Society in managing the property for wildlife as well as recreation, including

native tree plantings. There should be some recognition from the City for such efforts in the form of “ataboys” for businesses that try to do the right thing. In my experience, the City of Eugene does not support or recognize such efforts (City of Eugene 2005).

One TF member followed up by asking this speaker what form of recognition he thought businesses should receive. Without directly responding to the question, the speaker responded: “The City could be a problem solver as opposed to being a permitter or rule setter. The City needs to shed its bad reputation. It’s critical to partnering with the business community” (City of Eugene 2005). Indeed, the vast majority of comments from Chamber members reinforced the idea that to date, the City government had been unfair to businesses and if the City wanted to spur change, it should seek to do so with incentives, not regulations or rules.

Echoing this idea that the City government had given itself a bad reputation by being unfair and making it difficult for businesses to operate in the City, another Chamber member commented on the onerous nature of government permits as well as encroachment on the decision-making power of businesses:

Businesses are not asking for a gold star but rather government appreciation of businesses it works with. For example, I submit construction plans with an engineer’s seal and then am informed that my plans are not complete. Another example is tree cutting – I should be able to remove a tree without having to apply for a permit. That’s the kind of recognition a business wants to see because it demonstrates value for a business owner’s time and a willingness to partner (City of Eugene 2005).

Chamber members’ complaint that the City government was encroaching on a business’ ability to make its own decisions and have control of their business was expressed more explicitly later in the meeting:

The question [of what will make the SBI successful] goes back to the issue of business owners wanting to be in charge of their business decisions. Businesses fear that government will attempt to dictate their business practices. Your biggest challenge will be getting businesses to believe you will encourage them in shifting to sustainable business practices, not dictate to them (City of Eugene 2005).

Speaker after speaker at this meeting of the SBI TF and the Eugene Chamber of Commerce cited specific examples of how government bureaucracy was a major problem for Eugene businesses and how the City of Eugene government did not support Eugene businesses. One Chamber member specifically explained how he found it difficult to work with the City of Eugene staff, officials and related bureaucracy:

Another example is a recent application for a car wash, which is sustainable business because of water recycling and stormwater reduction but after going through the application process I was told that the property lacked a stormwater permit. I was told I would have to spend several thousand dollars to study and mitigate the runoff and install stormwater facilities. Subsequently, my company hired a former City employee who found the missing stormwater permit on file. No City employee took the time. The City consistently demonstrates a lack of willingness to work with businesses (City of Eugene 2005).

One Chamber member went so far as to say that the city government's regulatory processes were destroying Eugene businesses: "The City should consider how its actions potentially affect and destroy businesses due to the length of time City processes take" (City of Eugene 2005).

Clearly, Chamber of Commerce members were generally opposed to regulation, but regulation around environmental issues was a particularly sensitive issue. For example, one Chamber member brought up the issue of land use, and disagreements in Eugene over whether the City of Eugene's urban growth boundary should be expanded:

If the City does not grow, businesses could be in trouble. The homebuilding industry was in danger of collapse because of the lack of buildable land in the urban growth boundary, which has an effect on suppliers and related businesses who wish to be sustainable but without a market have a difficult time doing so. The City needed to be honest about the available land and its actual development potential. How can sustainability work with so much angst about expanding the UGB when all the data showed the community was lagging behind the goal of having a 20-year buildable land supply? (City of Eugene 2005).

Responding specifically to the idea of creating a more sustainable Eugene economy, one Chamber member implied that sustainability or environmental measures could cause businesses to lose profit or even close down:

If business does not have a market, a key factor to sustainability goes away. If businesses want to expand, what do they do? It seems like a good idea to look at that and have a reasonable planned strategy to make sure that businesses that wish to expand can do so. The community needs to get over its resistance to actually planning for growth (City of Eugene 2005).

During the two-hour-long meeting between the Chamber of Commerce and the SBI TF, the Chamber members argued that when the City does not cooperate with the business community, it impacts everyone in the community, through job loss, decreased tax revenue, and a lower quality of life. If the City wants to support the business community, it should lead by example. It should provide a great many more incentives to engender desired behavior, it should use little or no regulation to achieve the desired behavior, and it should be much more understanding of and sympathetic to the precarious situation of small businesses. In the end, the SBI TF largely followed the request of the Chamber members.

In reality, the platform for local government action that the Eugene Chamber members were proposing in response to the SBI was a very typical agenda for traditional economic development, which closely aligned with the main prescriptions of neoliberal policy. The main issues that Chamber members raised in their meeting with the SBI TF also closely mirrored a broader critique of the local government by the traditional Eugene business community. A survey of Eugene businesses in 2003 found that “the overwhelming majority of companies in Eugene believe that the city government is ‘unsupportive’ of business, and they wish the city would encourage economic growth or at least accommodate it” (Wihtol 2003). Not only did the results of the survey find that Eugene businesses felt they must struggle with cumbersome regulations, but also that Eugene’s toxic reporting law and the City’s withdrawal of enterprise zone property tax breaks represented the city’s lack of support for businesses. Issues of land use and growth have been among the most controversial in the Eugene business community: “91% of respondents say local regulations and anti-growth attitudes among elected officials and residents are a barrier to growth” (Wihtol 2003). Interestingly, when surveyed about the City government’s sustainability policy, just over half of respondents

expressed support for the City having a sustainable development policy, and just under half of respondents said that a sustainable development policy contributed to “negative perceptions about Eugene as a place to do business” (Wihtol 2003). The Eugene companies surveyed did say that Eugene possessed several positive characteristics that enhance its business climate; these assets included quality of life, recreation, safety, educational system and an abundant, skilled workforce. Ironically, almost all of such assets are directly related to services that are highly dependent upon the financial condition of the city government, including whether its tax base is sufficient to fund these services.

*Neoliberalism: Declining tax revenue*

A major part of the Eugene business coalition’s call for local government to regulate less and generally create a “good business climate” was demanding lower taxes. Interestingly, several members of Eugene’s business coalition said that the local government needed to create a better business climate in order to attract businesses, which would ultimately increase tax revenues. From a different perspective, several SBI TF members and the Mayor pointed out that the City’s ability to address social and environmental concerns was severely limited by the City’s financial struggles, partially the result of insufficient tax revenues. Indeed, the Mayor was only given \$5,000 to run the one and a half year SBI process. The reality is that there’s been a long-term corporate assault on taxes, which is largely responsible for cities’ reduction in tax revenues.

LeRoy (2005) described the tax situation of cities this way: since the 1950s, “states have been trying to cooperate and set up a simple, uniform system so that all profits of multistate corporations are taxed somewhere, somehow. And since the 1950s, corporations have been relentlessly attacking the states’ effort to cooperate – with litigation, lobbying, and creative accounting” (105). The Executive Director of the Multistate Tax Commission in 2005, Dan Bucks, said: “Why do we have less uniformity in state tax laws than we did in the early 1980s? Because businesses don’t support it.

They undermine uniformity whenever they see it because they have learned [that] the lack of uniformity creates opportunity for tax shelters...The multistate tax system is becoming a Swiss cheese income tax system” (114).

Consistent with neoliberal “growth first” ideology, local government’s focus has shifted from providing a certain level of welfare to facilitating and coordinating an economic development strategy that is supposed to create a healthy economy, with jobs for residents and a good quality of life overall. However, neoliberal policies draw funds away from social and environmental programs in order to offer business incentives and subsidies such as tax abatements. The end result is that local governments provide fewer social services and welfare benefits and, at the same time, collect a smaller amount of tax revenues because they are taxing fewer businesses. Furthermore, the deregulation of other social and environmental standards means that city residents require social services and welfare benefits from local government more than ever.

According to a 2006 study conducted by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), the corporate taxation rate in industrialized countries has fallen from 45% to 30% over the last 20 years. Similarly, the “average corporate tax rate for the world as a whole has decreased from 38% in 1993 to less than 26.8% in 2007,” and the corporate tax rate declined in 78 out of 97 countries studied by the International Labor Organization (ILO 2008). In the U.S., despite record profits from 2000 to 2004, corporations only contributed 7.5% of all tax revenue (ICFTU 2006).<sup>29</sup> The ILO and ICFTU estimate the loss of corporate tax revenues globally is hundreds of billions of dollars annually (ICFTU 2006; ILO 2008). In 2006, the ICFTU concluded that “no country, no matter its size, can expect to keep the downward pressure on taxes at bay by itself” (ICFTU 2006); the multinationals, “due to their total size can force many governments and authorities to grant them special tax breaks, and by reason of their international scope they can shift around their revenue, profits, losses, and debts as they please” (ILO 2008:132–133).

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<sup>29</sup> This includes all federal and state taxes: income, sales, and property.

While taxation rates, especially corporate taxes, have fallen in many U.S. states and in countries around the world over the last two decades, taxation rates in Oregon have decreased even further than other U.S. states. According to the Oregon Center for Public Policy, corporations operating in Oregon paid 71% less in state corporate taxes as a share of the economy as they did in the late 1970s (Leachman 2005). In terms of the percentage of income taxes that corporations pay, “in the 1973–1975 budget cycle, corporations paid 18.5% of all income taxes”; and in the 2003–2005 budget cycle, corporations paid only 4.6% of the all income taxes. If Oregon corporations were paying the same percentage of income taxes they were paying in 1973–1975, the 2005 state budget would have increased by \$1.8 billion. Accordingly, over the 20-year period between 1975 and 2005 that Oregon’s corporate income taxes have been decreasing, the state has lost \$10.9 billion (Leachman 2005).

Ironically, as corporate income taxes have decreased in Oregon, personal income taxes have been increasing, resulting in a greater tax burden on Oregon’s families and small businesses (Leachman 2005). Most striking, in the 2003–2005 budget cycle, while corporations paid 4.5% of Oregon’s income taxes; personal income taxpayers paid 95.5% (Leachman 2006). Leachman explained that the reason the income tax burden has been shifted from corporations to individuals is “primarily because Oregon gives corporations numerous tax breaks and because corporations are employing abusive tax shelters that lawmakers never enacted or intended to allow. Multi-state corporations have increasingly dominated Oregon’s corporate income tax base and are the primary beneficiaries of the income tax decline” (Leachman 2006). This evidence demonstrates that the business representatives on the SBI TF who argued regulation could not be enacted or taxes increased because such measures would detrimentally affect small businesses, were wrong. In fact, it is mostly large and multi-state corporations that are benefiting from the lack of social and environmental regulations, declining tax rates and tax abatements in Oregon.

Also important to note is that while the drastic reduction in Oregon's corporate income tax rates may benefit corporations in the short term, in the long term it will undermine the economic strength of Oregon (Leachman 2006). A disinvestment in Oregonians's public infrastructure will degrade the quality of Oregon's workforce, making it hard for businesses to find employees with appropriate skills. Public investments in schools and universities, roads, health care coverage, worker training, parks and the court system all depend on Oregon's tax revenues. Aside from the fact that such investments create a better quality of life for the majority of Oregonians, they are also business investments: businesses rely on well-trained workers and a solid infrastructure (McDonald 2008). Unfortunately, the corporate lobby in Oregon, and beyond, has focused more on short-term gain (decreasing the taxes businesses pay) than long-term social, economic and environmental health (Brecher and Costello 1990; Klein 2007; Oregon Center for Public Policy 2006). Furthermore, the above statistics demonstrate that not only do corporations pay less in taxes, they shift the tax burden onto individuals, many of whom have a difficult time paying their share of taxes in the first place.

In addition to decreasing corporate income taxation rates, Oregon already suffers from a small tax base due to its capped property tax and the absence of a sales tax. In 1996, Oregon voters passed Measure 47 (State of Oregon 2010). It reduced property taxes in Oregon by approximately \$450 million per year and "limited future increases to not more than 3% per year, unless voters approved higher taxes" (McDonald 2008). Bill Sizemore, a well-known anti-tax proponent, head of Oregon Taxpayers United and owner of a petitioner company, authored and was chief petitioner for Measure 47 (Sizemore 2010). Sizemore also authored Oregon's Double Majority Law "which prohibits the approval of property tax increases in special elections, unless there is at least a 50% voter turn-out for the election" (Sizemore 2010). According to Sizemore (2010), "Double Majority, similar to quorum laws which almost universally prevent elected bodies from passing laws without a quorum of those officials eligible to vote on the issue, save

Oregon taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars per year.” Like many of Sizemore’s tax measures, these also surreptitiously benefit wealthy individuals and corporations (Oregon Center for Public Policy 2006). According to the Oregon Center for Public Policy, Measure 47 “disconnected property taxes from real property values at a time when business property values were lagging behind residential property value” (Leachman 2006). Effectively, Oregon’s business property taxes are now significantly lower than those that burden individual homeowners. “In 1978-79, households paid 50% of all property taxes in Oregon. Business paid the other half. In 2003-2004, households paid 60% of property taxes, compared to 40% for businesses....If households still paid 50% of total property taxes, instead of 60%, they would have saved nearly \$500 million in 2004 alone” (Leachman 2006). Like the corporate income tax rate, decreases in the property tax rate have not been designed to lower tax rates for all Oregonians; they have only lowered the tax burden on corporations and actually increased it for individual households and small businesses. And, like the reductions in Oregon’s corporate tax rate, decreases in Oregon’s property tax significantly reduce Oregon’s overall tax revenues, limiting Oregon’s ability to pay for critical services and infrastructure.

Finally, Oregon has no sales tax (State of Oregon 2010). And, although Oregon’s personal income taxes are often cited as high, it often ranks near the bottom nationally for state taxation rates (State of Oregon 2010). This means that Oregon’s tax base is even more compromised, making it extremely difficult to fund critical public investments.

As I mentioned above, despite Oregon’s having lower taxes than many other states in the United States, lower and middle class families in Oregon are especially hard hit because Oregon’s tax system is flat compared to the federal tax system. Leachman (2006) described the unfair burden Oregon’s tax system places on working families: “Oregon’s tax system is upside down. A tax system promotes opportunity when it is based on ability to pay. But in Oregon, those who can afford to pay more wind up paying the smallest share of their income.” Leachman’s (2006) study found that “Oregon’s low-income families had an effective tax rate of 9.2%, compared to an effective rate of 7.8%

paid by Oregon's wealthiest 1% of families. The effective tax rate paid by Oregon's wealthiest families falls further, to 6.7%, when federal deductions for state income and property taxes are taken into account" (Sheketoff, Leachman and Ordonez 2008). Just a handful of U.S. states require families living in poverty to pay significant income taxes, and Oregon is one of them: "A two parent family of four in Oregon with income at the poverty line owes the state \$325 in Oregon" (Leachman 2006). While such an amount doesn't seem like much, to a family attempting to escape poverty it is a significant amount of money. And, when placed within Oregon's larger taxation picture, it becomes obvious that over the last two decades, the tax burden has shifted from corporations and wealthy individuals to lower and middle-class Oregonians.

The contention around increasing tax revenue in Oregon was apparent during 2009 when two tax bills were passed in the Oregon legislature that will increase tax revenue by \$733 million over the next two years by increasing taxes on the top 3% of income earners and corporations. According to one bill, the "corporate income tax rate would increase from 6.6% to 7.9% for companies with net income above \$250,000. The rate drops in 2011 to 7.6%. In 2013, it returns to 6.6% for companies with net income below \$10 million" (Register-Guard 2009). It also "updates the corporate minimum tax from \$10 – where it's stood since 1931 – to a sliding scale increase that ranges from \$150 to \$100,000, depending on a company's Oregon sales" (Register-Guard 2009). In response to these bills, fiscal conservatives and the business lobby in Oregon quickly joined forces to have a referendum vote on the two bills. In the past, opposition to such measures has been led by the main anti-tax group in Oregon, FreedomWorks, while business associations contributed little to such efforts. However, for these 2009 tax bills, "FreedomWorks organized a coalition that includes Associated Oregon Industries, homebuilders, the lumber industry, general contractors, grocery stores and other retailers, gasoline dealers, agribusiness, restauranteurs and car dealers" (Register-Guard 2009). Defend Oregon, a union-backed organization supporting the tax measures, ran a major campaign to keep the measures from going to a referendum vote. However, Defend

Oregon's efforts were unsuccessful and the referendum qualified for the ballot. Both Associated Oregon Industries and the Oregon Business Association said they would have supported temporary tax increases that helped Oregon get through its current recession, but not permanent increases as these measures put in place (Register-Guard 2009).

Accordingly, Senate President Peter Courtney questioned:

Whether any amount of compromising with the business lobby could have satisfied its more conservative factions' fundamental opposition to paying taxes. "I have a feeling that if we had made it [the tax measure] temporary, they would have said the biggest mistake you made was the kind of tax increase you had," said the Salem Democrat. "They were definitely going to come after these revenue measures" (Register-Guard 2009).

This experience shows the steady buildup of opposition to government involvement in the market, even in an era where the government budgets are depleted and government is faltering in its provision of social services to the ever-increasing jobless and indigent population. However, Oregon voters did approve an income tax increase on top earners (over \$250,000) in 2010, the first income tax increase in Oregon in 80 years (Yardley 2010). The campaign was mainly led by a progressive coalition of public sector and teachers' unions and focused on the need to raise taxes on those people with the ability to pay (Yardley 2010). The main group opposing this tax increase was called, "Oregonians Against Job-Killing Taxes" (Yardley 2010). This campaign strategy was recognized nationally as a model for raising taxes on corporations and top earners in other states where the 2007 recession, tight household budgets and high unemployment are the major public issues (Yardley 2010).

The growing strength of neoliberal ideology in Oregon and nationally over the last two to three decades has had two main consequences. First, since the 1980s, opposition to regulation has increased, causing a decline in taxation rates as well as a relaxation of certain social and environmental standards. This includes a reduced social safety net in the form of fewer benefits for the unemployed, injured workers, affordable housing, health insurance, among others (Oregon Center for Public Policy 2006). And when local government has proposed implementing social and environmental regulations,

the result has been highly contentious discourse, usually led by business coalitions that have become much more involved at the local level with local government's reduced leadership role. Second, the effect of decreased corporate, personal and property taxes has resulted in less money for city budgets, money that is needed to address social and environmental issues (Oregon Center for Public Policy 2006).

### *Interurban competition*

The Eugene business coalition's push for less regulation is part of a much larger neoliberal strategy by which locales are "whipsawed" against each other, while companies search for the best business climate. The best business climate is conveniently, and generally, defined by corporations as tax abatements and low social and environmental standards. As local government's involvement in economic development has decreased and businesses have played a greater role in economic development strategy, including through public-private partnerships, much of the information related to enticing businesses to locate in a city is proprietary. In other words, the public and city officials are not even able to see what other cities are offering companies to know what they are competing against.

Competition between states and cities for business capital is not new; however, the role cities and states play in this competition has become much more sophisticated, if not more convoluted in the last 10 to 20 years. Greg LeRoy chronicles the rise of the economic war among states in his book, *The Great American Jobs Scam: Corporate Tax Dodging and the Myth of Job Creation* (2005). On "business climate," LeRoy writes:

It remains an ambiguous, malleable term readily available for corporate use. Are we talking about the corporate income tax rate here, or is it how 'business-friendly' people are, or how loose environmental enforcement is, or how generous the property tax abatements are? Companies and their lobbyists can always decide which part of the 'climate' matters most today and whale away on it, insisting that if companies don't get their way, the area has a 'bad business climate.' Since the real-decision-making process remains a black box, public officials have no way to judge such claims (80).

