

Accommodating Social Change in Sustainability Policy: Solutions for a Just and Relevant Society

Siti Nur Halizah, Rahayu Mardikaningsih

Sunan Giri University of Surabaya, Indonesia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 28 May 2022

Revised 22 June 2022

Accepted 19 July 2022

Key words:

Urbanization,
Globalization,
Sustainability policy,
Social inequality,
Resource management,
Cross-sector collaboration,
Social justice.

ABSTRACT

Social changes involving urbanization and globalization pose major challenges to sustainability policy in many countries. These developments create tensions between economic growth and environmental conservation. Rapid urbanization raises new issues in natural resource management and increases social inequality, while globalization offers opportunities for international cooperation but also exacerbates disparities between countries. For this reason, it is important for sustainability policies to accommodate social change with social justice principles, including wise natural resource management and sustainability infrastructure strengthening. Achieving equitable sustainability requires policy that can address social, economic and environmental issues with an inclusive approach. Collaboration between various sectors, as well as society's participation in every stage of policy planning and implementation, is necessary to ensure that policy is relevant and acceptable to local societies. Only by taking into account the evolving dynamics of social change can sustainability policy create effective and sustainable solutions, providing tangible benefits to society at large and ensuring social justice for all groups.

INTRODUCTION

Global social changes, such as urbanization and globalization, have changed the way of life for many people around the world. Rapid urbanization affects various aspects of human life, from consumption patterns to people's mindset towards the environment. Urbanization enables infrastructure improvements and economic progress, but it also has the potential to increase pressure on natural resources and the environment. Rapid urban growth often leads to environmental degradation, air and water pollution, and increased demand for energy and land that is not always managed sustainably. Globalization, which has further strengthened relations between countries, has had a significant impact on consumption patterns and lifestyles, creating major challenges in terms of sustainability and efficient use of resources (Sachs, 2015). Sustainability is a crucial issue that needs to be integrated with these social changes to ensure a better future for all levels of society (Rybansky & Janos, 2020). Without a sustainable approach, urbanization and globalization can exacerbate environmental degradation and social inequality.

Urbanization and globalization also lead to changes in society's social and economic behavior. People are increasingly dependent on technology, mass transportation, and consumption of globally accessible goods. The consumption of these easily accessible goods has become an essential part of the modern lifestyle, allowing individuals to fulfill their needs and wants quickly and efficiently. These changes are often not accompanied by sufficient understanding of the ecological impacts of these new lifestyles. Consequently, despite increases in material prosperity, many areas are experiencing irreversible environmental damage, such as declining air quality, poor waste management and loss of biodiversity (Imppola, 2020). While urbanization and globalization have brought increased material prosperity to many, the resulting environmental degradation points to an imbalance between economic growth and ecological sustainability. This calls for a thorough evaluation of the relationship between social change and its environmental impacts. A better understanding of these interactions is essential so that solutions are targeted and not just temporary.

* Corresponding author, email address: rahayumardikaningsih@gmail.com

These rapid social changes also give rise to various inequalities in society. As societies move towards urbanization and the adoption of modern lifestyles, more marginalized groups, such as those living in rural areas or low-income societies, are often left behind in access to environmentally friendly facilities and services that support sustainability. For example, green transportation facilities, renewable energy, and technology-based public services are generally more available in urban centers. Meanwhile, communities in remote areas still face limitations in terms of basic infrastructure, let alone those that are environmentally friendly. These inequalities can exacerbate existing socio-economic and environmental conditions, adding to the challenge of achieving inclusive sustainability goals (Nikolic et al., 2022). It is important to identify how these social changes can interact with sustainability policies more effectively, especially in responding to the needs and challenges of more marginalized societies.

One of the main problems faced in the relationship between social change and sustainability is the lack of society's awareness of the negative impacts of unbridled consumptive behavior. The process of rapid urbanization, which encourages consumerism and economic polarization, often runs counter to the principle of sustainability. This consumerism is reinforced by the influence of media and popular culture that emphasizes the values of individualism and social status through the consumption of goods. Many individuals and groups do not fully understand that excessive consumption activities can lead to environmental destruction, although there have been efforts to raise environmental awareness in some countries (Jackson, 2009). This ignorance makes it difficult to design policies that address sustainability issues thoroughly (Haase et al., 2018). When people do not understand the importance of changing their consumptive lifestyle, policies designed by the government or related institutions often do not receive widespread support or even experience resistance.

