

building the new Jerusalem

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London Pathways to the Future - thinking differently

John Jopling,
Aequalis, 2000
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Creating enthusiasm for local government is not an easy task. However, John Jopling succeeds in generating interest in the challenges that Mayor Livingstone and the Assembly face in London over the next four years. He sets out the issues and threats that must be addressed, ranging from traffic congestion to air quality and suggests that full citizen participation in the democratic process is necessary in order for London to become a sustainable city. This contrasts with the spin doctoring and manipulation that has characterised many recent political campaigns. He identifies methods of empowering community groups, using a vision-led approach, and ensuring that all stakeholders are involved. He also identifies the opportunity to implement Local Agenda 21 with the re-emergence of a London-wide local authority.

Jopling suggests that an economic strategy that addresses global inequality is required for London, citing the powerful effect of financial decisions emanating from the City. He distinguishes carefully between growth and development, pointing out the pitfalls that lie in wait for those who worship growth as an end in itself. The second part of *Pathways to the Future* addresses the challenges of participatory government. Best practice models such as the city of Curitiba in Brazil are profiled.

This is a seminal resource that should be on the reading list of all those wishing to influence the future direction of their communities. The book is well referenced and includes an excellent list of sustainability resources on the World Wide Web. An evocative series of colour photographs reinforces the text.

As a city councillor in Dublin, I found the discussion of sustainability and city planning highly useful. Planning systems are outdated in both Britain and Ireland and fail to incorporate sustainability as an integral part of the development system. Tinkering with the existing legislation does not go far enough. What is needed is nothing less than an entire sea change and re-evaluation of what we wish to achieve.

Jopling's book lays the groundwork for this task. He gives an excellent background to the developments in sustainability since the Earth Summit in Rio, and provides a toolkit of resources that will be of use to those involved in active campaigning. Involving communities directly in the planning process is one of the methods that Jopling advocates so, having helped inner city communities to prevent the excesses of high-rise development, I was interested in the way Jopling showed how we can learn from previous mistakes in urban planning and work in partnership to provide sustainable mixed-use development in our towns and cities.

Ciarán Cuffe is an architect and urban planner. He was first elected to Dublin City Council in 1991 and is now a Green Party TD in Dun Laoghaire.



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