Rankings of cities' and states' business climates were issued annually from the late 1970s to the late 1980s by one accounting firm, Grant Thornton. Grant Thornton's business climate surveys attributed negative weight to cities with good jobs. In other words, if a city had high-paying manufacturing jobs and unionized jobs (often with low turnover and higher skills), it counted against them in the survey. Similarly, local and state taxes and social safety nets, such as welfare, workers' compensation and unemployment compensation, were counted against a locale. And how a locale used its tax revenues did not matter; thus, "the quality of infrastructure, education, training, recreation, public safety, or cultural amenities" was not factored into a locale's score (LeRoy 2005).

The Grant Thornton survey has since been discontinued, but other firms have continued it with equally subjective and unaccountable methodologies (LeRoy 2005). More importantly, the underlying themes of the Grant Thornton index are still powerful in shaping the discussion on what states and cities do about jobs, wages and taxes. In essence, states and cities are still pitted against each other, and a good business climate is still defined by low taxes, low wages, and few environmental and social standards, including anti-union laws.

One location management service that exists today, Mintax, offered this advice in an economic development magazine:

Government agencies are more likely to treat you properly when they feel like they are competing for your business and are cognizant that you are flirting with others....Play hard to get, flirt, create a bidding war, and the sky is the limit. With billions of incentive dollars available, and global competition at an all-time high, the future belongs to the corporations that best compete for these monies (LeRoy 2005:87, quoting Neville 1999:8).

U.S. cities have been particularly affected by the competition that has been fueled between states and cities by site locators and corporate lobbies. Citing security reasons, lower wages, more open space, lower taxes and friendlier government, many companies relocated in suburban areas shortly after World War II (LeRoy 2005). Together with other post-war trends that hurt U.S. cities, the exodus of factory jobs was a major reason

for the rising concentration of urban poverty and the racial and social tensions that arose in the 1960s and 1970s (77). The threat of businesses relocating to a city with a more friendly business climate has been exacerbated as the federal government has placed more burdens on city governments to raise their own funds to balance their budgets. In addition, in the last 30 to 40 years, firms have become much more mobile as technology has improved and laws on international trade, particularly U.S. protectionism, have relaxed, allowing companies to relocate to cheaper communities and maximize profits through reduced labor and resource costs (Brecher and Costello 1990). As a result, some U.S. firms have greater leverage as they ply city governments for tax breaks and deregulation because they can threaten with the loss of their business, jobs and tax revenues from the community (Brecher and Costello 1990; Klein 2007). In short, the pressure on local government officials to maintain or increase tax revenues, attract businesses, and provide citizens with jobs and a good quality of life has increased greatly over the last few decades.

Between 2004 and 2007, Eugene's local paper, the *Register-Guard*, was peppered with stories highlighting competition between Eugene and its sister city, Springfield, over attracting new and existing businesses. However, the reality of attracting businesses by creating a "good business climate" is much more complicated. First, companies' definitions of a good business climate do not positively weight aspects of local government that are important to a businesses' health, such as residents educational attainment, the quality of a city's infrastructure, the skill level of workers, or that union shops tend to have less turnover and higher skilled workers. Second, the majority of businesses do not relocate to an area because of the tax abatement package they receive; tax abatements are often just an added bonus for companies. Most companies have very specific needs that dictate where they locate, such as workers with certain skills and access to infrastructure, such as transportation corridors, cheap electricity, consumer markets, etc. Still, the threat of inter-urban competition is a powerful discourse for local government officials and policy makers who are concerned with their city's economic

health and residents having job opportunities. Therefore, with several business representatives consistently juxtaposing a healthy economic with a healthy environment and a few high-road jobs with many low-road jobs, the threat of inter-urban competition weighed heavily on the SBI's discussion of how to pursue a sustainable development strategy.

In a *Register-Guard* article comparing Eugene Mayor Kitty Piercy and Springfield Mayor Sid Leiken on economic development issues, summaries of the two leaders' perspectives highlight the tension around cities setting environmental and social standards for businesses:

[Kitty Piercy] Eugene's new Mayor, has declared economic development a top priority. She wants to end the city's reputation as a place where it is difficult to do business because of environmental regulations. Instead, Piercy hopes to make Eugene known for fostering environmentally friendly businesses that treat workers well. By contrast, Springfield Mayor Sid Leiken makes it clear that Springfield is open for business period. 'When there is a business interested in locating in Springfield and they are denied because of an outdated rule, it is our job to do appropriate review and updates,' he said in his own State of the City address two days later. 'When it is appropriate, we improvise'" (Russo and Keefer 2005:F3).

Aware of falling prey to the traditional economic development discourse that warns of losing business to cities with a better business climate (i.e., lower social and environmental standards, tax abatements, etc.), the Mayor expanded on her perspective of economic competition between Eugene and Springfield when she relayed a story to me about Springfield Mayor Sid Leikin trying to attract the Federal Court House to locate in Springfield:

Sid Leikin told me once while they were talking about building the Federal Court House, and his grandfather was an old politician, he called him and said, do you think we could stand a chance of getting the Federal Court House in Springfield? His grandfather said, well, where's the judge from? He said, oh, he's from Eugene. Well, no you won't get it, but you can pretend you can (Piercy 2008).

Mayor Piercy explained that much of the discussion around competition between the two cities is only talk – it rarely plays out in reality. Her feeling, shared by many others,

including one key economic development leader in Lane County, is that if a business wants to locate in Eugene because it contains the right market, labor supply, resource pool, etc., it will, regardless of the level of regulation and taxes. In fact, a recent Jobs with Justice study demonstrated that only a small percentage of businesses' relocations are attributed to cities offering tax abatements, instead the businesses are looking for a good location with a high-quality workforce and a high standard of living (Jobs with Justice 2010).

Despite Mayor Piercy and many other elected and city officials knowing that the threat of inter-urban competition is largely unfounded, Mayor Piercy still acknowledged that the threat of losing businesses and jobs creates a "climate of fear" in and among cities. For example, the *Register-Guard* newspaper, in an apparent pro-business bent, covered many stories on the competition between Eugene and Springfield over attracting the Carnival Cruise Lines National Call Center and Peace Health and McKenzie-Willamette Hospitals (Register Guard 2008). The Call Center, as well as Peace Health Hospitals, eventually located in Springfield. Clearly, for business-backed politicians, such as Sid Leikin and former Eugene Mayor Jim Torrey, a "climate of fear" makes it easier to implement pro-business policies (lower taxes and fewer social and environmental regulations), as they appeal to citizens' concerns about losing or attracting businesses, creating jobs, and increasing tax revenues.

Unfortunately, creating a more business-friendly environment is only business-friendly in the short term; in the long term, it will reduce businesses' ability to provide high-quality products and services because the city in which they are located will lack quality infrastructure, skilled workers, and basic services such as fire and police protection. Reducing the burden on business, at least in the case of Eugene specifically and Oregon as a whole, usually means reducing taxes through temporary tax exemptions. Yet, increased tax revenue is one of the main reasons local governments try to attract businesses. If the business' presence in a city, due to tax exemptions, does not actually increase the revenue stream for a city, then the purpose of attracting the business is

largely negated. A review of the tax exemption programs offered by the State of Oregon Economic and Community Development Department shows that many of the tax-exemption programs, which last 10 to 20 or more years, result in a significant loss of tax revenues for the state and city. And, by the time a business is due to pay the state taxes, sometimes up to 20 years later, the value of its property assets has decreased so much that the taxes it pays hardly compares to what it would have paid when it first opened shop (LeRoy 2005).

Importantly, there is some evidence to suggest that it is through more *stringent* social and environmental regulations that a community attracts business. In my interview with Mayor Piercy, she pointed out that while the business community is generally opposed to any type of regulation, at the same time, businesses are aware that the high quality of life in Eugene, accomplished through environmental regulations, such as the urban growth boundary, is a main attractant of high-quality businesses and workers.

Mayor Piercy stated:

... People love to live here [Eugene]. That's the other trade off. Every time I meet with people – the Chamber used to have these little luncheons where I could meet with business people and every time I sit down and talk with them they'd talk about how they wish the permitting process was easier, blah, blah, blah, but in the end they always to say to me, whatever you do don't change our environment here because that's why people choose to live here. They choose to live here for less because it's such a good place to be. So that's where the policy decisions that rest on our shoulders, and they're not easy, I mean most of the time even within the pro-sustainability part of policy makers they argue over themselves between where the lines should be. These are not easy decisions. There are not perfect rights anywhere so you're always sort of trying to give your best judgment between all of the things that pull and tug on each other (Piercy 2008).

Interestingly, it wasn't just Mayor Piercy who mentioned that a high quality of life attracts businesses. One TF member who was also a leader of economic development efforts in Lane County, mentioned that if there are no environmental or social standards for the businesses operating in your community, then the community is going to attract businesses that don't care about social and environmental issues in the community,

leading to a downward spiral in both quality of life and quality of jobs (Ransom 2008). Ironically, even the Eugene Chamber of Commerce's own website cites numerous studies that say Eugene has a good business climate. According to its site, Eugene was ranked #21 in *Forbes'* 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Ranking of the 200 "Best Places for Businesses and Careers" (Eugene Chamber of Commerce 2008). This ranking was based on job growth, income growth, the cost of doing business, cost of living, crime rate, educational attainment, presence of four-year colleges, cultural and recreational opportunities, and net migration. In the 2008 Kosmont-Rose Institute "Cost of Doing Business Survey," Eugene was ranked among the least expensive cities to do business based on taxes and fees imposed on businesses by the city government. The Chamber website also mentioned that Eugene made *Fortune'*s Small Business 2008 list of "100 Best Places to Live and Launch a Small Business in the United States (Eugene Chamber of Commerce 2008).

Viewed through the lens of the SBI – an economic development strategy to simultaneously address social equity, environmental health and economic prosperity – it becomes clear that the neoliberal economic development discourse is antithetical to addressing social and environmental concerns, and more generally to improving quality of life in Eugene. While proponents of ecological modernization and neoliberal policy argue that economic development strategy will attract businesses that will provide jobs and boost local tax revenues, attracting businesses has become an end in itself for many city officials and economic development officers. In other words, the ultimate goal of providing residents with good jobs and a high quality of life, including a healthy environment, has been lost to making concessions to businesses that undermine local government's ability to serve the needs of its residents or the environment. Instead, under a model of urban governance, business coalitions partner with local government on economic development, calling for less government regulation of businesses, which includes fewer social and environmental standards and lower taxes. And when city governments do not comply, business coalitions use the threat of inter-urban competition to scare local government into acquiescing to their demands. Sadly, less regulation and

lower taxes result in a lower quality of life for residents and, in the long term, a bad business climate, because the components essential to a healthy economy – high-quality infrastructure, a skilled workforce, a safe and healthy community, etc. – are undermined by the city’s financial austerity.

### **Local Government as Environmental Protector**

#### *Demands from the environmental movement*

Like business coalitions, the environmental movement has also responded to a more perforated, urban governance structure by becoming more involved in local government policy making (Agyeman and Evans 2003; Lee 2006; Krueger and Savage 2007; Whitehead 2002). However, while business coalitions call for less government regulation on their activities, the environmental movement, and to a lesser degree of success the social justice movement, are demanding that local government take responsibility for setting standards that provide a good quality of life for residents and protect the environment (Hawken 2007; Krueger and Savage 2007; Beaumont and Nicholls 2004; Ruben 2001). The environmental movement became especially engaged with local government from 2000–2008, while President George W. Bush rolled back national level environmental regulation (Natural Resources Defense Council 2008). It was during this time that numerous cities began creating international networks of cities working on environmental issues such as climate protection. This contradiction is particularly clear in Eugene where the environmental movement has been very active in local policy making and there has been significant tension between the environmental and business communities with respect to how Eugene should develop.

Prior to the SBI, there were three major battles that occurred in Eugene around development that contributed to tensions between the traditional business community, the environmental community and city government. One, there was major conflict around Hyundai/Hynix locating a semiconductor manufacturing plant in Eugene in 1997. The traditional business community wanted to offer Hynix millions of dollars in tax breaks

and not demand that Hynix meet any social or environmental standards in the community, even though the semiconductor manufacturing process relies on large amounts of toxic chemicals and large amounts of water. Per usual economic development discourse, the traditional business community argued that imposing any social and environmental demands on Hynix may drive the company to another city, thus denying Eugene residents thousands of new jobs and a large source of tax revenue. On the other side, Citizens for Public Accountability (CPA), a political and environmental watchdog organization, mounted broad opposition to Hyundai receiving large tax breaks and locating in protected wetlands in West Eugene. A major victory of CPA around the Hyundai battle was implementing the Toxic Right to Know law, the first in the country. However, Hyundai never hired the number of workers at the wages they promised, kept seeking tax abatements after they located in Eugene, and in the end, closed down the factory and laid off all its workers just more than a decade after it opened in Eugene.

Two, since the mid-1990's there has been a major struggle around what role local government should have in the management of Eugene's growth and land use. In 1998, the Eugene city government undertook a Growth Management Study which included many segments of the Eugene community in a process to identify what actions, if any, should be taken to manage Eugene's future growth. On the traditional business side, there was broad support for local government to expand the existing urban growth boundary for new business and housing development, to increase densities for new development, and regulate the development process less. In essence, the business community argued that by not expanding the urban growth boundary, the city government was driving businesses away who wanted to locate or expand in Eugene, as well as driving up living costs for residents by limiting the supply of new housing. Many residents and environmentalists in Eugene, however, argued for greater regulation of the development process through updated and more sophisticated land use and building codes that evaluated projects by its siting, design, job creation, and environmental impact

(City of Eugene 2000). This process was extremely contentious and many of the tensions remain unresolved through 2010.

Three, a proposed West Eugene Parkway deeply divided environmentalists and the business community for most of the early 2000's. From the environmental perspective, not only would the West Eugene Parkway fill and pave protected wetlands and parklands in West Eugene, it would also exacerbate traffic congestion and sprawl, not alleviate it (Eugene Weekly 2002). From the traditional business perspective, the parkway would alleviate traffic problems in west Eugene as well as create new jobs for residents and provide for more efficient transport of goods and services in and out of Eugene (Eugene Weekly 2002). The West Eugene Parkway was the center of numerous political campaigns, the subject of dozens of public hearings, and one of many conflicts around how to deal with development in West Eugene. Finally in 2006, due to wetlands impacts, high costs, and local opposition, federal and state highway planners decided not to build the West Eugene Parkway and later in 2008, Eugene City Council voted to remove the West Eugene Parkway from the official transportation metropolitan plan (TransPlan) (Pitman 2008).

As in many regions of the United States, tensions in Eugene between the business and environmental communities over urban growth and development create a difficult situation for city officials and policy makers to navigate. This tension also spills over into the labor community (particularly the building trades) which at various times finds itself aligned with environmentalists and business leaders. Broadly defined as pro-growth versus anti-growth, tensions frequently arise over job creation and economic growth versus environmental protection. Disagreement over how to address development and growth issues become particularly pronounced as the environmental movement makes demands for strict regulation of business practices and takes a "no compromise" position on environmental degradation.

These tensions were less present in the SBI process because the Mayor consciously chose more environmentally friendly business people for the TF;

nevertheless, business interests still shaped the SBI process and recommendations. One of the Mayor's main goals for the SBI was to bridge relationships between the city government and the business community, and between the business community and the environmental community. As a result, the baggage of past conflicts between these communities, mainly regarding regulation, informed how they approached new initiatives such as the SBI. More importantly, this context greatly influenced how the Mayor approached her goal of creating a sustainable economic strategy that addressed social and environmental needs, and ultimately it shaped the role that local government would play in pursuing this goal.

I identify three main factors as having contributed to an unfriendly relationship between the environmental and business communities in Eugene and Oregon, as a whole. This, in turn, has contributed to more polarizing positions on both sides – the business community is extremely wary of environmental regulation and the environmental community puts greater pressure on local government to regulate environmental quality. These factors include: 1) historically, a significant source of economic growth and job creation in the City of Eugene and the State of Oregon, has been based on natural resource exploitation; 2) the Pacific Northwest, and particularly Eugene, have been a hotbed for environmental protection activities and organizations; and 3) the referendum system in Oregon creates more contention around the implementation and elimination of regulation.

From the start of the SBI process, Mayor Piercy was well aware of the tensions that existed between the environmental and business communities; it was a large part of the reason for her initiation of the SBI in the first instance – she hoped to resolve some of these tensions. In fact, she explained to me that many of her environmentally sensitive business friends warned her not to mention the word “sustainability” during her campaign or once elected: “Whatever you do, don’t talk about sustainability [in your election campaign]. That’s a killer. You won’t win the election if you do that” (Piercy 2008). Some of the longest-standing tensions in Eugene with respect to environmental regulation

revolve around logging. Lumber mills and forest products were a thriving industry in Eugene and the surrounding region until a couple of decades ago when environmentalists, using the well-known Spotted Owl issue, succeeded in regulating the amount and type of logging by timber companies.

Defense of some of the last remaining old-growth forests in the United States drew many environmentalists to the area. Eugene is host to numerous environmental nonprofits, particularly no-compromise environmental organizations, as well as more radical collections of environmentalists, such as eco-anarchists. While there are several specific issues that have divided the environmental and business communities over the years, logging of national forests has been a particularly divisive issue in Eugene and the surrounding Willamette Valley. Logging companies, owned by some of the wealthiest and most politically powerful families in the Eugene-Springfield area, and environmentalists have been involved in bitter struggles over logging that have dragged on for years. Environmentalists have conducted tree-sits, spiked trees, blocked roads and bridges that lead to logging sites, used litigation and boycotts, and numerous other tactics to prevent areas from being logged.

Reflecting the tension over environmental issues in the region, a 2006 *Eugene Weekly* article on salvage logging began:

Stemming from decades long fights over logging old-growth forests in Oregon, business and environmental tensions have also arose in the Eugene area over what to do with old-growth forests after they've burned from forest fires. The most recent fight, concerning the Biscuit Forest in Southwest Oregon, was so heated it even attracted national attention from former President Bush, timber companies and environmental organizations from across the U.S. and others (Eugene Weekly 2006).

In the case of salvage logging, timber companies, which hold great political sway in the area, want to log legally protected forests that have burned, in order to salvage lumber. Many environmental organizations, however, argue that intact post-fire forest ecosystems are among the rarest in the world and want them left unmolested to regenerate.

Indicating the level of tension over logging in the region, this *Eugene Weekly* excerpt describes the response to the issue:

A flood of public opposition followed the proposal [to log Biscuit]. The agency received 23,000 public comments, 95% of them opposed to post-fire logging, and environmental groups filed a half-dozen lawsuits challenging the plan. The Forest Service pushed ahead with logging operations anyway, despite staffing shortages and auction prices 70% lower than expected. By January 2005, with only 53 million board feet cut, the operation had cost taxpayers more than \$14 million, according to a World Wildlife Fund report (Abraham 2006).

Tension over logging has been particularly high in Eugene and surrounding communities because two to three decades ago the regional economy was largely dependent upon natural resource extraction such as logging, sand and gravel extraction, and fishing (Oregon Blue Book 2010). For example, Hull-Oakes Lumber Company, based in Monroe, Oregon, was awarded the contracts to log four federal timber lots in Oregon in 1991, but years went by before Hull-Oakes was able to log any of the lots because local environmental organizations contested logging of these areas. In a *Register-Guard* article, owner Ralph Hull said: “We’ve had to cut timber [on our 11,000 acre tree farm] that was too young to be harvested — at a great sacrifice to the future” (Burri 1995). As most of Oregon and Eugene’s economic base depends on natural resource extraction, limiting natural resource extraction sparks intense debate.