The social changes brought about by globalization are often not matched by society's readiness to deal with emerging environmental challenges (Harrington & Elliott, 2015). Globalization does open up great opportunities in terms of technology exchange and international trade, but it also brings challenges related to the exploitation of natural resources and the unequal impact of climate change. Developing countries, for example, often experience greater negative impacts from climate change due to their dependence on environmentally damaging sectors, such as agriculture or extractive industries (Bu et al., 2016). Societies in these countries must be better equipped to manage sustainability under increasing globalization pressures.

The problem of inequality in the implementation of sustainability policy is also an important issue. Many sustainability policy implementations tend to benefit certain groups of people who have access to resources and knowledge about environmentally friendly practices, while other groups do not get the same benefits (Suša, 2019). For example, the poor or those living in rural areas tend to be more marginalized in the decision-making process regarding sustainability-related policies. This dependence makes these countries more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as land degradation, decreased water quality, or increased natural disasters. This further exacerbates existing social inequalities, which can further reduce the effectiveness of sustainability policies themselves (Moss, 2015). Globalization does provide great opportunities in terms of technology transfer and international collaboration, but these benefits can only be achieved if people have the awareness and readiness to take advantage of globalization in a sustainable manner.

Rapid social changes due to urbanization and globalization affect many aspects of human life, including sustainability. It is crucial to understand how social values that evolve over time interact with sustainability policies. An imbalance between economic growth and environmental protection can exacerbate existing inequalities, ultimately harming the whole of society, especially the most vulnerable. The study of the relationship between social change and sustainability is therefore crucial for designing more inclusive and sustainability policy.

A better understanding of how social change affects sustainability practices is also essential for creating policy that is more effective and acceptable to all levels of society. Faced with major challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and social inequality, there needs to be a collective effort to ensure that policy design does not only benefit some parties, but also takes into account the needs of the wider society, including those who are marginalized. This will ensure that sustainability can be achieved in a fair and inclusive manner.

The purpose of this research is to explore how social changes, such as urbanization and globalization, can be accommodated in sustainability policy, so that the resulting solutions become more relevant and acceptable to the whole society. This research aims to understand the interaction between social and environmental factors, and to design policies that create a balance between economic, social and environmental sustainability, especially in the midst of increasingly complex global challenges.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this research, a literature review approach is used to examine the relationship between social change and sustainability policy, with a focus on how social factors, such as urbanization and globalization, influence sustainability practices. This approach utilized a variety of literature sources including books, journal articles and research reports to understand existing theories and practical applications of sustainability policy in different countries and social settings. The literature review enabled the researcher to identify research gaps, as well as provide insights into how social change interacts with policy that aims to create a balance between economic growth and environmental protection. One of the key references in this study was the book "Sustainability: A Comprehensive Foundation" by Tom Theis and Jonathan Tomkin (2012), which discusses various aspects of sustainability using a multidisciplinary approach.

In using a literature review approach, it is important to critically analyze existing data to determine how cultural values and social norms can influence people's attitudes towards sustainability policy. The literature reviewed also includes various case study from countries with different social and economic backgrounds, to provide a more comprehensive picture of the challenges faced in integrating social change into sustainability policy. For example, the work of Sachs (2015) in his book "The Age of Sustainable Development" provides a perspective on the global challenges in achieving sustainability and how policy in different parts of the world is adapting to rapid social change, including related to urbanization and globalization.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Social change, which includes urbanization and globalization, has a major impact on the dynamics of social, economic and environmental life. Urbanization causes mass movement of people from rural to urban areas, creating new challenges in space and resource management. The increase in population in urban areas also poses challenges in waste management, air quality, and the distribution of water and energy resources. Without careful planning, urbanization can exacerbate environmental and social problems, such as urban poverty, regional disparities, and environmental degradation. Globalization, with its technological advances and global interconnections, further exacerbates inequalities, but also offers opportunities for growth and knowledge sharing. In the face of these challenges, sustainability policy must be able to respond effectively to these social changes by creating solutions that are relevant, integrated and acceptable to all levels of society (Sheykhi, 2020).