In other words, Eugene’s and the State of Oregon’s economies have traditionally lacked diversity. Only in the late 1990s did Oregon obtain a small high-tech industry, such as the Hynix plant in Eugene, which produced computer chips. Unfortunately, the high-tech industry tends not to be labor intensive, and thus, for its economic profit, it provides a proportionately small number of jobs. As I mentioned before, this plant closed down in 2008 after receiving a multi-year property tax abatement worth over 50 million. Other than the small high-tech sector and resource extraction activities, the University of Oregon has provided a degree of stability to Eugene’s economy. The University, in 2009, was the second largest employer in Lane County, and attracts thousands of students to Eugene each year who bring a significant amount of outside money to the area (City-

Data 2009). A lack of economic diversity and a historical economic reliance on natural resource extraction has created a foundation for conflict between the business and environmental communities over environmental regulation, but specific issues, such as old-growth logging, land use regulation, social and environmental regulations on corporations etc., punctuate this long, harsh and hardened relationship.

Also contributing to the polarization of political perspectives in Eugene regarding how to address environmental issues is that the Pacific Northwest, and Eugene in particular, became a hotbed for radical environmental action in the late 1990s. Most notably, several members of the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) were charged and tried in federal court in Eugene for over a dozen environmental actions, including “the 1996 destruction of the [United States Forest Service] Oakridge Ranger Station, the 2000 arson attempt at the Eugene Police Department’s West University Public Safety Station, the fiery destruction of 35 SUVs at a Eugene truck lot in 2001” (Bishop and Steves 2006:A1). One of their most significant activities was burning parts of Vail ski resort in Vail, Colorado in 1998, causing \$24.5 million in damage. This action not only brought radical environmentalism into the limelight in Eugene, but also nationally. Ultimately, the ELF was infiltrated by the FBI, leading to charges against six individuals in 2005 (Bishop and Steves 2006:A1). The decision of the federal court in Eugene to charge the ELF members as “terrorists” under the federal terrorism enhancement sentencing law, which allows the court to add up to 20 years to each defendant’s sentence, was unprecedented. This in no way improved the relationship between environmentalists and the business community, and the struggle to gain political influence over government decision making raged on.

Yet it is not solely the radical environmentalist movement in Eugene that has caused tension. The targeted success of the environmental movement at large in Eugene has also contributed to the tension between the traditional business community, environmentalists, and local government. The environmental community has succeeded in advocating for and passing a Toxics Right to Know law (the first in the nation),

preventing a major highway from bisecting the West Eugene wetlands, and maintaining an urban growth boundary around Eugene to protect open space and farmland (Oregon Toxics Alliance 2010; Oregon.Gov 2010; Blue Green Eugene 2005).

### *Land use, urban growth and economic growth*

More recently, tensions between the environmental and business communities have been exacerbated over regulation of land use and urban growth. Related to conflict in the 1990's over growth management and the urban growth boundary, Measure 37 was introduced in 2004 to the Oregon state legislature; it has been an especially polarizing issue in the Eugene-Springfield area. A perfect example of “roll-out neoliberalism,” the Measure requires the state to compensate landowners for any decreases in their property values due to state-imposed regulation, such as environmental, land use or zoning rules. According to the *Eugene Weekly*, “Eugene’s share of that bill is proportionate to its population, local taxpayers here could end up with an annual bill of \$185 million a year in claims and administrative costs. That’s the equivalent of about two years worth of city property tax revenues” (Eugene Weekly 2004). One Eugene City Councilor described the measure as “institutionalized anarchy,” stating “if it passes it will destroy the desirability of the state of Oregon as a place to live, do business and recreate” (Eugene Weekly 2004). Proponents of land use regulation and zoning argued the bill would cost the taxpayers millions, while developers, land speculators and timber barons could make millions because they could now claim that any of their lands situated outside the urban growth boundary would be worth much more if they were allowed to subdivide or develop it, with projects like strip malls, subdivisions, and big box stores (Eugene Weekly 2004).

With so much money up for grabs, the timber barons and land speculators have pumped big bucks into the pro Measure 37 campaign. The pro-37 PAC reported a half million dollars in contributions by Sept 23 — mostly in big checks from timber and development interests....Measure 37 would make Oregon perhaps the first place anywhere where governments must compensate property owners for

such a wide range of regulation. Even many staunch critics of property regulation say that's too radical (Eugene Weekly 2004).

Since 2004, many parts of Measure 37 have been reformed through subsequent actions by the state legislature and the Oregon Supreme Court (State of Oregon 2010; Chaimov 2008). What's most interesting about this battle around regulations related to land use is that the cities in Oregon with stricter land use regulations and zoning laws have been less affected by the Great Recession of 2007–2009 and the failing housing market. This resilience is mainly attributed to these cities' tighter regulations on land use, which limited overbuilding of housing stock (New Geography 2010). Consequently, Oregon cities like Bend, which do not have strict land use regulation, have been much more affected by the economic downturn, mainly because of their surplus of housing stock.

Related to land use regulation, the regulation of big box stores like Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and other such big box stores has been highly contentious as well. In April 2004, before Mayor Piercy assumed office, but as she was first organizing the SBI, the Eugene City Council held a vote to put a moratorium on the building of big box stores. New big box store proposals would be denied until the City Council decided how to regulate the size, location, traffic impact and other development issues related to these stores. While many other cities around the United States, and even some smaller towns in Oregon, had put a moratorium on big box stores until they were better able to regulate them, the Eugene City Council voted 5 to 4 to not impose a moratorium on big box retailers. The *Eugene Weekly* captured the following quotes from Councilors both opposing and supporting the moratorium:

'The intent is to protect local businesses and local workers,' said [Betty] Taylor of her moratorium proposal. 'It's way overdue. People are saying now, 'Why haven't you done something?'' But [Jennifer] Solomon said she opposes restrictions on the 'valuable services' stores like Wal-Mart provide. 'This just feels very anti-business to me.' [Nancy] Nathanson, now running for mayor, said city staff work on the moratorium would distract from higher priorities. She said a moratorium could affect a wide variety of retailers. 'Are we saying no more Jerry's [an Oregon home construction store that competes with Home Depot and Lowe's], no more 5<sup>th</sup> St. Public Market [a local shopping district mainly occupied

by small, local stores]?’ [Bonnie] Bettman said preserving local jobs against poor-paying big boxes should be a city priority. The city spends a lot of money on economic development, she points out. ‘I think we can also spend money to protect local jobs’ (Eugene Weekly. 2004a).

The tensions between the environmental and business communities over regulation are also exacerbated by Oregon’s unique referendum process whereby citizens’ can write and pass laws through the initiative process. It is through such initiatives that Oregon’s property tax was cut and capped (see Measure 47), that Measure 37 was passed (although mainly repealed through subsequent legislation), and that many other anti-tax measures have been proposed. The initiative process tends to succeed when it is backed by well-funded groups, because paid petitioners and campaigning companies can be hired. It started out as a populist tool created in 1902 to give citizens direct access to creating and overturning laws, but some claim it is now a “new and expensive weapon for well-financed interest groups” (Broder 1998:A01). The spike in use of ballot initiatives really took off after California approved Proposition 13 in 1978, which cut and capped property taxes. Nationally, “collecting signatures to qualify ballot initiatives has become a multimillion-dollar industry, and the ad battles over these issues are as intensive and expensive as any candidate campaign” (Broder 1998:A01).

Other states’ initiatives, like Oregon’s, tend to focus on cutting taxes, but Oregon has consistently placed more initiatives on its ballot than any other state (Broder 1998; USA Today 2000). Speaking in 1998 after Oregonians had placed more than 30 constitutional amendments and laws on the ballot, and had passed 12 of them, University of Oregon President Dave Frohnmayer said: “Initiatives that limit taxes without cutting spending or that mandate spending without providing revenue usurp the role of the legislature and governor in managing the ledger of state government. It especially diminishes the role of the legislature as the central instrument of the government. And that is bad for democracy” (Broder 1998). Bill Sizemore, the Director of Oregon Taxpayers United and owner of a petition company, has been exceedingly prominent in Oregon for instigating and successfully running initiative campaigns. He led a successful

campaign to cut and cap property taxes in 1996, he led the effort to pass Measure 37, he unsuccessfully posted initiatives to end payroll deductions for union political dues (twice), and he failed in an initiative to ban same sex marriage (Sizemore 2010). In the case of ending union political dues, the state employees' union, AFSCME, has had to fight Sizemore's initiatives twice, and put their own counter-measures on the ballot at a huge expense to the union.

The referendum process has fueled an ongoing debate between the environmental and business communities over how Oregon and its cities should develop. More specifically, this debate centers on the role that government regulation should play in Oregon's development. In the eyes of the business community and many workers in extractive industries, "economic development" is stunted in Eugene due to environmental land use regulations like the urban growth boundary, and other environmental and social regulations like the Toxic Right to Know law. A stunted economy means fewer jobs, which is a direct and tangible harm to workers and their families. In the eyes of many in the environmental community, the preservation of the environment benefits workers and their families in the long run, and should never be compromised by short-term business interests. It is within this context that Mayor Piercy attempted to broker cooperation between the environmental, business and social justice communities around sustainability and develop an alternative economic development agenda through the SBI.

## **Conclusion**

The negative response of the Eugene business community to the potential regulation of social equity through the SBI reflects a typical agenda for traditional economic development. This agenda is one that closely aligns with the main prescriptions of neoliberal policy: reduce government spending on social services, reduce regulations and taxation rates, and ensure the government facilitates and coordinates the attraction of new businesses and business capital (Harvey 1989; Kearns and Paddison 2000). There was not unanimity among the business community to push a neoliberal

agenda. However, the few business owners involved in the SBI who supported government regulation for environmental and social well-being were outsiders to the Chamber of Commerce and were already addressing social and environmental issues in their business operations regardless of incentives or regulation.

The prominent role that the traditional business community played in the SBI reflects broader political-economic trends. Firstly, as local governments shift from a leadership role to more of a coordinating and facilitating role, they turn power over to private interests and nonprofits in determining city priorities, policies and action. This shift in power affects many issues relevant to a community's well being, like housing, infrastructure, welfare, environmental health and economic development. However, for the purposes of the SBI, I am most interested in how the role of local government has changed in the sphere of economic development. The Mayor's SBI, as an initiative aimed at changing business practices for greater sustainability, had at its root a vision for an alternative economic development policy. Yet this vision conflicted with the Chamber of Commerce's vision for economic development. According to the urban governance model, the more perforated structure of local government has provided an opportunity for traditional business coalitions to have much greater involvement and influence in policy making. Therefore, the significant involvement of the business community, their relatively cohesive agenda, and their ability to speak with authority in the SBI, led to a result that mirrored the Chamber's interests. This reflects a much broader trend across the U.S. of local government turning to the private sector for assistance with their entrepreneurial strategy, and at the same time, the private sector message being dominated by traditional business coalitions. Agencies like the Lane Metro Partnership, the main entity dealing with economic development in Lane County, is one factor lending to the cohesive and dominant traditional business community, and it also highlights the emerging role of public-private partnerships in performing the role of what used to be local government's sole responsibility.

The more perforated structure of local government has also created more space for other interest groups, namely the environmental movement, to make demands of local government. For the most part, the environmental movement has called on local government to take responsibility for environmental protection by implementing and upholding environmental regulation. Efforts by the environmental movement to have local government regulate environmental quality were particularly strong during President George W. Bush's administration because of the lack of federal-level environmental leadership. The city-level results of the environmental movement's demands on government are evident in the Toxic Right to Know law, strict land use codes, the protection of wetlands in West Eugene, the protection of forests in the Willamette Valley, and more.

However, the environmental movement's effort to regulate at the local level clashes with the traditional business community's efforts to reduce social and environmental regulation. As a result, Mayor Piercy's efforts to bridge economic development and social and environmental sustainability through the SBI rested on highly contested political ground. While this political ground was somewhat of a mine-field, Mayor Piercy hoped to use this contested space to forge a more collaborative relationship between local government and the business community, and also to boost her political capital with the business community. Indeed, maintaining the economic health of one's city through entrepreneurialism is now a major responsibility of city officials. Thus, she wanted to find a middle ground. In this sense, the SBI was a compromise path that attempted to address both the business community's discourse around economic development and job creation and the environmental community's concerns around protecting forests, open space, farmland, and air and water quality.

In an effort to walk this compromise path, the structure of the SBI lent itself to strong business influence. As a result, the outcomes of the SBI were weak, despite the fact that strong regulation is necessary to ensure that the benefits of economic development are more evenly distributed across society. The perforated structure of local

government lends itself to those civil society groups with the greatest resources and time to dedicate, as well as to those groups with the most to lose. Accordingly, issues of particular importance to the social equity representatives on the SBI, such as wages, health and retirement benefits, etc. were ignored. The pressure exerted from the traditional business community for the SBI not to regulate, along with the Mayor's own interest in bridging the divide between the business community and the city, trumped all other interests. Based on the uncompromising stance of the business community, it is apparent that regulation may be one of the few means to bringing businesses into compliance with social and environmental norms. In fact, the larger political-economic context around businesses and regulation demonstrates that states and cities should attempt to implement uniform social and environmental standards across regions, reducing competition between cities by evening the playing field between them.

To provide a case in point, the few times where all three components of sustainability – social, environmental and economic – have been addressed, the government has taken a leadership role through regulation and incentives. Germany, for example, is internationally recognized for its housing energy retrofit program. The program was initiated by a coalition of labor, environment and government officials to address unemployment, high energy bills for low-income families, and the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Between 2001 and 2005, the German government invested \$1.8 billion in retrofitting low-income residents' homes for energy efficiency and renewable energy sources. Then, in response to the global recession of 2007 and the need to provide greater employment opportunities for German residents, the government invested \$8.1 billion more to expand this home retrofit program. By 2009, around 300,000 good, union jobs had been created by this program and more than 600,000 apartments had been retrofitted, reducing low-income residents' energy bills by 80% (Schneider 2010). Germany has also significantly reduced its energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. In terms of regulation, the German government has required that businesses obtain a certain percentage of their energy from renewable sources. This

mandate has driven investment in renewable energy sources and also provided job opportunities for residents (Schneider 2010). In the United States, the city of Los Angeles has created a building retrofit program modeled after the German program. The Los Angeles program includes energy efficiency retrofits of all city-owned buildings. Similar to Germany, this program was initiated by a coalition of labor, environment and government officials.

While Germany is operating under unique social, political and economic forces, it serves to highlight the strong leadership role that the government must play in sustainability efforts. Yet in Eugene and across the United States, the capacity of local governments to regulate for sustainability is limited by neoliberal ideology and the strength of traditional business coalitions. The historical tensions in Eugene between the environmental movement and the business community have led to a heightened sensitivity towards a regulatory framework. The regulation of logging, land use and urban growth has served as a lightning rod for tensions around the role of local government in social and environmental regulation. In short, these tensions run deep in Eugene and play an important role in policy making. These tensions were in part what led Mayor Piercy to introduce the SBI, yet they also contributed to the failure of the SBI TF to recommend any form of regulation to address sustainability. The sustainability movement sits at the nexus of neoliberal economic development and a community's social and environmental well-being. Sustainability demands government regulation, while neoliberalism demands government entrepreneurialism. The strength of business coalitions, coupled with perforated urban governance, serves to limit the opportunities for successful sustainability initiatives. This points to the limits of sustainability within the current urban political-economic context, and also partially illuminates the path towards a sustainable future.

**CHAPTER V**  
**JUST SUSTAINABILITY: LABOR-COMMUNITY COALITIONS**  
**WORKING FOR REGIONAL EQUITY**

**Introduction**

In this chapter, I turn to one of the few ways that social equity is addressed within urban sustainability efforts in the U.S. — among labor-community coalitions with a vision for regional equity. Labor-community coalitions are made up of labor unions and other non-labor institutions in civil society – housing, religious, immigration, transportation, and social service organizations – all working together towards shared or common goals (Frege, Heery, and Turner 2003). After extensive primary and secondary data analysis, interviews, and participant observation, I turned to these coalitions because I had yet to find a city government that comprehensively addressed social equity in its sustainability efforts. While Mayor Piercy attempted to build an alternative economic development agenda through the SBI, it lacked certain necessary ingredients for making social equity a central component of the outcome. Labor-community coalitions with an eye towards regional equity, however, may contain the necessary mix of ingredients. These coalitions may successfully provide an alternative to the traditional business organizations' economic development agenda, with the goal of fully integrating their social equity and environmental sustainability agenda within a city region.

The main driving force for social equity goals within the Mayor's SBI came from labor representatives on the Task Force (TF). However, these labor representatives lacked broad support, either from the labor movement or from other community organizations and social justice movements which might have helped advance social

equity concerns within the SBI. Prior to the SBI, there was no existing network formed between the labor movement, the environmental movement and the broader social justice movement that could be activated during the SBI process in order to collectively develop and advance an equity agenda. In fact, the Lane County Labor Council had shown little interest in working on issues outside traditional workplace negotiations between the employer and a union. Furthermore, the SBI process did not represent an urgent or threatening issue that required immediate attention; with limited time and resources, most unions and social justice organizations only respond to issues that threaten their existing interests. The labor representatives' lack of success led me to look at labor-community coalitions in the U.S. that are addressing social justice and environmental concerns through participation in regional equity movements. An exploration of labor-community coalitions' work in sustainability and regional equity provides great insight into the ways in which concerns of workers and their communities can be addressed alongside environmental and economic issues. While a traditional strategy for labor unions is to intervene and reshape the economic development process in the workplace, in industry, or at the national level, it is only recently that labor unions have intervened in economic development efforts to ensure equity and broader community benefit at the city/local level (Applegate 2007:53). Unions' and other community organizations' recent interest in influencing economic development at the local level should not come as a surprise given the shifting roles of local governments and business coalitions in the last few decades. In a neoliberal fashion, local governments have retreated from coordinating economic development programs, handing over this responsibility to business coalitions that drive development based on the pursuit of profit rather than the public interest. "In addition to sacrificing the governance role of unions and communities to that of businesses, the government's retreat from 'mixed' governance since the 1980s has also entailed abandoning economic equality as a public policy priority" (Applegate 2007:54).

In the last decade, amidst waning political power, cuts in social spending, growth in low-wage jobs, and a worsening urban ecological environment, unions and other

community organizations have begun to see the potential of working together to challenge the growing power and influence of business coalitions at the local level. As an alternative to the business coalitions' vision for development, labor-community coalitions are forming and advocating for a development agenda focused on creating regional equity. Intentionally broad in scope, they create an organizational structure that allows for larger and more powerful coalitions. Their agenda for regional equity can include everything from good jobs, health benefits, affordable housing, affordable and accessible transportation, a healthy work and living environment, access to green space, and much more.

### **Regional Equity Movements and Their Ideological Principles**

“Every word in the term regional equity movement is important: The region is the level for action, equity is the goal, and a movement is the way to make change” (Blackwell and Pastor 2009:16). In the Mayor's SBI, social equity was constantly juxtaposed with strict economic concerns, a strategy used to discredit social equity by traditional business representatives on the TF. Consequently, the idea that cities operate within an environment of scarcity was the dominant framework guiding the SBI TF. There were two main tradeoffs that consistently arose during SBI TF discussions: (1) community members must choose between many low-road jobs and fewer high-road jobs; and (2) community members must choose between a healthy economy and a healthy environment. Operating within this framework, it was virtually impossible for SBI TF members to identify recommendations that created a win-win-win situation for environmental, social equity, and economic goals.

In contrast, labor-community coalitions and the regional equity movement transcend a scarcity perspective to devise ways to meet social equity, environmental, and economic goals simultaneously. In other words, the development of a city is not viewed as a zero sum game. Instead, development is viewed within a framework of abundance

and with the perspective that there's enough economic, environmental, and social wealth to meet a whole community's needs (Blackwell and Pastor 2009).

The regional equity movement and labor-community coalitions, in particular, are “proposing a new politics of sustainable metropolitan development” based on fairness, participation, democracy, and access to opportunity (Pavel 2009). This paradigm of sustainable development for regional equity is generally based on four ideological principles that together provide a very different orientation for development than that of the Mayor's SBI. The broad principles of regional equity are to: (1) build a broad based movement for regional equity; (2) build an equitable, inclusive city; (3) allow the environment, society and the economy to flourish; and (4) ensure meaningful community voice, participation, and leadership.

#### *Building broad-based movements*

A guiding principle of the regional equity movement is that in order to challenge the neoliberal urban economic development paradigm, a broad array of organizations must work in unison. However, it's not easy for diverse organizations to overcome their differences and pursue a common agenda. A notable obstacle for labor-community coalitions is overcoming differences between social and environmental organizations, historically pitted against each other by business in a job-versus-the-environment dichotomy. It is often difficult for social justice advocates to see the value of addressing environmental problems unless those problems lead to serious community health issues. Likewise, the environmental movement's traditional focus on preserving natural resources can come at the expense of poor and working families (Duncan 2009:13). The movement for regional equity recognizes the importance of aligning the interests of environmental and social justice advocates. Duncan explains that “this vital symbiosis is as yet embryonic” (Duncan 2009:13). The labor-community coalitions for regional equity, numbering around 15 throughout the U.S., are doing the difficult work of linking social justice with environmental concerns, because when their objectives are integrated,

it creates a powerful framework for organizing (Duncan 2009:14; Partnership for Working Families 2010).<sup>30</sup>

The labor movement is an essential member of the regional equity movement, and the struggle is to expand labor's focus beyond the workplace to broader social and environmental issues. The regional equity movement strives to encourage the U.S. labor movement to adopt "social movement unionism" as a means for labor to revitalize its membership, its organizing tactics, and, ultimately, its power (Moody 1988; Nissen 2004).

Social movement unionism is defined as the labor movement making alliances with other social and community movements that are attempting to be a counterweight to corporate power (Nissen 2004:67). A more specific definition is provided of social movement unionism: "a shift in orientation and strategy from insider or business union approaches to the innovations of a mobilization-based social unionism" (Turner 2007:3). Many labor scholars agree that if the labor movement builds alliances with other social movements and community organizations, the cultural climate in the U.S. may shift towards viewing unions in a more positive light, and believing that the right to join a union is a human right (Turner 2007). Furthermore, social movement unionism pushes for substantial social change that goes beyond the workplace and touches on broader social issues of regional equity. Social movement unionism is different than a social movement; it refers to union mobilization strategies that combine with social movement approaches for resource development, coalition building, grassroots mobilization, aggressive organizing, demonstrations, and civil disobedience (Turner 2007:15).

In large part, calling on unions to adopt social movement unionism and build broad-based coalitions for regional equity has become an ideological principle of the

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<sup>30</sup> According to the Partnership for Working Families, a national organization that assists labor-community coalitions, there are 15 labor-community coalitions working on regional equity issues in various U.S. cities, as of 2010 (Partnership for Working Families 2010). These coalitions exist mainly in major U.S. cities like Los Angeles, CA, Seattle, WA, Boston, MA, Denver, CO, Atlanta, GA, but also exist in smaller U.S. cities like Syracuse, NY, Pittsburgh, PA, and Hartford, CT (Partnership for Working Families 2010).

regional equity movement because central labor councils can play a decisive role in transforming the economic development agenda of a region:

Organized labor is one of the few remaining entities in a position to contest for power with these increasingly influential bastions of corporate influence. Labor has long been organized on a regional basis through Central Labor Councils that are essentially coalitions of the labor unions operating in an area. As such, they can play a valuable role as a counterpoint to the regional influence that has been smartly cultivated by the business community. By acting regionally on behalf of an entire community, Labor has the opportunity to become a spokesperson for the aspirations of its community, which is something that is not possible when Labor focuses only on more narrow concerns, such as negotiating contracts one at a time (Dean 2009:96).

In fact, without the labor movement and central labor councils stepping up to this challenge, working families have no effective lobby on issues of economic development at the city/region level (Dean, 2009). Labor's role in labor-community coalitions adds significant weight to their agenda because the labor movement is the largest membership-based movement in the U.S. that represents working families – “only the church and senior citizen groups rival Labor in terms of their capacity to organize and influence the larger society” (Dean 2009:105).

The first labor-community coalitions for regional equity emerged in the late 1990's in California, in Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay area, but most labor-community coalitions have only formed and become active since 2005 (Partnership for Working Families 2010). Prior to the recent emergence of labor-community coalitions in some U.S. cities, local government officials and their agencies had often succumbed to a region's well-organized business community and its local economic policy, which included lower taxes, more development, and less regulation, as we saw with the Mayor's SBI. Although labor-community coalitions are proposing and implementing a counter agenda to the traditional business-led economic development agenda, many coalitions consist of (progressive) business leaders, government officials, policymakers, and academics, not just social movement organizations. Having a truly broad movement for regional equity, including social equity, a healthy economy, and environmental

sustainability, is a key principle of the movement. Many progressive movements are too “compartmentalized, too narrowly oriented around single issues, and lacking a broad moral vision” (Blackwell and Pastor 2009:19). The sustainability movement in general also draws its strength from its broad agenda, as it brings together many different issues under one roof. Unfortunately, the Mayor’s SBI suffered from compartmentalization. While social, environmental, and economic concerns were brought together in a single initiative, these concerns were addressed separately and social issues were prioritized below the others. Conversely, the agendas of labor-community coalitions often supersede narrow organizational or movement interests, and the coalition has the clout to ensure that the larger issue of equity takes precedence. The “right to good jobs, decent wages, local services, and environmental quality remain a common cause between unions and an array of social justice movements within communities” (Sellers 2007:36).

*Building an equitable, inclusive city and reducing regional disparities*

After the need for a broad coalition, the second ideological principle of the regional equity movement is building an equitable, inclusive city and reducing disparities that exist between the region and its parts. While achieving social equity is essential for regional equity, reducing a region’s social inequalities is important for other reasons, too. Having a more inclusive city (including access to good housing, jobs, education, health care, etc.) is not just a moral imperative but is also good for business – “in the new economy, the most important factors fueling competitiveness are the skills and innovative capacities of a nation’s and region’s workforce” (Blackwell and Pastor 2009:16). Studies show that paying attention to the needs of low-income people benefits all residents of a metropolitan region (Pastor et. al. 2000; Barnes and Ledebur 1998; Voith 1998; Blackwell and Pastor 2009:18).

*A different framework for sustainability: Operating in an abundant society*

The third main principle of regional equity movements is prioritizing a region's sustainability, in terms of both social and environmental equity – with economic policy developed around meeting those concerns. For regional equity movements, their efforts are focused on shifting “policy in a direction that is more favorable for disadvantaged communities” (Blackwell and Pastor 2009:18). This approach to economic development is in marked contrast to the SBI's approach, which was shaped by the mainstream business community's emphasis on scarcity. The SBI operated according to a zero sum game, in which meeting one component of sustainability meant another component wasn't addressed (i.e. an increase in wages meant less jobs overall). This perspective ensures that business, the driver of job creation, always comes out on top. This perspective needs to be changed, and one of the few successful means of doing so is by developing the power of labor-community coalitions within regional equity movements, which can shift the terms of a debate to that of abundance rather than scarcity. One of the main ways that the economic development debate is being shifted from one of scarcity to one of abundance is through labor-community coalitions holding individual development projects accountable to broader community benefit. Because a developer receives public monies for a project, labor-community coalitions can make public support for the project dependent upon the project meeting a community's need for good jobs with a living wage, health care, and workforce training, affordable housing, environmental health, and more. In short, proposed projects and programs are evaluated by their ability to meet residents' basic needs so that inequality between privileged and disadvantaged residents in a region is decreased, not increased.

*Ensure meaningful community voice, participation, and leadership*

The last major principle of the regional equity movement is ensuring meaningful community voice, participation, and leadership in creating regional equity. There are two main aspects to this principle. First, direct involvement of a large number of people is

important to the decision-making process. Second, the involvement of socially disadvantaged residents is key to finding solutions to a region's problems because these residents are most impacted by a region's policies. While the Mayor's SBI did bring a large number of residents into the process through community meetings and web surveys (around 700 people were engaged in the public participation aspect of the SBI), the central decision-making power for the SBI was controlled by a small group of people who were appointed and not accountable to the larger community. Furthermore, the SBI TF and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) membership hardly included any socially disadvantaged residents. Instead, the TF and TAC were mainly made up of white, middle- to upper-middle-class professionals with expertise in sustainability.

The regional equity movement is one of the few comprehensive responses to the rising power of business and trade associations in cities. Corporate leaders have become acutely aware that regional-level policies related to land use, taxation, development, and permitting are set by local jurisdictions. Consequently, corporate leaders and their business associations have become very organized and effective at shifting regional policy. Dean describes their involvement:

“Unfortunately, most of the business-dominated groups formed to address these bureaucratic obstacles to their success often pursue competitiveness for its own sake. Frequently, and despite growing evidence to the contrary, they operate under the mistaken notion that economic competitiveness will translate into a healthy economy. The focus on competitiveness to the exclusion of all other concerns often has very negative consequences on the overall social welfare in a community” (Dean 2009:97).

Labor-community coalitions for regional equity help create a new vision for economic development that goes beyond economic growth to include social and environmental goals, using a process led by the very members of society who have been excluded from traditional economic growth.

### **Labor Community Coalitions Leading the Movement for Regional Equity**

Across the U.S., regional equity efforts are carried out primarily by labor-community coalitions. I will use Frege, Heery, and Turner's widely accepted definition and taxonomy of labor-community coalitions: "discrete, intermittent or continuous joint activity in pursuit of shared or common goals between trade unions and other non-labor institutions in civil society, including community, faith, identity, advocacy, welfare and campaigning organizations" (2003:2).

Labor-community coalitions have existed in different forms since the 1930s in the United States. However, their existence has been inconsistent, as relations between the various movements have been in constant flux since that period. Today's labor-community coalitions are closely linked to community-based development organizations (CBDOs) and their model of community empowerment. CBDOs also emerged in the 1930s in the U.S. and drew on the union model of organizing to empower community members – "community organizing to empower residents to gain the benefits of economic development initially imitated, even as it elaborated on, labor organizing: mobilizing residents to bargain with and compel concessions from those controlling the development system" (Applegate 2007:57).

In fact, in the early 1960s the President of the United Auto Workers (UAW), Walter Reuther, became involved in uniting labor unions with community-based organizations to form city-based labor-community coalitions. Reuther worked with President Lyndon B. Johnson to mesh Johnson's War on Poverty agenda with the concerns of labor-community coalition members, eventually building Citizens Crusade Against Poverty. The coalition called for democratic economic planning, full production, and equitable income distribution. Reuther and the coalition were specifically concerned with connecting the anti-poverty agenda with other important urban social issues, like decent jobs, affordable housing, etc. The UAW eventually set up the Demonstration Cities (DC) program that aimed to "rehabilitate the central cores of American cities," connecting neighborhoods to downtowns and connecting low- and middle-income blacks

and whites to housing and public services (Applegate 2007:63). Central to Reuther and DC's efforts was gaining social-democratic control over a city's economic development plan and process (Applegate 2007).

Reuthers' efforts eventually led to the formation of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and a proposal for HUD's first program, called "Model Cities." Unfortunately, Reuthers' plan to be the first head of HUD and run "Model Cities" was not realized. Instead the "Model Cities" program offered "no challenge to existing governance relations, while replicating the residential, race, and class divisions that Demonstration Cities was framed to overcome" (Applegate 2007:63). Relations between labor unions and community organizations deteriorated quickly after the creation of HUD. Reuther was criticized by community organization leaders for pursuing a government-sponsored, top-down model that undermined his social-democratic aims. "Community organizers were left to contend with the restructuring that had occurred: a government role in directing community organizations that was unprecedented, and community organizations that manifested an unprecedented dependence on government for their existence and agenda" (Applegate 2007:64). By the late 1960s, great mistrust had developed between labor unions and community-based organizations. The civil rights and women's movements took legal action against labor unions; many labor unions opposed the anti-war movement; and some New Left movements accused unions of being a part of the racist, imperialist Establishment (Applegate 2007:64). Today, however, there are new features of labor-community coalitions that did not exist in the past. Many labor scholars contend that the organization Jobs with Justice emerged in many cities around the country in the late 1990s because community and union activists were discontented with the narrow issue focus and weak mobilization of CLCs (Nissen 2004). Jobs with Justice formed in 1987 and is now present in more than 40 U.S. cities (Jobs with Justice 2010). Jobs with Justice "engages workers and allies in campaigns to win justice in workplaces and in communities where

working families live” and uses existing organizations like unions, congregation, and community organizations to build broad coalitions (Jobs with Justice 2010).

Today’s labor-community coalitions are city based, yet they often belong to a national network that helps strengthen individual coalitions through information-sharing, power-sharing, and on the ground support. One of the most well-known and active networks of this type is the Partnership for Working Families that has an explicit goal of developing networks of similarly structured organizations in 50 major U.S. cities. They currently have about 17 network partners throughout the U.S.

Second, labor unions are not only building alliances with other social justice or civil society organizations, but also with environmental organizations. As a result, community health and broader environmental issues are now part of labor-community coalition platforms. Only recently have labor-community coalitions included a significant environmental element and opened their membership to various other social justice and community organizations such as strict environmental organizations, as well as segments of the business community. Furthermore, the labor-community coalitions that are acting as part of the larger regional equity movement inherently focus on the social and environmental needs of a whole region, not just specific issues or short-term gain.

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One of the most well-known labor-community coalition campaigns in the U.S. is called Clean and Safe Ports. This campaign was run by the Teamsters union, alongside a Partnership for Working Families network organization – Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE) – and included dozens of environmental, community, health and labor organizations. The campaign forced the publicly owned, Long Beach and Los Angeles port authorities to employ port truck drivers, so that the drivers had better working conditions and could afford emissions control equipment for their trucks or new, more efficient trucks (Coalition for Clean and Safe Ports 2010). This was also a huge victory for the environment and the communities living near the ports who suffered from the trucks’ diesel emissions (Coalition for Clean and Safe Ports 2010). The coalition

around the Clean and Healthy Ports campaign hopes to replicate its model for change in other U.S. port cities (Coalition for Clean and Safe Ports 2010).

### **Taxonomy of Coalitions**

Frege, Heery and Turner (2003) identify four types of coalitions: vanguard, common-cause, bargained, and integrative. In vanguard coalitions, labor unions lead the coalition and require other partners to subordinate their goals to labor interests. In common-cause coalitions, two or more distinct types of organizations rally around a common agenda that helps both types of organizations meet their individual goals. When potential partners explicitly agree on the principles and parameters of a coalition before formation, it is called a bargained coalition. Finally, an integrative coalition has the most assimilation between participating organizations, as coalition partners (including unions) adopt the goals of the other participating organizations as their own (Frege, Heery and Turner 2003).

In the case of the SBI, there was only one organization that served as a sort of host for labor-community coalition work: Jobs with Justice/Eugene Springfield Solidarity Network. The main issue on which this coalition had worked was creating a living wage ordinance in Eugene, OR. Unfortunately, this campaign was not successful in Eugene, and the Lane County Labor Council (LCLC) was not supportive of Eugene implementing a living wage. The rationale for this lack of support stems from a narrow union vision for equity, based on the fact that many union members already make over a living wage. In this sense, the group acts more like a vanguard coalition because a living wage ordinance is not a priority for labor unions in the LCLC. Thus, the LCLC unions are unwilling to give full support for the campaign.

### **Community Organizing and Labor-Community Coalitions**

In Pavel's assessment of successful labor-community coalitions for regional equity, she found that each coalition went through the same four stages of community

organizing efforts. First, mobilization is initiated by what some community organizing theorists call a “waking up” period, in which the conditions in a community lead that community to mobilize, sometimes resulting in a critical mass and an alignment of interests between various community actors (Pavel 2009:109). Second, the organization(s) goes through a “getting grounded” period – grounded in time, place, and community (Pavel 2009:111). During this period, individual organizations or a coalition of organizations may use a variety of methods to assess their current situation depending on the type and scale of the issue they are confronting and the readiness of the organizations, among other factors. For example, getting grounded may include gaining a stronger understanding of the legislative or budgetary process, neighborhoods’ varying access to services like groceries, parks, etc. In the third stage, organizations assess external factors to determine what they are up against and what possibilities exist for collaboration with other organizations. In the final stage, coalitions articulate the vision, which provides a framework for shared power among all the various organizations participating in the campaign. Typically the vision mobilizes new action and draws in a broader array of constituents. This framework allows a coalition to proactively pursue its vision for the future. Pavel explains this stage: “They have learned how to learn as a community, and they demonstrate this generative capacity through a variety of flexible responses and practical actions. The capacity to ‘say yes’ through a positive program enables breakthrough communities to consolidate short-term gains as well as longer term policy victories that are part of a vision for sustaining enduring change” (2009:112).

In Denver, CO, a new leader of the Central Labor Council (CLC) with deep ties to community organizing and a broad commitment to social justice took over around the same time that Colorado was on the verge of becoming a right-to-work-state if certain Democratic seats in the House and Senate were lost. With the possibility of having a Republican Governor as well as a majority Republican legislature, labor and other progressive movements realized that their social and environmental priorities were deeply threatened. Due to this immediate threat, the labor movement, community and faith

organizations, and environmental groups all started working together to beat back a Republican takeover of the state.

“And so the labor movement really started thinking a lot about our political campaigns and what are we really doing, and how are we creating the infrastructure within the labor movement to really hold politicians accountable. We did some experimentation with member to member work in 1999 and then really ramped that up in 2000 and had a huge political victory within the labor movement, where people across the country all said that we could not take over one of our legislative chambers. And then the labor movement partnered with other groups to actually create that takeover and people all across the country were calling it the Colorado Miracle” (Smith 2008).

After successfully preventing this Republican takeover, the CLC went on to form a nonprofit organization, Front Range Economic Strategy Center (FRESC). FRESC’s core priority was to build power to meet the needs of working families by uniting the labor movement with other organizations (FRESC 2010). FRESC has gone on to complete all four stages of community organizing that Pavel (2009) identifies.

Unfortunately, I do not think the labor movement, the environmental movement, or other social movements in Eugene, OR, have been brought together by a universally threatening issue that would incite Pavel’s so-called “waking up” period. While there are numerous issues that community and environmental organizations in Eugene have organized around, there have been few issues that have resulted in an alignment between labor and community/environmental organizations. Certainly a contributing factor to this situation is that labor unions and the CLC in Eugene have not been enthusiastic about tackling social justice issues that go beyond workplace matters like wages and benefits. Likewise, the majority of environmental organizations in Eugene are purely focused *on environmental protection* rather than environmental justice. Furthermore, the most contentious political issues in Eugene over the last several years have centered around development and have been framed as “anti-growth” versus “pro-growth.” Examples include the West Eugene Parkway, downtown revitalization, expansion of the University of Oregon, expansion of the urban growth boundary, etc. In most of these cases,

environmental organizations fall on the side of opposition to additional development and labor unions support growth that may lead to job creation.