The importance of accommodating social change in sustainability policy is not only limited to short-term planning, but also considers long-term environmental and social impacts. When policies are only oriented towards short-term solutions, such as emission control or waste management without taking into account social dynamics, they risk being unsustainable. For example, urban sustainability does not only focus on nature conservation, but also includes the development of environmentally friendly infrastructure and the welfare of the society living in the area (Gudmanian et al., 2020). Policy decisions should be based on the principles of social justice, which can reduce inequalities and take into account the interests of the most vulnerable groups. By incorporating a social justice perspective, policies will not only be more environmentally effective, but will also strengthen people's social resilience to future challenges, including climate change, economic crises, and evolving global dynamics.

This process is not easy. Although many countries have implemented sustainability policy, the integration of social change in policy often faces various challenges (Sannella, 2020). One of them is how to ensure that the policy is not only fair, but also effective in addressing the challenges. It is important for sustainability policy to be inclusive, adaptive, and have the ability to coordinate across different levels of government and between different sectors. Without good coordination, policies tend to overlap, be out of sync, or even contradict each other. Inclusiveness and adaptability are key for policies to remain relevant in the midst of dynamic social change. By ensuring inter-sectoral collaboration and broad public participation, sustainability policies will have a better chance of succeeding and delivering sustainable impacts in the long-term.

In the face of the challenges of social change presented by urbanization and globalization, it is important for sustainability policy to accommodate these dynamics in a relevant and equitable manner. Urbanization, characterized by the massive movement of people from rural to urban areas, often leads to problems such as urban poverty, environmental degradation, and unequal access to resources. Urbanization has also widened the gap between urban and rural residents. Globalization connects countries and individuals around the world in an interdependent economic network, but can exacerbate social and economic inequalities. In order for sustainability policy to create equitable solutions, it needs to be developed by considering these two phenomena in a comprehensive and inclusive manner (McGrath, 2015).

Urbanization brings various challenges that affect environmental sustainability. Rapid urban development is often not matched by adequate infrastructure, as well as the overuse of natural resources. Massive land development to meet the needs of settlements and commercial areas often comes at the expense of green open spaces and reduces the capacity of the environment to absorb carbon. As a result, pressure on local ecosystems increases and the risk of disasters such as floods and climate crisis is heightened. In this case, sustainability should not only focus on conserving natural resources, but also on urban planning that supports sustainable lifestyles. For example, policies that encourage the development of green infrastructure, environmentally friendly public transportation, and efficient waste management can help reduce the negative impact of urbanization on the environment (Satterthwaite, 2010).

Globalization brings complex impacts to sustainability policy. Although globalization can facilitate the exchange of technology and knowledge, it also exacerbates the gap between rich and poor countries, and triggers social injustice in society. Developing countries often face difficulties in accessing environmentally friendly technologies, as well as in obtaining funds to mitigate the negative impacts of industrialization processes accelerated by globalization. Dependence on raw commodity exports and environmentally destructive industrial activities further worsens their position in the global economic system. The distribution of benefits from globalization tends to be unequal, with most of the profits concentrated in the hands of multinational corporations and rich countries, while the ecological and social costs are borne by the most vulnerable communities. Sustainability policies should bridge this gap by encouraging international cooperation and a more equitable sharing of resources (Stiglitz, 2002).

To ensure that social changes such as urbanization and globalization can be accommodated in sustainability policy, an approach based on social justice principles is needed. This is important because social change often creates or exacerbates inequalities in access to resources, public services and economic opportunities. Policy must be able to address the inequalities that arise from these social changes, paying special attention to the most vulnerable groups, such as the poor and marginalized. One way to achieve this is to ensure community participation in policy planning and implementation, so that policies truly reflect their needs and aspirations (Sachs, 2015).

It is also important to involve the private sector in the development of sustainability policy, especially companies operating in developing urban areas. The private sector can play an important role in supporting sustainability initiatives through investments in green technologies and responsible business practices. Without the active contribution of the private sector, government policies are often limited in their reach and implementation effectiveness, given the country's limited fiscal capacity and resources. With policies that encourage collaboration between government, society, and the private sector, the resulting solutions will be more sustainability and accessible to all levels of society (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Governments can provide fiscal incentives or regulations that encourage companies to invest in sustainable projects, while communities need to be given space to monitor and participate in the process. This cross-sector collaboration allows for more inclusive, effective and long-term solutions.