### **The Rise of Labor-Community Coalitions for Regional Equity**

Several issues contributed to the recent emergence of labor-community coalitions that take a comprehensive approach to social, environmental, and economic issues in a region. Some of the most important issues are increasing environmental degradation and social inequality and the accompanying convergence of social justice and environmental concerns; the growing presence of the environmental justice movement; the labor movements' interest in addressing broader social issues; and, finally, greater attention being paid to the role of U.S. cities in our politics and economy.

#### *Increasing environmental devastation and social inequality*

Demographically speaking, for the first time in history over half the world's population, about 3 billion people, live in cities (UN Habitat 2010; Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2004). There is ample evidence that the process of urbanization is intensifying, particularly in the Global South. Most startling is not that urbanization is increasing so drastically, but that it is accompanied by exponential growth of the urban poor (Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2004; UN Habitat 2008; Davis 2006). One-third of the world's *urban* population (mainly women and children) is living in extreme poverty today, and that figure is expected to double in the next 30 years (UN Habitat 2010).

In addition to an increasing urban population, changes in the global economy have contributed significantly to growing inequality in many U.S. cities. A decline in manufacturing and a concurrent rise in the service sector have created a highly unequal economy (Sassen 1990, 2001). A growing service sector creates new wealth, but not for all people. Women, immigrants, and people of color are often excluded from these benefits and instead are marginalized in low-wage, part-time, and contingent jobs within the service industry (Sassen 1990, 2001). The shift to a service-sector economy has led

to a vision for U.S. cities focusing on the needs and desires of privileged residents, rather than the majority of urban residents who lack the wealth to enjoy the services offered (Bayat 2000; Ruben 2001). An emphasis on real estate development often accompanies a growing service-sector economy, increasing the cost of living, and, as a consequence, exacerbating low-income residents' economic insecurity (Ruben 2001).

A larger urban population typically leads to increased consumption and ecological degradation. As cities grow, they transform the natural landscape within and around them: land surfaces are reshaped; water and air quality are degraded; natural resources are extracted; and growing cities make highly concentrated demands for food, fuel, and raw materials that can affect distant ecosystems (Mahadevia 2000). Cities in the United States and around the world are facing the environmental and human health implications of air and water pollution, "hot spots" (rising temperatures due to a lack of green space), and more. As is now widely recognized, increasing attention is being focused on how urban living can become less environmentally destructive (Ruben 2001; Evans 2001).

### *Social justice and environmentalism converge*

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, with its \$90 million annual lobbying budget, lobbied heavily in 2008 and 2009 to stop the U.S. House and Senate from passing climate protection legislation, arguing that the legislation would cause economic hardship and job loss (Broder 2009b). This stance mirrors the view of most traditional businesses: that profit is the most important factor to be taken into account, and the interests of working-class people and the environment are secondary. Labor-community coalitions have found that most business associations involved with economic development efforts are primarily interested in reducing regulatory measures on businesses, streamlining permitting procedures, or reducing taxes on businesses (Dean 2009:98).

The growing intensity of urban environmental and social problems presents an opportunity for environmental and social justice advocates to build new and broader alliances and to convince traditional business interests that the social and environmental

challenges we face today are on par with the economic challenges (Pavel 2009). Linking environmental sustainability with development that meets the social needs of urban residents forms the basis for new coalitions, which can lead to the achievement of both social and environmental goals (Duncan 2009). As a result, there is growing interest in finding solutions to these issues that address social and environmental concerns, not just one or the other.

*The growing strength and visibility of the environmental justice movement*

The growing visibility of the environmental justice movement has contributed to the convergence of environmental and social equity movements.<sup>31</sup> The environmental justice movement's "revision and expansion of environmentalism has developed the foundation for understanding and implementing initiatives aimed at achieving regional equity" (Shepard and Charles-Guzman 2009:35). This reshaping has been particularly powerful in cities where the environmental justice movement has defined the environment as a place where people "live, work, play, pray, and learn" (Shepard and Charles-Guzman 2009:35).

In fact, one of the first environmental justice conferences was organized in 1976 by the United Auto Workers and Environmentalists for Full Employment to address employers' arguments that pollution-control measures would cause economic difficulties, including job loss. However, there has only been inconsistent collaboration between environmentalists and social justice groups, such as labor unions, since their first interactions in the 1970s (Obach 2004:47-81).

Unfortunately, the environmental justice movement does not have a strong presence in Eugene, and there were no environmental justice organizations represented

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<sup>31</sup> Examples of the growing visibility of the Environmental Justice movement include Van Jones' appointment to the White House; in 1994, President Clinton issued an Environmental Justice Executive Order (12898); in 1996, in response to calls from the environmental justice movement to reform the decision-making process around environmental issues, the EPA expanded the "Public Participation Rule of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act" with the goal of getting communities more involved in the RCRA permitting process (Shepard and Charles-Guzman 2009).

on the SBI TF. While the Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides (NCAP) was represented on the TF and is concerned with the impact of pesticides on community members, their work integrates economic justice in only limited ways (NCAP 2010).

### *Paying greater attention to cities*

Some of the factors that motivated Mayor Piercy to initiate the SBI have played a central role in the emergence of labor-community coalitions for regional equity. In the last part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, labor-community coalitions emerged as the result of four central factors: 1) The growing strength of the environmental movement and public interest in sustainability (Wheeler and Beatley 2004); 2) A greater awareness of suburban sprawl and the connection between the spatial dimensions of cities and inequality between urban residents (i.e. whites leaving the city for the suburbs played a significant role in the decline of American cities (Beauregard 2003)); 3) A greater focus from city governments and businesses organizations on creating cities that are economically competitive on the global market (Sassen, 2001, 2006); and 4) The disproportionate effect of immigration and other demographic trends on communities of color in cities (Orfield 2009).

In terms of opportunity structure, unions may find more allies to build regional power at the urban level than they will find at the national, sectoral, or workplace levels (Turner 2007). Openings in the opportunity structure, namely weakness in state authority, have created space for cities to lead and have been accompanied by the “loss of legitimacy, policy failure, and/or divisions among the powers that be” (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001:14-15). Labor unions and other social organizations are also attracted to urban level campaigns because they cost far less than state or national campaigns. Accessing elected city officials is also much easier at the city level, giving organizations greater leverage to advance their interests.

### **The Labor Movement Goes Beyond the Workplace**

The increase in social inequality is correlated to the long decline of the labor movement in the U.S., the only movement in this country dedicated solely to advancing the interests of working families. In short, many within the labor movement are calling for new union strategies to ensure its survival. Turner (2007) sees these new strategies as marked by “social coalition building and grassroots mobilization at the urban level” (3).

As manufacturing disappears from many urban areas, or shifts from large-scale operations to light manufacturing, or disperses into suburbs and exurbs, union membership takes a beating while opportunities for new organizing are less favorable. A corresponding expansion of service sector employment- in health care, education, building services, domestic services, transportation- requires innovative organizing strategies and confronts unions with new challenges (Turner 2007:11).

As a result of their declining power and density, some unions are joining forces with other organizations and social movements by building coalitions. According to Luce (2007), there are three main reasons why labor unions have pursued coalition building in the last ten years. First, they are doing so as a defensive measure to combat their declining power and density. Sellers’ survey of unions’ politics at the local level revealed that urban coalition building is very important to effectively move their political agenda, and his research confirms what many case studies have been showing – that the local has “emerged as a major element in the opportunity structure of union politics” (2007:35). Sellers’ study found that “regardless of how high the national rates of union density were or how institutionalized the opportunities for local union influence, unions benefited in the local process from the strength of other civil, political, and institutional actors in the community. Unions in general benefited when other social justice groups were also stronger” (2007:50-51).

In other words, coalition building with other community organizations – civic, religious, or other social justice groups – helped enhance the political efforts and efficacy of unions by building support from different bases in urban society, such as those based on ethnicity, immigrant status, gender, religion, neighborhood issues, or other identities

(Turner 2007:4). Coalition building with other organizations requires unions to reframe their interests to include those of other urban actors. This can be very difficult for some unions, but it can also connect them with greater resources to advance their cause and revitalize the labor movement overall (Turner 2007).

Second, unions choose to join or build coalitions for proactive reasons (Luce 2007). Particularly for labor leaders who were involved in new social movements in the 1960s and 1970s, they want to expand beyond labor's narrow focus on workplace negotiations to address broader social issues that affect workers. Third, some labor leaders come from a leftist political ideology with a commitment to justice and solidarity that lends itself to coalition building (Luce 2007).

There are several good examples of unions building alliances with other organizations for both defensive and proactive reasons that expand their focus beyond the workplace. These include SEIU's and UNITE's current organizing work, Jobs with Justice's strategy, and the living wage movement, which numerous labor scholars argue spurred many of the labor-community coalitions in existence today.

Returning to their roots to survive and rebuild, unions are targeting those urban workers who are most exploited: women, people of color, immigrants, and low-wage workers who cannot afford a car and are hurt the most by housing inflation and the related necessity for long commutes (LeRoy 2009:209).

Change to Win (CtW) unions and others, such as UNITE HERE, have specifically focused on urban-level organizing because their largest potential membership base is urban. The service sector and other urban-tied industries, such as transportation and construction, which these unions represent, are the most rapidly expanding sectors in urban economies. The service sector generally includes health care, education, hospitality, and building services, all industries that typically provide low-wage work and disproportionately represent women, immigrants, and persons of color.

Unions representing these workers have realized that labor-community coalitions are a great vehicle for organizing the unorganized – often the poor, women, people of color and immigrants – and as a result, have been very willing to instigate the formation

of these coalitions. In fact, CtW unions' involvement in coalitions occasionally has caused problems between them and the CLC's to which they belong (Nissen 2004). This is a less relevant issue today, as the 2005 AFL-CIO split has caused many CtW unions to leave their CLCs, which mainly are affiliated with the AFL. In Nissen's Miami case study, the CLC actually tried to stop SEIU and UNITE from bringing organizing and contract battle requests directly to a coalition to which they all belonged, the Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice (2004:75). My interviews with labor-community coalition leaders revealed that many CLCs across the U.S. have attempted to control the relationship between individual unions and their coalitions, as well as control the activities of other coalition members. In essence, many CLCs were only interested in participating in vanguard coalitions where they operated as the vanguard organization (Nissen 2004).

### **The Living Wage Movement Spurs Labor-Community Coalitions**

In the 1990s, Jobs with Justice emerged in the U.S. in response to the labor and social justice movements' frustration over unions' narrow focus on wage and benefit issues. With living costs rising, including housing, transportation, health care, food, and more, working families needed to address other concerns besides wages and benefits. Many individuals who have worked with labor-community coalitions since the early 2000's, attribute the emergence of labor-community coalitions to the pioneering work of Jobs with Justice, which was founded to address broader social issues. One labor-community coalition leader said:

So Jobs with Justice was really formed to try to jumpstart and create some solidarity among those unions that were doing organizing in the late 1980s and early 1990s... Where the labor movement was kind of ho hum, you know, business as usual, sitting back and dying... There were people who were starting to organize. And I really think that it was the entry point for people like me and people like Lisa to start to be a part of the labor movement. I think Jobs with Justice created the space for that (Smith 2008).

Typically, Jobs with Justice's greatest allies in the living wage campaign – the campaign that has received the bulk of its support – are those unions with low-wage members who suffer from these broad social concerns, like SEIU, UNITE, and AFSCME (Nissen 2004). Many labor-community coalitions that still exist grew out of what labor scholars call “the most successful sustained labor-community coalition movement in the U.S. today” – the living wage movement (Nissen 2004:70, 2001). The living wage movement has been spurred on by significant growth of low-wage work in U.S. cities, partly due to the privatization of government services and the growth of the service sector.<sup>32</sup> Many unionized, public sector jobs in cities were lost due to cash-strapped local governments contracting out services. As a result, well-paid government jobs with benefits were replaced by low-wage jobs with no benefits (Luce, 2007).

In response to these trends, the incidence of workers living in poverty grew, and community and labor organizations looked for solutions. At the same time, labor and community groups were feeling under attack more generally and looked for avenues for local campaigns that would unite them with their allies and offer the opportunity for winnable reforms (Luce 2007:22).

Eventually, living wage campaigns in U.S. cities were so successful that some declared it a social movement (Nissen 2000; Merrifield 2000). Living wage campaigns have been launched in thousands of U.S. cities and passed in over 200 U.S. cities (Dolnick 2009). A living wage is a natural alliance builder because it is popular with a diverse range of organizations as well as the general population. The most common partners of living wage campaigns are labor councils, unions that represent low-wage workers, and “non-worker organizations” (NWOs) – organizations that fight on behalf of working people but are not necessarily controlled by workers (i.e. Jobs with Justice) (Luce 2007).

Many unions and central labor councils have joined living wage campaigns in their cities in part to build alliances with other organizations. Change to Win unions have

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<sup>32</sup> Oregon had 59,000 more manufacturing jobs (mostly in the forest product industry) than service jobs in 1976. By 2000, there were 187,000 more service jobs than manufacturing jobs. In other words, the service sector grew from 16% to 27% of the Oregon economy, while manufacturing declined from 23% to 15% in this same time period (Oregon Center for Public Policy 2006).

found their organizing efforts are more successful when connected to community organizations that appeal to the social identities of workers. Such social identities can include immigration status, ethnicity, religious beliefs, and more. Central labor councils often join living wage campaigns in order to improve their visibility within their communities (Luce 2007). The President of the Southern Arizona Labor Council, Ian Robertson, said about Tucson's 1997-1999 living wage campaign: "I'm tired of being called a labor boss, and that we're only interested in collecting dues. Here was an opportunity for labor to be a community partner" (Luce 2007:26).

One leader of Lane County's Labor Council (LCLC), however, felt that workplace negotiations and collecting dues were the main priorities of the LCLC, not being a community partner (Doyle 2008). Accordingly, Eugene's living wage campaign was a distraction from labor's core priorities (Doyle 2008). Many unions don't realize the need to work in concert with community partners until it is too late. Events such as a political loss can make unions and labor councils realize that a pro-labor agenda may not be moved forward without the help of other organizations in the community (Luce 2002).

Luce uses Boston as an example of how living wage campaigns can cement alliances and lead to further collaboration between labor and community organizations. The 1997 Boston living wage campaign was mainly run by the Greater Boston Central Labor Council (primarily representing white, working-class union workers) and ACORN (primarily representing low-income, African-American residents). Leaders of ACORN and GBCLC said their relationship was institutionalized when they successfully passed a living wage ordinance and won seats for both an ACORN and a GBCLC representative on the City's Living Wage Advisory Committee. Since this win, they have also successfully raised the state minimum wage (in 1998), passed a statewide and Boston-specific earned-income tax credit, and introduced a state corporate accountability law (Luce 2007:27).

Similarly, Los Angeles' living wage campaign solidified the labor-community coalition, and many participants agree that it inspired a citywide movement for

community benefits. Since they won a living wage ordinance in 1997, they have also achieved community benefit agreements on six economic development projects (developers did not receive broad community support for their projects until they agreed to meet specified community demands), elected labor-friendly candidates to city government, and won large pay raises for city employees (Luce 2007).

In conclusion, unions' declining power, coupled with neoliberal policies' detrimental impact on the working class, has driven unions to seek new methods of organizing and community organizations to seek broader coalitions. Building alliances – tapping into organizations' constituency bases - is a central aspect of many unions' new strategy to deal with declining numbers and density.

### **The Main Factors Determining the Success of Labor-Community Coalitions for Regional Equity**

Given that labor-community coalitions in some U.S. cities have begun to challenge the agenda of traditional business coalitions around development and to create their own agendas that prioritize equity and environmental sustainability, it's important to look at the main factors determining the success of labor-community coalitions for regional equity. An examination of these determinants offers valuable insight into the challenges and opportunities for labor-community coalition work in Eugene, OR, around the Mayor's SBI.

Scholars that are studying newly formed labor-community coalitions for regional equity in the U.S. have identified six components that are usually essential to the successful creation and maintenance of these coalitions: (1) an initial issue to rally around; (2) the position of CLCs and individual unions on building regional equity; (3) organizational and movement bridge-builders; (4) adequate funding; (5) the status of other social activism in the city; and (6) achieving concrete results. I will address each of these issues in turn.

*An initial issue to rally around*

Labor-community coalitions almost always require an initial issue to rally around that spurs potential members into action. Labor unions and other civil society organizations are unlikely to build alliances with each other based on a theoretical belief in the importance of coalitions. Typically, the issue is of interest and importance to all member organizations of the coalition, or is of such great importance to one organization that it decides to recruit others to get involved. Highly visible incidents that often incite the formation of labor-community coalitions include the closing of an important social service in a community (such as a hospital), police violence against residents, or a toxic facility malfunctioning or locating in a community (Pavel 2009:113). Labor-community coalitions that include environmental organizations and unions have most commonly formed around campaigns addressing specific corporations that the unions want to organize and that environmentalists want to make more environmentally responsible.

For many labor-community coalitions active in the regional equity movement today, the initial issue that spurred their formation was the living wage campaign. As real wages in cities declined with the growth of the service sector and the loss of manufacturing jobs, attempts to establish a living wage ordinance emerged across the U.S. The organizations involved in living wage campaigns realized that moving a controversial political agenda required a broad base of support, and they often recruited members from the labor, environmental, religious, and social justice communities. In the process of pursuing a living wage, alliances were formed between these different communities that, in some cities, led to more formal and established coalitions that continue today.

In contrast, the Mayor's SBI did not provide an initial galvanizing issue to rally around and incite cooperation between social movement groups. As a city-led process with appointed members and limited decision-making power, it did not inspire deep commitment and collaboration among labor and community organizations. There is likely a deeper thread present in that failure, stemming from an earlier unsuccessful

attempt in Eugene to pass a living wage ordinance. While there were many political factors that contributed to that earlier defeat, as well, the lack of involvement from the Eugene labor movement in the campaign certainly played a role, just as the lack of CLC involvement in the SBI played a part in missing the boat on social equity.

*Central labor councils' and individual unions' positions on building regional equity*

Many studies on labor unions' collaboration with other organizations have shown that "the choices and strategies pursued by union leaders and their organizations" largely determines if and how unions work in coalitions (Turner 2007:1). Problematic attitudes – proprietary, monopolistic, or vanguard, to name a few – from the leadership of CLCs or individual unions significantly challenge the success of labor-community coalitions (Nissen 2004). As the regionally organized bodies of the labor movement, CLCs play a pivotal role in regional equity movements. How a CLC relates to the new geography of social, environmental, and economic sustainability movements determines the role that working people will play in the development of regional economic strategy (Pavel 2009).

In most cases, unions participate in common-cause coalitions if they have a leader who has "strong ideological motivations to connect their union with the coalition" (Nissen 2004:78). Such ideological motivations can lead urban labor movements to ally with various identity-based organizations that address a variety of worker interests, including women, people of color, immigrants, consumers, and communities. In fact, identity-based social coalition building is important to the "multijurisdictional unionism of an increasingly service-based economy" (Nissen 2004:78). However, alliances with these identity-based organizations often require a shift in a union's internal structure and/or leadership because such efforts go well beyond the exclusively worker-based campaigns that they typically organize. For some unions:

The institutional arrangements in which key local unions are embedded have allowed those unions to choose the status quo over innovation, blocking a broader pattern of mobilization and coalition building. In New York, a small number of powerful locals have often been at odds with one another and have shown only limited interest in central labor council coordination, while in Boston a few

strategically placed locals have cuts deals with local and state governments that have at times benefited their own unions at the expense of broader labor and social interests (Turner 2007:7).

Heckscher and Palmer (1993) argue that U.S. unions cannot successfully participate in mutually beneficial labor-community coalitions, mainly because they are narrowly focused on employer-union relations (297-299). Or, if they do participate, they only form “vanguard coalitions,” where they play the role of the dominant partner with a narrow focus on labor’s interest and gaining other coalition members’ support for the labor agenda (Heckscher and Palmer 1993). In short, “unions are incapable of acting as equal partners with others in multilateral coalitions working for broad social goals” (Nissen 2004:71).

Similar to Lane County Labor Council’s (LCLC) participation in the SBI, Nissen documents that unions commonly take a top-down approach to coalitions, whereby only one individual of a union, usually a CLC officer, participates in coalition meetings, and there is little or no attempt to engage local union leaders or members (2004).

Also similar is the LCLC’s engagement with Eugene’s living wage campaign, where Nissen notes a pattern of CLC’s narrow interest in living wage campaigns. “If union members weren’t directly winning pay increases, organized labor had no stake” (2004:74). In a case study of Miami’s living wage campaign and organized labor’s involvement with it, Nissen found that the union leader and CLC officer serving on the Community Coalition for a Living Wage “refused to concede that a broader, integrative goal like raising the floor for all workers (and thus lessening the impetus for the county to privatize AFSCME-represented county jobs) was desirable” (2004:74). This labor leader’s relation to the campaign mirrors exactly how a leader within Eugene’s CLC felt about passing a living wage. He felt that organized labor only had an interest in supporting the aspects of the living wage campaign that benefited union workers’ pay (Doyle 2008; Nissen 2004). Beyond the particular individuals involved in these campaigns in Eugene and Miami, even individual unions that supported a living wage

ordinance did not play an active role in the coalition; they felt that one individual from the CLC was enough support for the cause (Nissen 2004).

In their review of union interactions with regional coalitions, Greer, Byrd, and Fleron (2007) found that Buffalo's manufacturing unions were not interested in social movement unionism because they were already in coalition with their employers, government, and other social actors to promote economic development in their region. This was a strategy they had developed and used for many years, and they were not interested in breaking with it. To join a community-labor coalition would likely undermine prior coalitions between unions and pro-economic development organizations. Similarly, in an examination of Miami and Nashville's labor coalition histories, Nissen and Russo (2007) and Cornfield and Canak (2007), respectively, found that no unions in those regions had been successful at building coalitions with other community organizations. While both places are right-to-work states, which makes labor organizing more difficult, both places also had growing immigrant workforces that traditional labor union leadership had been reluctant to reach out to. While the abovementioned authors concluded that the "growing ethnic minority workforce occupy a central position in labor's prospects for successful organizing and political clout," still the unions did not take the steps to build coalitions (Turner 2007:8; Nissen and Russo 2007; Cornfield and Canak 2007; Milkman 2000).

In conclusion, the perspective and choices of individual CLC and union leaders is perhaps the most critical piece of coalition building between unions and community organizations for regional equity. However, the choices of CLC and union leaders are based on many factors, including their personal views of how to address broader workplace issues, the state of the union or CLC, their capacity to take on issues beyond workplace negotiations, the history of relations between the labor movement and other movements, and the union members' interest in engaging in coalition work. Nissen notes that many rank and file members are not interested in coalition work because they see the role of their union leadership as only related to contract negotiations for wages and

benefits (Nissen 2004:78). With unions' power declining over the last few decades, union leaders feel even more pressure to achieve short-term results for their members and use their resources and time wisely (Nissen 2004). Nissen points out that coalitions do not consistently win results for labor unions, so in this respect coalitions are not a sure bet for short-term gain for unions. Given that CLCs and individual unions have an obligation to focus on issues specific to wages and benefits, yet limited resources to do so, creating labor-community coalitions allows these entities to involve themselves in broader equity issues without being the primary drivers of that process. Their roles in the coalitions leave them with adequate capacity to maintain focus on workplace issues, while providing a mechanism for dialogue and collaboration on a much broader scale, with implications far beyond workplace equity.

#### *The role of bridge-builders in labor-community coalitions*

The third factor determining the successful formation of labor-community coalitions is having the organizations' "bridge-builders" eventually participate in the coalition. Bridge-builders are individuals who operate in both labor and community organizations and thus have an interest and knowledge of the issues, constituencies, and methods of each type (Rose 2000). In his groundbreaking book, *Coalitions Across the Class Divide: Lessons from the Labor, Peace, and Environmental Movements* (2000), Rose found that bridge-builders were necessary to overcome the cultural differences that often exist between working class organizations like unions and middle-class organizations like environmental organizations.

In Nissen and Russo's case study of several of Miami's campaigns relating to social justice, they found that bridge-builders played an instrumental role in forming and maintaining the coalition (2007). The bridge-builders in his study had backgrounds in multiple social justice issues, including organized labor. In general, they found that bridge-builders have a broadly progressive political ideology: "Leaders with this perspective see organized labor as part of a larger social movement for social and

economic justice, so coalitions seem to be natural” (2004:79). In my interview with one of the leaders of the largest labor-community coalition networks in the country today – Partnership for Working Families – I found that this leader had a long history of working on a wide variety of issues with community organizations prior to working with Denver’s CLC. Then, after working with the labor movement for more than a decade, she helped form a coalition between a variety of community, environmental and labor unions in Denver (Moody 2010). The importance of one environmental leader’s work to build alliances between the labor and environmental movement and establish a statewide Renewable Energy Standard was described as follows:

I would say one of the key ingredients of that partnership and why we’re really still pretty successful now was that there was a leader within the environmental community, um, who ran one of the most powerful environmental groups here in Colorado who is really respected by, um, state-elected leadership and local city leaders. And he really took an interest in trying to figure out why the labor movement should care about the policies that they were running, and actually worked his butt off to figure out how labor could win from the policies they were promoting” (Smith 2009).

In short, having at least one individual, if not more, who is familiar with the issues, constituency, and organizational style of other potential coalition partners is a common ingredient for most successful labor-community coalitions. Often these individuals also have a broad commitment to social justice that supersedes individual organizations’ issues and struggles. Bridge-builders are more likely to have access to other organizations and movements, as well as the ability to smooth relations among the various coalition partners by identifying “make or break” issues (Pavel 2009; Rose 2000).

Based on my interviews with SBI TF members, I did not identify people who could act as bridge-builders between the social equity representatives and the business representatives, or between the social equity representatives and the environmental representatives. However, there were several SBI TF members who acted as bridge-builders between the environmental and business communities. A few business owners on the TF were truly concerned with environmental sustainability and had already begun

implementing sustainable practices in their business operations. Thus, these business owners were very keen to explore other ways to improve their sustainability practices.

There were also a couple of SBI TF members from the environmental community who used their positions as nonprofit managers to relate to the business owners on a peer level. In fact, one SBI TF member from the environmental community bonded with SBI TF business representatives around the difficulty of paying employees higher wages and better benefits. Unfortunately, besides the Mayor, there were not really any environmental or business representatives who were well-respected among the labor community, or vice-versa, at a level that would have enabled them to act as a bridge-builder between the two communities. Most important, the coordinator of the SBI process, who was essentially charged with balancing the various interests involved in the SBI, had little to no experience with the labor movement. In contrast, most leaders in the Partnership for Working Families network have worked in environmental, labor and community organizations; thus, they are known and well-respected by all of the different groups with whom they're working (Interviews, 2009).

#### *Labor-community coalitions require adequate funding*

The fourth factor of labor-community coalition success is quite obvious but still important to mention: Labor-community coalitions need adequate funding for high-quality staffing and outreach. Most coalitions gain funding through donations from their member organizations and individuals as well as grants from foundations. Without adequate funding, coalitions may lack the staff and expertise to achieve concrete results.

#### *Relationship to broader social activism*

Fifth, the broader growth of social activism in a region fuels the success and growth of labor-community coalitions and, overall, social movement unionism. The tactics of social movement unionism – coalition building, grassroots mobilization, aggressive organizing, demonstrations, and civil disobedience – occur outside of

established, government-sanctioned channels, and thus are difficult to develop and utilize if other social movements are not widespread in a region. Turner explains, “There are no broad social movements to sweep unions along in their efforts at power building – which is one reason why so many unions have resisted innovation” (Turner 2007:15). Cities like Eugene, OR, have strong environmental movements; but typically their goals and membership are too distant from those of the labor movement to spur collaboration without having a common target or numerous, highly-skilled bridge-builders present. In short, having a variety of social movements in a city region often leads to successful coalition formation and maintenance. For example, a thriving movement or organization is more likely to have the ability, both in resources and time, to reach out to and collaborate with other movements. Furthermore, a thriving movement or organization is also more likely to have visibility to other movements and organizations; and this can contribute to a cross-fertilization of ideas around political strategy and implementation.

#### *Achieving concrete results*

Finally, it is important that labor-community coalitions achieve concrete results for their organizational participants. Achieving concrete results for participating organizations assures their leaders and members that contributing time and resources to the coalition is a good investment (Pavel 2009). If concrete results are not achieved by the coalition, organizations that are already strapped for resources and time may question whether taking the time to build a broader agenda for change is strategic for them, or if they should just focus on their own specific issues. For many labor-community coalitions, concrete results are not achieved for years. While achieving those results often solidifies relations among coalition members, in the meantime some partners may drop out. The labor-community coalition Campaign for Responsible Development coordinated by FRESC (Front Range Economic Strategy Center in Denver, CO) took three years to win a community benefits agreement (CBA) at one development site in Denver. In the end the CBA was a huge victory for the coalition, and they have now

moved to gaining CBAs for other development projects. But, in the process of gaining the first one, they struggled to maintain the interest and investment of coalition partners and inevitably lost some completely (Smith 2009).

Labor-community coalitions are complex entities, and their successful formation and maintenance usually requires all six of these factors to be present. In examining these six factors, it becomes clear that Eugene lacks some of the ingredients necessary to develop a strong labor-community coalition that could significantly influence city politics and in particular the Mayor's SBI process. The Mayor's SBI didn't provide a galvanizing issue for organizations to rally around; the CLC leadership was not interested in addressing broader social issues (as was evident in the CLC's lack of commitment to the living wage campaign); and the goals of non-labor organizations in Eugene were primarily directed at environmental issues, which are often too distant from labor's goals and membership to incite meaningful collaboration.

In the long-term, Turner evaluates the success of labor-community coalitions by their ability to build a social justice infrastructure. Turner defines social justice infrastructure in this way:

Based on active networks of social actors in ongoing relationships and engaged in multiple campaigns, a social justice infrastructure includes both institutions and a transformed local politics in which labor's influence as a progressive social actor expands. In the best cases, labor-inclusive coalition building may contribute to a revitalization of civil society and democratic participation (Turner 2007:3).

In places like Los Angeles, CA, and Denver, CO, labor-community coalitions have reached a level of permanence that allows the coalitions to proactively execute their visions for regional equity, as well as anticipate and respond to specific issues that arise, such as individual development projects. Building a social justice infrastructure is not only important to revitalizing the labor movement and other movements involved in labor-community coalitions, but also to renewing progressive politics more broadly (Turner 2007:13).

### **Just Sustainability: Labor-Community Coalitions for Regional Equity**

After exploring the key elements to building and maintaining coalitions, I turn now to the opportunities and challenges faced by labor-community coalitions for regional equity. On the positive side, the city-region scale of labor-community coalitions offers an opportunity structure that does not exist at the state or national levels. A 40-year decline in federal aid to cities and state budget cuts have resulted in less money for city governments to provide important services and infrastructure to residents. Combined with the growing lobby of traditional business coalitions, the city level is ripe for action that addresses the social and environmental concerns of urban residents (Blackwell and Pastor 2009:16).

Movements for regional equity exist outside of formal government structure, giving coalition members latitude in action not available within government. Furthermore, with city governments responding more to the needs and desires of traditional business interests under a neoliberal policy framework, impacting the debate around development is more effective from outside the government structure.

Regional equity movements also benefit from their unique method of combining tactics to create social change. Made up of a variety of organizations, regional equity movements combine strategic research, union-style organizing, community development, and social movement approaches in a broad-based multi-issue effort. “Because the regional equity movement centers on an economic development agenda rather than a purely distributive agenda, the combination of research, organizing, and action is critical to its success” (Blackwell and Pastor 2009:20). The organizing aspect of regional equity movements builds long-term civic engagement and public will for change. The policy action solidifies the vision for reform, and then an informed and engaged public can hold policy makers accountable to the policy shifts (Blackwell and Pastor 2009).

In the process of building power for regional equity, labor-community coalitions use bottom-up structures and decision-making practices (Dean 2009). One of the first regional equity labor-community coalitions, formed in San Jose, CA, in 1995 – Working

Partnerships USA (WPUSA) – created a model for labor-community coalitions that was based on these bottom up structures and practices. By using this inclusive approach, WPUSA was able to create what they call “a shared understanding of the true conditions in a local economy that impact working families” (Dean 2009:97). This shared understanding guides the coalition’s research about the region’s social and environmental status, producing data about its unmet social and environmental needs that can be used for community education, to inform civic leaders, and most importantly, to bring “economic development efforts into line with identified community aspirations” (Dean 2009:98).

Producing research and analysis of a region’s social, cultural, and environmental conditions has become a staple of labor-community coalitions (Blackwell and Pastor 2009:20). In fact, many labor-community coalitions have chosen to produce reports in various formats that discuss the geography of opportunity for their regions’ residents.<sup>33</sup> These reports inform the movement’s work, and because they are based on quality research, they build the coalition’s legitimacy among politicians and other policymakers (Blackwell and Pastor 2009). For example, WPUSA’s report showed that despite an “economic boom” of high-tech industries and record profits in Silicon Valley, the region’s workers suffered from poverty-wage jobs, the prevalence of temporary and contingent work, a growing divide between the rich and the poor, and a lack of benefits like health insurance and pensions (Dean 2009:102). Based on the research and data contained in their Community Economic Blueprint, a Sacramento Bee journalist wrote that the Blueprint “reinforced the growing evidence that beneath the much-celebrated boom in California’s high-tech economy – behind each of those baby-faced Silicon Valley millionaires and every billion-dollar initial public offering, there are a hundred low-paid contingent workers with no job security, no benefits and only the most uncertain future” (Dean 2009:103).

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<sup>33</sup> Some of these reports on the geography of inequality include Community Economic Blueprint, WPUSA; The Regional Equity Atlas: Metropolitan Portland’s Geography of Opportunity, The Coalition for a Livable Future.

Through elaborate GPS mapping exercises, Coalition for a Livable Future (CLF) in Portland, OR, was able to demonstrate visibly and clearly the geography of inequality in Portland. With the completion of CLF's Equity Atlas, residents, policymakers, and elected officials have used it to better understand the diverse economic, social, and environmental reality of each neighborhood in Portland and accordingly develop policy around the needs of each neighborhood.

Although they vary in their style and quality of production (among other differences), the mapping of inequities in a city-region has become a staple of labor-community coalitions' research, policy, and action agenda. The atlases are instrumental in the formation and maintenance of coalitions, too, because they provide member organizations with the data they need to develop a shared analysis, and, later, a shared agenda for regional equity.

### **Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs)**

To date, the most common tool used by labor-community coalitions for building regional power and creating greater equality in a region is the Community Benefit Agreement (CBA). A CBA is an agreement, signed by community groups, a developer, and sometimes a government agency, that incorporates a range of benefits that a developer must provide to gain community support for a project (Feingold 2009; Gross, LeRoy, and Janis-Aparicio 2005). The success of a CBA mainly depends on the presence of a multi-issue, broad-based labor-community coalition (Gross, LeRoy, and Janis-Aparicio 2005). Table 1 provides a sampling of labor-community coalitions in the U.S. and components of Community Benefit Agreements that they have signed.

**Table 6.** Sampling of labor-community coalitions' missions and achievements.

Labor-Community Coalition	Mission	Sample Achievements
Community Labor United (CLU), Boston, MA	CLU's strategic campaigns promote quality jobs, secure healthcare, affordable housing, and environmental justice.	\$1.4 billion energy efficiency plan that will bring jobs and home retrofits to Massachusetts' working class communities.
Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE), Ventura, CA	CAUSE is working to create a sustainable economy that is just, prosperous and environmentally healthy.	Successfully led living wage campaigns; securing access to quality, comprehensive, and affordable universal health care and resolving health disparities.
East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy (EBASE), Oakland, CA	EBASE envisions an economy where all workers earn enough to live in dignity, have a voice on the job and in policy making, and live in healthy communities.	Achieved a groundbreaking agreement that requires local hiring for billions of dollars' worth of construction at the Port of Oakland and generates millions of dollars in job training funds.
Garden State Alliance for a New Economy (GANE), Newark, NJ	GANE builds power for working families while holding governments and corporations responsible for the creation of quality jobs, health care, affordable housing, and environmentally safe communities.	Bayonne Harbor Development: GANE's proposed language was incorporated into the RFP that was released in 2010. Developers are asked to provide information about the quality of the jobs their proposals will create and the affordability of the homes they will build.
Good Jobs and Livable Neighborhoods (GJLN), Milwaukee, WI	The GJLN Project of Citizen Action promotes economic justice in Wisconsin by supporting civic participation in the formation of economic development policies and programs.	Successfully campaigned for the 'Milwaukee Opportunities for Restoring Employment' (MORE) Ordinance: prevailing wage requirement and increased apprenticeship, training, and job opportunities for residents of Milwaukee's poorest neighborhoods.
Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE), Los Angeles, CA	LAANE promotes a new economic approach based on good jobs, thriving communities, and a healthy environment for everyone.	Port of Los Angeles Clean Trucks Program, which improves conditions for more than 10,000 port truck drivers and mandates dramatic reductions in harmful diesel pollution at the country's largest port complex.
Puget Sound Sage (SAGE), Seattle, WA	Sage works to improve the lives of working families: good jobs and workplace rights, affordable housing, and a clean and safe environment.	Mitigation fee: downtown office developers are asked to pay into a low-income housing fund, ranging from \$13/sq ft to \$22.50/sq ft; funds target very low-income workers.

(Partnership for Working Families 2010).

The Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) CBA, pursued by the labor-community coalition Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE), is financially speaking the largest CBA in the country, as well as the first signed with a government agency – the City of Los Angeles (Feingold 2009). Its monetary value, along with the fact that it was an agreement with a government agency, opened up a whole new realm of possibilities for labor-community coalitions in negotiating CBAs (Feingold 2009). Signed by the City of Los Angeles and a coalition of 20 labor, environmental, and community-based organizations, the LAX CBA, is worth \$500 million: \$230 million will be used to soundproof classrooms and install improved windows on schools in the shadow of LAX; \$15 million is committed to job-training programs for local residents who are covered under a local source hiring agreement for LAX contracts; tens of millions of dollars are dedicated to reduce diesel emissions and to electrify the engines of equipment used in airport gates; and minority and women-owned businesses are given preference for LAX contracts (Feingold 2009).

For the coalition partners involved in this historic agreement, the CBA represented a huge advance in relations between the labor and environment community that in the past had so often been at odds with each other over land use and development (Feingold 2009). This dynamic contrasts with the relationship between Eugene's labor and environmental communities, in which they rarely converge around common issues, particularly when related to land use and development. The LAX CBA was an important victory for low-income communities of color that surround LAX and had never before secured major quality of life guarantees from the city government:

The convergence of labor, environmental, community, and educational groups marked a breakthrough in coalition building. While unions had generally supported LAX development as a source of new jobs, environmental and community organizations as well as the two school districts had opposed the airport expansion, fearing more health and environmental problems. *Indeed, in communities around the country, the perceived tension between economic and environmental interests has stood as a key roadblock to the formation of larger, more powerful social justice alliances* (Feingold 2009:202, emphasis mine).