Successful sustainability policy must be based on accurate data on the social and economic dynamics and environmental impacts of policies. This requires regular data collection and analysis, which can provide a clear picture of social change and provide a basis for policy evaluation and improvement. For example, collecting data on population mobility, air pollution levels, or per capita energy consumption can provide important insights for policymakers in formulating more effective and efficient policy. This data-driven approach allows the policies formulated to be adaptive and dynamic, in line with changes that occur in the field. Investment in information systems, monitoring technology, and human resource capacity in managing and analyzing data are important aspects in supporting the formulation of evidence-based sustainability policies.

It is important for policy to consider sustainability in the long term, not just in the short term that focuses on solving immediate problems. Sustainability challenges are often complex and require solutions that not only address immediate problems, but also maintain ecological and social balance for the future. Sustainability policy that not only addresses immediate problems but also considers long-term impacts on society and the environment will be better able to create sustainable and equitable solutions. By prioritizing long-term sustainability, we are not only preserving ecosystems and reducing social inequalities, but also realizing a more just and prosperous future for all humanity. This approach will allow society to adapt to social change, while preserving natural resources for future generations (Meadows, 2008).

Inclusive and equitable policy must also take into account the balance between economic growth and environmental protection. While economic growth is often regarded as the main driver of development, policies that only focus on economic growth without considering the impact on the environment and society can result in a detrimental imbalance in the long-term. For example, rapid industrialization without proper management of natural resources can cause irreversible environmental damage and worsen social inequality. Sustainability policy must balance the three main pillars: economic, environmental, and social (Elkington, 1997).

Sustainability also requires changes in individual and collective behavior in society. People who do not have an awareness of the importance of managing natural resources wisely are often trapped in excessive consumption patterns that damage the environment. Policies that support sustainability must be able to educate people about the importance of managing natural resources more wisely and reducing the negative impacts of daily activities. Educational programs that introduce sustainability lifestyles, such as reducing plastic consumption or saving energy, can encourage deeper behavioral changes in society.

The role of education in sustainability is not only limited to the individual aspect. Education policy also needs to integrate sustainability values into the education curriculum to encourage future generations to be more sensitive to sustainability issues and ready to face the challenges of social change. The integration of sustainability values in the education curriculum is not only about theory, but also about practice. Sustainability education can include learning about climate change, natural resource management, social justice and sustainable consumption patterns. In the classroom, students can be involved in projects that encourage concrete actions, such as recycling activities, reducing plastic waste, or using renewable energy. Educational policy can help create a society that is more aware and active in supporting sustainability (Tilbury, 2011).

The implementation of policy that considers social changes such as urbanization and globalization also require coordination between various levels of government, from local to national. Policy implemented at the local level must reflect the specific conditions on the ground, while policy at the national level must cover more macro aspects. Effective coordination between these two levels of government will ensure that policies are relevant and well implemented (Bulkeley & Betsill, 2005).

Successful sustainability policy must also consider the cultural factors that exist in society. Each society has different values and norms in responding to sustainability issues. Policy must be able to adapt to existing social and cultural conditions in order to be accepted and implemented properly. Policy that is not sensitive to local culture may fail to achieve the desired sustainability goals (Sachs, 2015).

Sustainability policies must be monitored and evaluated regularly. Measuring policy effectiveness is essential to ensure that the policy implemented delivers the desired results in the long term. With a clear evaluation system, the policy can be improved and adjusted to changing conditions, so that it can continue to support social, economic, and environmental sustainability (Hopwood et al., 2005).

Given the growing complexity of social change and sustainability challenges, the policy formulated must be able to respond to the needs of the times. Urbanization and globalization bring great pressure to social and environmental systems. Policies that accommodate these two phenomena must focus on social justice, cross-sector collaboration, and wise management of natural resources. Policy must be adaptive, as the challenges may change over time and new dynamics emerge in society.

Sustainability is not only about preserving the environment, but also about achieving equitable social welfare. Policy designed to deal with social change must touch all aspects of people's lives and provide solutions that suit local needs. An approach based on the principles of social, economic and environmental sustainability, as well as a deep understanding of the social changes taking place, are key to achieving sustainability and equitable solutions.

Finally, while major challenges remain, optimism is warranted. With the right approach, synergy among various stakeholders, and a commitment to social justice and sustainability, the possibility of creating a better future for all is wide open. Policy based on inclusive social change will create a strong foundation to face the increasingly complex challenges ahead.