Prior to the LAX CBA, LAANE had negotiated six CBAs since 2000 for various private development projects. Those CBAs have addressed the concerns of nearby communities, typically low-income people of color, and have included legally binding commitments to living wage jobs, local source hiring, affordable housing, green space, child care centers, and traffic mitigations. Besides these concrete results, Feingold explains that CBAs have:

Brought about a fundamental change in the dynamics of development, giving residents a real voice in shaping the future of their communities. This new model has put parents, clergy, activists, and other neighborhood leaders across the table from developers, rather than relegating them to the sidelines or leaving them with no option but litigation to oppose harmful projects (Feingold 2009:200).

A labor-community coalition that led a CBA negotiation for three years described the intensity of asserting social and environmental demands within the economic development agenda:

I mean, we were the smelliest people in town when our coalition first kicked off and when we started getting press around what we were asking for. People said we were gonna kill development. And tried to discredit us. And we had, you know, the Mayor's head of economic development telling the developer that they could not talk to us and that the city wouldn't work with them if they were working with us...It was really a, I mean, we were taking on a sacred cow in Denver. And we were taking on all the fears that Denver has, that it's still a cow town and that people aren't gonna want to develop here (Smith 2008).

This is an important step for communities because other means of asserting their rights, such as litigation, are often hardly available; business organizations and private developers often can far outspend these coalitions in litigation fees.

The CBA model overcomes the false dichotomies between business success and good wages and between economic growth and a healthy environment. One of the main ways through which CBAs challenge these dichotomies and transform economic development is by balancing the needs and desires of communities, businesses, and the general public, instead of pitting business and city government against community. Plus, city governments must walk a fine line between advocating for community health and being portrayed as anti-business or as creating a bad business climate (LeRoy 2009).

Most U.S. city officials worry that businesses and developers won't locate in their city if they don't provide financial incentives to do so (e.g. tax breaks). LeRoy argues that after decades of declining U.S. cities, many city officials suffer from a "low level of civic self-worth" (2009:210). CBAs can help combat this low self-worth and assist city officials and residents in obtaining the respect and basic quality of life they deserve (LeRoy 2009:211).

Since the Carter Administration (which ended in 1981), federal aid to cities has been declining – notwithstanding a slight improvement during President Clinton's terms. And, with a ballooning federal deficit due to other federal priorities like the War in Iraq and Afghanistan, Homeland Security, and Hurricane Katrina, it is unlikely that cities will see an increase in funding anytime soon. Local governments have suffered greatly from state budget cuts, losing a significant amount of their funding for job and housing assistance programs (LeRoy 2009). CBAs are an effective way of ensuring that local social needs are met and that economic development continues despite shrinking city budgets. Given the decline in government money to spur economic development, city governments leverage more private funding for economic development. Private developments, however, do not provide as many opportunities for public involvement in influencing the goals and outcomes of a project. As cities rely more on private developers to do major urban projects, CBAs are an effective way for community groups to have their needs and desires balanced with those of business and government (LeRoy 2009:205).

Politically, CBAs are possible and even beneficial for City Councilors and Mayors because the politicians generally win praise for bringing new development projects to their community, plus they leverage the development to win benefits for their constituents (LeRoy 2009). "CBAs are helping businesses to succeed. Indeed, in a few cases, developers are even seeking out CBAs to help facilitate the approval process for their projects" (LeRoy 2009:209). However, because labor-community coalitions'

leverage to create CBAs is public subsidies, the CBA model has thus far been limited to projects and developments that receive these subsidies (LeRoy 2009).

CBAs can also help address tensions between middle-income people moving to cities and low-income residents who've always lived there. The U.S. has started to see a "back to the city" trend rather than the "white flight" that occurred for decades prior to the 1990s. During the 1990s, eight of the ten largest cities in the U.S. saw a population increase. In fact, Eugene, OR's population has been growing at 2% per year. This urban revival is attributed to a few factors: the baby boomers no longer have children at home and as a result are choosing to live in cities, where they are close to work and other amenities; culturally and socially, many young people are more excited about living in urban cores rather than in suburban or rural areas; and many new immigrants to the U.S. choose to live in older neighborhoods that have traditionally been immigrant neighborhoods (LeRoy 2009:206).

CBAs are an important complement to unions' urban-based organizing drives (such as CtW's, the AFL-CIO's Union Cities program<sup>34</sup>, and Jobs with Justice), because the same workers they are attempting to organize also benefit from many of the agreements that CBAs secure, such as affordable housing, improved transit options, and investment in low-income areas (Ibid). CBAs are one specific strategy through which labor-community coalitions can redefine the entrepreneurial vision created by successful businesses, linking that vision with social justice and environmental commitments that have driven powerful community-improvement campaigns (LeRoy 2009:211).

### **Winning the City Council**

In addition to CBAs, labor-community coalitions for regional equity also rely on electing labor-friendly politicians to City Council. Getting a majority of labor- and

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<sup>34</sup> Under John Sweeney's leadership of the AFL-CIO, the Union Cities campaign was launched in 1995. The campaign was based on the belief that to counter corporate power, unions needed to mobilize and build organization and capacity in local communities. "The goal was to create a sense of urgency about organizing, to build real coalitions, to change local politics, and to inspire and motivate workers by starting to win again" (Sneiderman and Eckstein n.d).

working family-friendly city councilors elected to the Council is part of labor-community coalitions' larger strategy for redefining development and building power to advance their regional equity agenda. San Jose, CA, and FRESC in Denver, CO, are among the best examples of labor-community coalitions gaining political power to pursue their agenda. Between 1993 and 2003, a labor-community coalition in San Jose helped elect a majority of labor- and working family-friendly councilors to the City Council. This majority on the Council ensured the passage of several pieces of legislation that solidified labor-community goals that otherwise would have to be secured through individual CBAs (Dean 2009:99). Electing a labor- and working family-friendly city council often comes at a later stage in labor-community coalition development. Electing this type of council requires a well-established coalition with a cohesive agenda for regional equity.

### **Leadership Development Institutes**

Leadership development institutes are another unique aspect of labor-community coalition strategy for advancing a regional equity agenda. The Silicon Valley WPUSA, for example, created a leadership development institute that “bring[s] together civic leaders, academic experts, union leaders, community activists, clergy, and elected officials in a nine-week course that examines the Silicon Valley economy through a social justice lens.” The intent is to provide emerging leaders with an inclusive, long-term counter to the economic development agenda of business leadership groups (Dean 2009:103).

WPUSA's leadership institute works with local leaders to build three main skills and knowledge areas: 1) Increase their use and knowledge of policy analysis tools so they can base their organizational strategies on a “shared analysis of regional economies and social needs”; 2) Identify a common language that local leaders from diverse parts of the social justice and environmental communities can use to discuss their disparate issues; and 3) Develop relations among individuals and groups in the coalition that supersede single-issue campaigns. “By using policy analysis tools to identify issues of

mutual concern and potential allies, WPUSA built new, ongoing broad-based alliances that cut across class, race, ethnicity, and occupational groups within Silicon Valley's highly fragmented economy" (Dean, p. 103-104). For example, through building policy analysis skills and a common framework to discuss their issues, the leadership institute assisted coalitions in moving beyond a living wage campaign to envisioning a much broader strategy for a region.

### **Challenges for Labor-Community Coalitions**

While labor-community coalitions' broad agenda for equity is a highly effective model for obtaining large-scale victories for working families in U.S. cities, there are also real challenges to this method of social change.

In terms of labor-community coalitions' internal politics, it is an arduous process through which organizations and movements can overcome their diverging goals, members, and tactics, and agree to work together in cooperation. While many labor-community coalitions include environmental organizations and incorporate their issues in the agenda, it's particularly difficult for environmental and social justice movements to move beyond their myopic viewpoints. Resource conservation and ecosystem protection are primary to the environmental movement and occasionally come into conflict with improving people's living and working conditions, which are primary to the social justice movement (Duncan2009:31). Neglecting the reality of how certain groups are socially impacted by environmental issues is a longstanding criticism of the mainstream environmental movement. Similarly, the labor movement has been criticized by the environmental movement for pursuing job and workplace gains irrespective of the environmental implications. These coalitions for regional equity also have to confront other issues that may separate potential partners, such as race, class, and gender. Blackwell and Starrett (2009) describe it as a process of recognizing collaborators' different perspectives, and then identifying and focusing on their common agenda rather than their differences. They go on to warn, "We cannot make the mistake of fighting over

crumbs while supporters of the status quo divide the whole loaf” (Blackwell and Starrett 2009:313).

The external politics of labor-community coalitions are also a challenge, as their agenda for reframing economic and urban development is up against powerful urban business lobbies and government inertia. In essence, labor-community coalitions are attempting to separate economic growth and other traditional measures of business success from a healthier and more economically secure community. The dominant paradigm pushed by traditional business organizations is that first businesses have to be successful before communities are. In fact, attempts to address a community’s unmet social needs or to implement environmental standards, are met by the simple argument that such measures cause job loss and a decreased tax base. A major challenge for labor-community coalitions in attempting to redefine the regional economic development agenda is to question the assumption that successful businesses, measured by increased corporate sales, profits, or productivity, alone creates a healthy and economically secure community. Instead, these coalitions are arguing that business success by itself does not guarantee job creation, good paying jobs, benefits, access to critical social and public services, or a healthy environment (Dean 2009:99). While the original goals of the SBI stated that business success and community health could be met simultaneously, as the SBI process evolved and the structure of the TF bent towards dominance by the traditional business community, the final results focused almost entirely on achieving social and environmental health through business success.

Besides challenging urban development to be more socially and environmentally centered, labor-community coalitions are pushing back against traditional business groups and city officials during a time of fiscal crisis (Dean 2009). Most U.S. cities have been making major cuts in their social and public spending for the last decade in order to meet budget deficits. This fiscal environment complicates any challenge to the dominant economic paradigm, especially when such a challenge is commonly associated with increased funding for environmental and social concerns and less funding for businesses.

Furthermore, during these times of fiscal constraint, traditional business interests push even harder to implement policies and programs that reduce their tax burden (Klein 2007). In short, labor-community coalitions are calling for local governments to change the way they prioritize public and social services and economic development at a time when city officials barely have the money to staff these programs (hence their move to turn economic development over to private interests).

Finally, even in the context of labor-community coalitions' victories for working families, their communities, and the surrounding environment, there are shortcomings to be examined. Thus far, CBAs have only been achieved on a project-by-project basis, otherwise known as site fights, and project-specific agreements are limited in what they can do for working families on a broader and long-term scale. First, the individuals and organizations involved in labor-community coalitions that sign CBAs are the first to admit that it's an extremely time- and energy-consuming process. Most CBAs require constant work for more than two years before the final agreement is reached. That is a lot of work for typically low-budget organizations and movements, and it only scores a win for one project. This begs the question, for how long are these coalitions sustainable? Even after a CBA is signed, some entity needs to monitor and evaluate whether all bodies are meeting the standards set out in the agreement. Given the fiscal constraints of local governments, city staff are unlikely to play this role, while self-monitoring is out of the question. This leaves the coalition in a position where if it wants to ensure that all of the CBA criteria are met, it would need to commit its own resources and energy for long-term monitoring.

Many of the individuals and organizations involved in these coalitions and CBAs agree that achieving a citywide CBA is the ideal. However, signing a citywide CBA is much more complicated than just signing an individual agreement. A citywide initiative would require a public vote or perhaps City Council approval, as well as far greater resources and commitment from coalition members to wage the campaign. Traditional business groups would fiercely resist such an effort, and they might even garner national

support for such a fight because it would affect every development in the city, and then could spread throughout U.S. cities.

### **Conclusion**

Labor-community coalitions for regional equity are one of the few ways that social equity and environmental sustainability are being addressed within a framework of economic development in the U.S. In essence, labor-community coalitions are the counterweight to traditional business groups like the Chamber of Commerce. There are many political and economic barriers that impede a city-led process like the SBI in being able to address social equity concerns. The traditional business coalition lobbies to avoid policies that regulate social and environmental standards, and the city government is caught between appeasing the business community by regulating less or the social and environmental communities who call for greater regulation. In the end, the business coalitions typically have much more political and financial power to pursue their policy and election candidate preferences. Even with proponents for social equity working from the inside, as the SBI TF representatives did, their power to influence the TF's final recommendations around social equity were very limited. Labor-community coalitions may not have the financial resources to match traditional business, but they have the legitimacy and the strength in numbers. Traditional business coalitions call for less regulation and more financial support in the form of tax incentives. Labor-community coalitions demand that city governments take responsibility for meeting the needs and desires of a city's residents, which includes regulating for social and environmental health.

Labor-community coalitions are the result of bridge-building work that has already happened among the various member organizations and movements of the coalition. Accordingly, the difficulties around differing goals, visions, strategies, etc., are worked out within the coalition rather than within the city-led decision-making process. In other words, the labor, environmental, and social justice organizations involved agree upon a compromise that meets all of their needs in some respects. The purpose of the

coalition is to be able to advance a common, agreed-upon position in the city-led process as a collective force, rather than having each individual organization or movement advance their particular positions without the support of other social and environmental organizations and movements.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION: RECLAIMING SUSTAINABILITY

As environmental concerns increase, such as climate change, and social problems grow related to jobs, health care, housing and transportation in the United States, sustainability and sustainable development have emerged as a dominant framework for addressing society's main social, environmental and economic issues (Whitehead 2003). Finding solutions that reduce one's impact on the environment, create greater social equity, and build a healthy economy, has become a guiding light for many political leaders, policy makers and citizens. For many cities, sustainability is a top priority (Living Cities 2009).

Building on the momentum of urban sustainability nationwide, both as a concept and as a movement,<sup>35</sup> and its aim to integrate social, environmental and economic goals, Mayor Piercy initiated the SBI in 2005. Mayor Piercy wanted to use the framework of sustainability to address some of Eugene's most challenging issues – high unemployment, the decline of family-wage manufacturing jobs and the rise of low-wage service sector jobs, a widening income gap, lack of access to health insurance, and high food insecurity and hunger rates (Oregon Center for Public Policy 2006; Oregon Food Bank 2009). The economic situation in Oregon mirrors similar trends in other U.S. cities, where the high-wage manufacturing sector is being supplanted by the low-wage service sector, at the same time that the adoption of neoliberal policies draws funds away from critical social services. Consequently, the framework of urban sustainability, which seeks to simultaneously address social, environmental and economic concerns, resonates with

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<sup>35</sup> The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) definition of sustainability is the most commonly used. It defines sustainability as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs” (WCED 1987).

residents struggling to achieve a good quality of life and with city officials looking to build a healthy and thriving community.

It is within this context that Mayor Piercy introduced the idea of creating a Mayor's SBI and implemented it during her first term as Mayor. Like so many elected officials, policy makers and citizens around the country, Mayor Piercy had high hopes for building an initiative that would "make Eugene one of the nation's most sustainable mid-size communities" by 2020, and "strengthen the economy by finding ways to support businesses and expand quality jobs that use sustainable measures" (SBI TF 2006a:4). Setting the SBI in motion was an admirable and important undertaking, not just for Mayor Piercy, but for all city officials, policy makers and residents concerned with their city's wellbeing. Moreover, beginning in 2008 with the election of President Obama, the sustainability discourse, largely in the form of green jobs and a green or clean energy economy, has become widely popular on the national level. This draws even greater attention to the idea of sustainability, the triple bottom line and, in essence, the balancing of social equity, environmental health and economic prosperity.

While the rise of the urban sustainability discourse is fairly recent, in many ways, the issues surrounding social equity and sustainability are age-old. The struggle regarding social equity as a component of sustainability efforts, and the relationship among the three components of sustainability, is at the core of economic development discourse. It determines who bears the costs of economic growth, and it touches on who has the power to dictate the development of our communities. In short, the push for environmental and social sustainability often directly contradicts the push by influential urban business coalitions for cities to be more entrepreneurial, or economically competitive, with other locales.

In the end, my study of the SBI is an extremely cautionary account of the trade-offs related to balancing social equity, economic prosperity, and environmental health under the rubric of sustainability. Previous studies had shown that the "social leg" of the stool is often neglected, particularly related to gender, race, and class (Agyeman and

Evans 2003; Dobson 1999; Daley 1996). Indeed, at the end of the Mayor's SBI process, no substantive proposals or recommendations for addressing the social equity component of sustainability were made. This is despite Eugene being a city that has been highly recognized for its sustainability work and, generally, its progressive politics. Instead, the SBI TF's Final Report (2006a:9) stated that "the TF found it much easier to identify mechanisms to promote the economic and environmental aspects of the Triple Bottom Line than the social equity components...the TF encourages Eugene City Government and the community at large to pursue additional actions to address social equity issues." If Eugene cannot develop a comprehensive sustainability program, then other officials and citizens in other cities must engage in a thorough and honest discussion about the possibilities in their own cities. Furthermore, the final outcome of the SBI, in terms of social equity, confirmed that among politicians, activists, and academics committed to the pursuit of sustainability, there is a lack of understanding of the challenges city officials' face when attempting to pursue comprehensive urban sustainability policies and programs. Krueger and Savage (2007) assert that while sustainability has professed a tripartite commitment to social justice, environment and economy, "as a development discourse and incipient set of policies [sustainability] has yet to live up to its progressive potential: to bring together these issues in a holistic way" (216; Dobson 2003; Gibbs and Krueger 2007; Krueger and Agyeman 2005; Agyeman 2005).

Indeed, I found that the SBI TF's "weak" approach to sustainability – aligned with traditional economic development discourse and policy strategy – led to the marginalization of social sustainability and to some extent, environmental concerns (SBI TF 2006a). There are several characteristics of the SBI that define it as a "weak" approach to sustainability and cause a significant contradiction between achieving the economic prosperity component of sustainability and the environmental health and social equity components.

Regarding the politics of the SBI TF, the social equity representatives on the TF tried to keep social equity issues in play throughout the SBI process, but because their

focus was primarily on labor issues, progress was difficult. Once the TF process began and TF members recognized one another's stake in the process, it was apparent on all sides that moving the social equity representatives' issues forward would be contentious because their focus on workplace equity – a living wage, support of unionization, employer provided health benefits, etc. – presented a challenge to traditional economic development strategy. Rather than providing businesses with assistance, through tax abatements, technical assistance, and cost reductions through environmental measures, as ecological modernization proposes, the social equity TF members proposed measures that would help redistribute wealth through workplace and community equity (SBI TF 2005a). Complicating this difficult ask, the social equity representatives on the TF did not feel they had sufficient support from the external labor or social justice communities to be able to apply the necessary pressure to push their issue forward. Many social equity and labor advocates “self-selected” out of the SBI process before it even started because they were skeptical of any city-led, environmentally-oriented sustainability effort addressing equity. As Agyeman (2005) described, sustainability's background in formal policy making arenas is off-putting for many socially marginalized residents and their advocates. This is ironic given that these marginalized members of our community are the same people who have the most at stake when it comes to all three legs of sustainability: jobs, a healthy environment, and equity both in the workplace and in the community. One of the labor representatives to the SBI Technical Advisory Committee limited his investment in the process after attending a few meetings, as he saw little hope of equity being included in the final recommendations of the SBI due to the “weak” sustainability approach of the SBI coordinator and many of the TF members (Doyle 2008). There is also a general anti-environmental attitude within the labor movement that needs to be addressed in order to garner wider labor support for such initiatives.

In addition, like most members of organized labor today, the labor representatives to the TF had very little experience designing and advancing a socially just sustainability agenda. The relationship between the labor movement and the environmental movement

has been so rocky over time that most labor leaders and members have very little experience identifying and developing a common agenda between labor and environmental advocates. Even though the environmental justice movement has an explicit justice focus that would seemingly resonate with the labor movement, many issues keep them distanced, including the labor movement's historical exclusion of people of color. Plus, there are only a few, if any, environmental justice organizations in Eugene, if one applies Agyeman et al.'s (2003) commonly accepted definition of the term.<sup>36</sup>

The social equity representatives to the TF attempted to join forces and build a common agenda with the environmental representatives to the TF, but with little success. None of the environmental representatives to the TF had explicit equity dimensions in their environmental work outside the SBI TF. Indeed, one such member aligned with the business representatives on most social equity issues because, as a leader of a nonprofit, she felt that she faced similar financial challenges as for-profits related to wages, health benefits, and the right to organize. Outnumbered on the TF, lacking outside support, and unable to build an alliance with environmental representatives on the TF, the proposals for social equity in the SBI were destined for failure.

The labor movement has work to do going forward. It needs to develop its thinking around a union vision for sustainability that is grounded in workplace and community equity, including good, green jobs, opportunities for training and support for union organizing. And ultimately, it is only through joint efforts between the labor, social justice, and environmental movements that we can overcome the false dichotomy between jobs and the environment. Without the environmental and labor/social justice movements working together, it is easy for wealthier and more politically connected

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<sup>36</sup> The environmental justice movement seeks to end the inequitable distribution of environmental "bads" and to link social justice and environmental issues (Cole and Foster 2001; Agyeman, Bullard, and Evans 2003; Stein 2004). Environmental justice organizations are typically led by low-income people and/or people of color (Agyeman 2005; Agyeman, Bullard, and Evans 2003). Environmental justice organizations work on a range of issues including race and the environment, civil rights and human rights, facility siting, land use planning, brownfields, transportation equity, suburban sprawl and smart growth, energy and climate justice (Agyeman, Bullard, and Evans 2003).

business and elite interests, described as the “urban growth coalition” by Logan and Molotch (1987), to perpetuate an economic growth model based on ecological modernization. This approach to development in which economic growth will lead to improved social and environmental well-being, leaves environmental, social justice, and labor advocates scrambling for the crumbs left by economic development. Accordingly, the argument that environmental protection and workplace equity undermine job creation effectively divides the various interest groups, who then are unable to advocate as a united force (Obach 2004). Additionally, the labor movement often fails to work closely not only with the environmental movement, but also with other social justice movements that address issues that are broader than traditional wage and benefit issues (Turner 2007). The supposedly divergent interests of these various movements, as well as the economic development arguments that are intended to keep these movements divided, must be overcome.

Although addressing social equity was one of the Mayor’s goals at the beginning of the SBI process, pushing it forward became problematic when contrasted with her goal of finding common ground among the different communities in Eugene. She did not want the relationships among these communities to fracture further, particularly between the business and environmental communities. In addition, because she had gone out on a limb to get the SBI going, she did not want it to suffer any irreparable setbacks and thereby tarnish her legacy as a “Mayor for All Eugene.” In the end, Mayor Piercy felt that while the SBI did not result in the perfect alignment of the triple bottom line, it was indeed an important step for Eugene’s future as it heads down a path toward continued dialogue over meeting social, environmental and economic goals (Piercy 2008). Yet, Piercy’s goals for the SBI facilitated the marginalization of social equity in a few ways.

Piercy did not appoint someone to coordinate the SBI process who had a strong background in social equity or social sustainability. The choice of Bob Doppelt to lead the SBI was a smart one, given her goal of uniting the environmental and business communities in Eugene, as Doppelt had demonstrated significant expertise in the

technical, environmental and business aspects of sustainability. Yet this choice also signified a “weak sustainability” approach to the SBI, as Doppelt did not see a significant role for equity in the SBI. The fact that Doppelt proposed the TF adopt the WCED definition of sustainability (absent explicit equity language), and provided background materials and guest presentations that were largely devoid of equity dimensions, demonstrated this weak approach to sustainability. Plus, even if Doppelt had wanted to address equity issues through the SBI, it would have been nearly impossible to do so given the tiny budget for the SBI (\$5,000) and the short time frame for producing the SBI’s final recommendations.

Compounding the marginalization of equity was Mayor Piercy’s selection of two members of the business community to co-chair the TF. Although one of the co-chairs was quite progressive and supportive of addressing social equity issues, he did not have enough experience advocating for social equity to lead the the social equity agenda. Moreover, two business representatives on the TF in particular had significant experience and skill shaping city policy that was unmatched by any of the other representatives on the TF. These members were able to drive dialogue and decision making, while at the same time representing the well-aligned interests of the Eugene Chamber of Commerce.

There are several broader political-economic forces that pushed the Mayor’s SBI towards a “weak” approach to sustainability, aligning it with traditional economic development strategy, and ultimately, marginalizing equity issues from the SBI discourse and recommendations. Over the last couple of decades, responsibility for urban economic development strategies has largely been shifted from public agencies to partnerships between the public and private sectors (Bassett 1996). This shift is attributable to a broader shift in urban governance, pushed primarily by business interests, in which the demand is for city governments to become more entrepreneurial, to exploit competitive advantages in order to attract investment, and to play a role in the global economy similar to a nation-state. This shift in the role of urban governance is related to “the rolling back of national state regulation, the cutting loose of localities from

centralized fiscal resources and controls, and the triumph of a neoliberal ‘growth first’ ideology” (White, Jonas and Gibbs 2004:549). This shift means that city government has altered its role from “the local provision of welfare and services toward outward-oriented stances aimed at encouraging local growth and economic development” (Gibbs 1997:205). Furthermore, the proliferation of public-private partnerships to encourage economic development has provided a vehicle for local business leaders and coalitions to influence urban politics and economic growth without the accountability inherent in public office (Bassett 1996). As a result, business coalitions have become highly involved in influencing urban-level politics (Bassett 1996). Yet many businesses, despite the shifting terrain of a globalized economy, remain locally dependent. As a consequence of their local dependence, gaining power at the local level is very important to these firms. The goal of such power is to create a “business-friendly climate.” Businesses often claim that without a business-friendly climate, economic development will falter, and new jobs will not materialize (Cox and Mair 1988). This is obviously a strong argument, especially in communities that suffer from high rates of unemployment. The strength of this argument is buoyed by the absence of any corollary to business coalitions within progressive social movements.<sup>37</sup> Labor unions would be the natural corollary, but they have too often sided with business coalitions when jobs and the environment are pitted against each other (Cox and Mair 1988). As a result, the dominance of the “business-friendly climate” is assured.

On the other hand, due to a decentralization of power from state and national levels of government to local government, the roles and responsibilities of local governments have expanded (Beaumont and Nicholls 2004). According to Beaumont and Nicholls, more administrative and service provision by local governments, a shift towards consolidating local governments into metropolitan level governing bodies, and an increase in interest group involvement in city politics, have led to “an expanded and more perforated urban political opportunity structure” (2004:123). This transformation in

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<sup>37</sup> Citizens for Public Accountability (CPA) was a coalition alternative in Eugene, although it lacked strong labor backing and was relatively inactive during the SBI.

local governments spurs urban interest groups and movements to organize and make demands of city government (Beaumont and Nicholls 2004). As a result, many cities today face contradictory forces that greatly influence and shape their policies and actions.

In the case of Eugene, OR, there is both the push from traditional business coalitions to encourage economic growth, but there are also demands from various urban stakeholders and social movements to be more responsive to the needs and desires of the community at large. Yet local governments are limited in their capacity to follow through on many of the demands of constituents. The decentralization of power towards local governments has not been accompanied by a corresponding decentralization of funds towards local governments, which is a consequence of neoliberal policy. This means more of a burden is placed on city government to maintain the economic health of the city with little assistance through federal and state funding (Logan and Molotch 1987). At the same time, various urban stakeholders, including social, environmental and labor movements, are recognizing that the political opportunity structure is opening at the city level, and therefore are forcing city governments, often against their will, to be more responsive (Agyeman and Evans 2003). Yet there is no easy answer for cash-strapped local governments. Given that these social, environmental and economic challenges will only increase as more and more people move to cities (Eugene has a growth rate of 2% per year) the future of urban politics and economic development is uncertain.

Based on this political-economic context – cities “charged with being good entrepreneurial cities” and “regulating environmental and social health” – it is clear why Mayor Piercy proposed the SBI, and more generally, brought the concept of sustainability to bear on Eugene’s future development. Piercy was looking for a development compromise that appeased the traditional business community but also touched on Eugene’s significant social and environmental issues. And thus Eugene’s SBI was not only caught in a web of political interests, traditional business interests, environmental interests, and social justice interests, it was also caught in a web of larger political-economic issues: declining federal spending to urban areas; the rise of low-wage, service

sector jobs; increased pressure on city governments to regulate social and environmental concerns; and an increasing urban population marked by growing social inequality. This complicated landscape upon which the SBI conducted its public hearings, Roundtables, TF meetings, and decision making processes, shaped the composition of the TF, their perceptions of sustainability, and the final outcome of the SBI.

The SBI is embedded in difficult conversations occurring in cities around how to develop. In the case of the SBI, I argue that the Mayor hoped to use the SBI as a type of alternative economic development tool that focused on attracting and maintaining businesses and jobs, but also used social and environmental criteria to evaluate businesses. In other words, Mayor Piercy was attempting to overcome what Cox and Mair (1988) call city official's dual local dependence on the electorate and the local economy. Elected city officials, like Piercy, must provide for community well-being and, at the same time, ensure that jobs are being created through economic development and that the tax base is expanded to fund projects related to community well-being. Given their dual allegiance to the electorate and the economy, city officials are often torn between meeting popular demands for improved quality of life (housing, transportation, services, jobs, clean and healthy environment, etc.) and business demands for a friendly business climate. This balancing act is highly political and involves many different urban actors and interest groups with varying needs and desires, including some very powerful interest groups, such as traditional business coalitions, which have a high stake in the outcomes of the discussions.

Given the difficulty that city officials like Mayor Piercy face in balancing or negotiating these contradictory forces of social and environmental quality and economic growth and development, is it possible for an initiative like the SBI to truly address equity concerns? Based on my case study of Eugene Mayor Piercy's SBI, I do think it is possible for an initiative like the SBI to address the real equity concerns and desires of residents. However, such an event would require the presence of a few key factors that were absent from Eugene's SBI.

The Mayor would need to be willing to expend political capital, which she lacked at the time, to challenge traditional businesses' argument that economic growth leads to greater social and environmental well-being. More specifically, the Mayor would need to appoint someone to coordinate the TF that had a solid grounding in social equity issues, a demonstrated commitment to balancing social, environmental and economic issues, and that was respected within the community. The Mayor would need to select TF co-chairs who represented a more balanced position on equity and sustainability, and at least one co-chair with the knowledge and skill to advance an equity agenda. The composition of the TF would need to look different to better address all three components of sustainability – economic prosperity, social equity and environmental health. In the Mayor's SBI, none of the TF members were directly accountable to any specific interest group, as they were not elected into the position by those groups. To enhance the diversity of the TF, the Mayor would need to identify those interest groups that are essential to participation in a SBI, and solicit involvement by those groups. However, the individual who ultimately represents these various groups would be selected by the respective group and accountable to that constituency. Such a framework for community involvement would increase buy-in from the community by creating a more participatory atmosphere that is not dictated by any particular interest group.

Incorporating equity into the SBI would also have required significant changes by the labor and social justice advocates involved in the SBI. The lack of existing ties between the labor movement, the broader social justice movement, and the environmental movement severely inhibits the chances of advancing a broad equity agenda alongside an environmental agenda. When these positive relations do exist, labor, community and environmental organizations can build a common agenda grounded in familiarity with each other's interests. On the SBI, there was hardly any collaboration between the social justice and environmental representatives to the TF. Therefore, each respective group was advancing an isolated agenda. Given that the business representatives to the TF had access to a well-organized network of businesses and financial resources through the

Chamber of Commerce, it was an uphill battle for social equity and environmental representatives.

The politics of sustainability and the political-economic context of U.S. cities today create a situation where it is extremely difficult to create a city-led sustainability initiative that seriously challenges economic growth and business interests and instead develops policy that gives significant weight to social and environmental concerns. Yet, there are few other institutions that can house a sustainability process that will bring such diverse stakeholders to the table and realistically allow for any far-reaching results. After extensive research on sustainability initiatives and programs in U.S. cities, I have found that one of the few methods for addressing social equity in sustainability efforts is through labor-community-environmental coalitions working for regional equity. These labor-community coalitions offer successful examples of how sustainability/alternative economic development efforts in the United States can include labor-focused, social equity components, while also addressing some of the needs of the business community.

While a traditional strategy for labor unions is to intervene and reshape the economic development process in the workplace, in industry, or at the national level, it is only recently that labor unions have intervened in economic development efforts to ensure equity and broader community benefit at the city/local level (Applegate 2007:53). Unions' and other community organizations' recent interest in influencing economic development at the local level is a response to neoliberal policies in which local governments have retreated from coordinating economic development programs, handing over this responsibility to business coalitions that drive development based on the pursuit of profit rather than the public interest. "In addition to sacrificing the governance role of unions and communities to that of businesses, the government's retreat from 'mixed' governance since the 1980s has also entailed abandoning economic equality as a public policy priority" (Applegate 2007:54).

In the last decade, amidst waning political power, cuts in social spending, growth in low-wage jobs, and a worsening urban ecological environment, unions and other

community organizations have begun to see the potential of working together to challenge the growing power and influence of business coalitions at the local level. As an alternative to the business coalitions' vision for development, labor-community coalitions are forming and advocating for a development agenda focused on creating regional equity. A focus on the regional level does not negate the value of city level coalitions; however, a regional focus transcends issues of interurban competition and allows for a truly comprehensive approach to inequality that leaves no one behind. Issues such as public transportation, job creation, air quality, and poverty are not limited to a city's boundaries and must be addressed as such. Labor-community coalitions for regional equity are intentionally broad to allow for larger and more powerful coalitions. An agenda for regional equity can include a multitude of environmental, social and economic issues, including good jobs, health benefits, affordable housing, accessible public transportation, a healthy work and living environment, access to green space, and much more. Labor-community coalitions and the regional equity movement also transcend a scarcity perspective in economic development to devise ways to meet social equity, environmental, and economic goals simultaneously. In other words, the development of a city and its surrounding region is not viewed as a zero sum game. Instead, development is viewed within a framework of abundance and with the perspective that there's enough economic, environmental, and social wealth to meet a whole community's needs (Blackwell and Pastor 2009).

Another alternative to a city-run and city-based sustainability program is having a community-based sustainability program. A community-based sustainability program is initiated and run by civil society and/or community organizations. In a process very similar to the SBI, but run outside the city government, Urban Agenda, a nonprofit in New York City, conducted a two year process gathering input from businesses, citizens, city officials, and community groups on how to build an equitable, environmentally sustainable New York City economy (Urban Agenda 2009). While my study does not examine this case in detail, it is clear from the Final Recommendations of this Green

Collar Jobs Roundtable that basing such an effort within a social justice and environmentally focused organization allows these themes much greater presence than did the SBI. On the other hand, because this process was not established within the city government, it must now engage in another phase of work that aims to get the recommendations adopted by the New York City Council. Because this process was developed and led by a labor-community coalition and was not dominated by business interests, it contains more controversial material than the SBI recommendations related to social equity. Many of the recommendations seek the regulation of the City economy to ensure the creation of good jobs, rather than the creation of just any job.

My study of Eugene's SBI is unique in its concentration on the broader social, political and economic forces shaping urban sustainability efforts, including the role of key actors, and the social and political struggles that mark how sustainability is conceived and defined. Most other studies of urban sustainability efforts focus on the technical issues associated with pursuing and achieving urban sustainability (Dobson 1999). However, I think the technical issues posing barriers to achieving sustainability can be overcome; the political issues surrounding sustainability and social equity offer the real challenge to achieving sustainability.

In the past, cities were characterized as unnatural places to live, and a return to rural forms of living posited as the best solution to environmental degradation (Dunlap and Michelson 2002). Today, however, after years of continual urbanization, there is a renewed focus on designing cities in a way that addresses environmental and social issues (Haughton and Hunter 1994; Bugliarello 2006). Cities in the United States are finally being recognized as places of opportunity for individuals looking for a high quality of life that has less impact on the natural environment. Cities, in fact, are the locus of the sustainability movement, as they house all the components of sustainability in an extremely compact area, creating an incredibly rich space for this dialogue (Owen 2009). As labor-community coalitions mature and these relationships deepen, the capability of these coalitions to offer a counter-balance to traditional business alliances may increase.

Therefore, future city-led sustainability initiatives may offer more promising ground for “just sustainability.” Yet, it is clear that for a comprehensive sustainability effort to proceed, it requires a constellation of factors to enter into alignment. I hope that my study of Eugene, Oregon’s Sustainable Business Initiative offers insight into the factors that are necessary to implement just sustainability, and that community groups, city governments, and individual advocates might take some of the lessons learned by Eugene’s pioneering effort and apply them to future sustainability endeavors.

## APPENDIX

### SBI TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Sustainable Business Initiative Technical Advisory Committee members and professional affiliations.

<b>SBI TAC Members</b>	
Anne Arden	Lunar Logic, Knowledge Metrics
Bern Johnson	E-Law
Betty Snowden	Betty Snowden Real Estate
Brian McCarthy	Cameron/McCarthy Landscaping
Cary Thompson	Helios
Charles Biggs	Neighborhood Leaders Council
Chuck Forster	Lane Workforce Partnership
Dave Hauser	Eugene Chamber of Commerce
David Lively	Organically Grown Company
David Parker	Advanced Energy Systems
Doug McLaughry	Sheet Metal Workers Local #16
Eben Fodor	Fodor & Associates, Community Planning Consulting
Gavin McComas	Sundance Natural Foods
George Russell	Eugene 4J School District
Hank Hoell	Liberty Bank
Harry Battson	Lane County Food Coalition
Ian Hill	Sequential Biofuels
James Bean	University of Oregon Lundquist School of Business
Jan Fillinger	Solarc Architecture and Engineering
Jan Spencer	Citizens for Public Accountability
Jane Holloway	Lane County Fair
Jessica Chanay	Food for Lane County
Jill Hoggard Green	PeaceHealth

Jim Lindley	Lane Community College Small Business Development Center
Jim Maloney	Eugene Water and Electric Board
Karyn Kaplan	University of Oregon Environmental Resource and Recycling Manager
Kate Davidson	Davidson Strategies
Kathy Ging	Realtor
Kevin Jones	Full Circle Community Farm
Kevin Matthews	Friends of Eugene
Laurie McClain	Socially Responsive Financial Advisors
Lou Christian	Lane/Coos/Curry/Douglas Building Trades
Maeve Sowles	Lane County Audubon Society
Marie Matsen	Lane Community College Small Business Development Center
Mel Bankoff	Institute for Sustainable Ethics and Economics
Mel Pyne	PeaceHealth Oregon
Mitch Hagstrom	Pacific Continental Bank
Paul Thompson	Active in Neighborhood Association
Randy Hledik	Wildish
Rick Wright	PC Market of Choice
Roy Orr	McKenzie-Willamette Medical Center
Rudy Berg	Eco-Building Guild
Sarah Bennett	Bennett Management Company, LLC
Stephan Ostrach	Teamsters Union Local #206
Steven Musser	Energy Services Company
Sue Gorham	Convention and Visitors Association of Lane County Oregon
Tim Keeley	Bethel School District
Tom Bowerman	Down to Earth

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