CONCLUSION

Social changes, such as urbanization and globalization, present major challenges and opportunities for sustainability policy. With increasing urbanization, megacities face pressure on natural and social resources, while globalization opens up opportunities for global collaboration but also exacerbates inequalities. Sustainability policy must be designed with social justice, inclusiveness and diversity in mind to effectively address these challenges.

Wise management of natural resources and people development will create a solid foundation for sustainability.

To ensure sustainability that is equitable and relevant to local societies, policy must adapt to social change. Collaboration between the government, private sector and society is essential in creating solutions that are innovative and acceptable to all levels of society. By approaching sustainability policy with a perspective that considers social change, the solutions implemented can be more effective, equitable and sustainably implemented. Policy must be able to accommodate the challenges and opportunities of urbanization and globalization to ensure a better future for all humanity.

REFERENCES

- Bu, M., Lin, C. T., & Zhang, B. (2017). Globalization and Climate Change: New Empirical Panel Data Evidence. *Environmental Economics and Sustainability*, 201-220.
- Bulkeley, H., & Betsill, M. M. (2005). *Rethinking Sustainable Cities: Sustainable Development and Urban Regeneration*. Routledge.
- Elkington, J. (1997). *Cannibals with Forks: The Triple Bottom Line of 21st Century Business*. Capstone.
- Gudmanian, A., Yahodzinskyi, S., Koshetar, U., & Orochovska, L. (2020). Social and Economic Aspects of Environmental Problems in the Globalized World. *In E3S Web of Conferences*, 164, 11019.
- Haase, A., Bedtke, N., Begg, C., Gawel, E., Rink, D., & Wolff, M. (2018). On the Connection between Urban Sustainability Transformations and Multiple Societal Crises. *Urban Transformations: Sustainable Urban Development through Resource Efficiency, Quality of Life and Resilience*, 61-76.
- Harrington, D. W., & Elliott, S. J. (2015). *Understanding Emerging Environmental Health Risks: A Framework for Responding to the Unknown*. Canadian Geographer.
- Hopwood, B., Mellor, M., & O'Brien G. (2005). Sustainable Development: Mapping Different Approaches. *Sustainable Development*, 13(1), 38-52.
- Imppola, J. J. (2020). Global Economy and Its Sustainability in the Globalized World. *In SHS Web of Conferences*, 74, 04008.
- Jackson, T. (2009). *Prosperity without Growth: Economics for a Finite Planet*. Earthscan.
- McGrath, J. (2017). Globalization and Social Change. *In The Modernization of the Western World* (pp. 256-270). Routledge.
- Meadows, D. H. (2008). *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*. Chelsea Green Publishing.
- Moss, T. (2015). *The Global Environmental Politics of Inequality*. University of California Press.
- Nikolic, N., Zečević, M., Nesic, Z., & Rendulić Davidović, G. (2022, August 1). The Impact of Global Changes on the Transformation of Politics, Economy and Education. *In 9th International Scientific Conference Technics and Informatics in Education*, 371-376. Professional Development and General Education Tropics.
- Porter, M. E., & Kramer, M. R. (2011). *Creating Shared Value: Redefining Capitalism and the Role of the Corporation in Society*. Harvard Business Review, 89(1-2), 62-77.
- Rybansky, R., & Janos, D. (2020). Globalization and Its Impact on Healthy Lifestyle. *In SHS Web of Conferences* (Vol. 74, p. 04022). EDP Sciences.
- Sachs, J. D. (2015). *The Age of Sustainable Development*. Columbia University Press.
- Sannella, A. (2020). Sociology and Sustainable Development: The Paradigm is Going to Change. *Perspectives for a New Social Theory of Sustainability*, 115-123.
- Satterthwaite, D. (2010). *The Impact of Urbanization on Sustainability*. Earthscan.
- Sheykhi, M. T. (2020). Mutual Effects of Environment and Urbanization: A Sociological Assessment. *Ann. Environ. Sci. Toxicol*, 4, 24-26.
- Stiglitz, J. E. (2002). *Globalization and Its Discontents*. W.W. Norton & Company.
- Suša, O. (2019). Global Dynamics of Socio-Environmental Crisis: Dangers on the Way to a Sustainable Future. *Civitas-Revista de Ciências Sociais*, 19(2), 315-336.
- Theis, T., & Tomkin, J. (2012). *Sustainability: A Comprehensive Foundation*. OpenStax.
- Tilbury, D. (2011). *Education for Sustainable Development: An Expert Review of Processes and Learning*. UNESCO.