

! This PDF is governed by copyright law, which prohibits unauthorised copying, distribution, public display, public performance, and preparation of derivative works.

**THIS CHAPTER
IS AN EXCERPT
FROM**

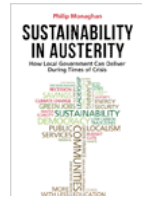
**Sustainability in Austerity: How Local Government
Can Deliver During Times of Crisis**

BY Philip Monaghan

FIRST PUBLISHED November 2010

ISBN 978-1-906093-57-0 (pbk)

MORE DETAILS AT www.greenleaf-publishing.com/austerity



© 2010 Greenleaf Publishing Limited

SUSTAINABILITY • RESPONSIBILITY • ACCOUNTABILITY

Greenleaf Publishing, Aizlewood's Mill, Nursery Street, Sheffield S3 8GG, UK
Tel: +44 (0)114 282 3475 Fax: +44 (0)114 282 3476
info@greenleaf-publishing.com <http://www.greenleaf-publishing.com>



1

Why you should read this book

National governments have their national [sustainability] policies, but after all it is local governments who have to implement these policies (UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon 2009).

1.1 Establishing need

While developed and developing economies alike are slowly emerging from the worst recession since the USA's first Great Depression at the start of the last century, the turmoil of the recovery is likely to last for years to come. The massive debt burden on national governments in the West from the various bank bailouts has caused a ripple effect that has been felt across the world. One consequence of this emergency response to the economic devastation is a dramatic and virtually unanimous reduction on public spending in the medium to long term, even if some are still implementing a short-term spending stimulus to avert further recession.

This has created a 'perfect storm' in local governments whereby the public's expectations and national targets on sustainability issues

are increasing at the same time as funds are being drastically cut. Therefore, this is a major challenge for anyone associated with a local authority. One example is the costly commitments to establish targets to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions under the Copenhagen Accord, which have come at the height of the crisis (UNFCCC 2010).

Given this financial straitjacket, this book is a must-read for all council leaders in need of advice on cost-neutral actions and to equip you to 'do more for less'. Filling this vast gap in know-how is the key achievement of this book. This is done through primary as well as secondary research, including new critical insights from case interviews with local government leaders from across Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America and North America. Sharing reflections from a new generation of public service innovators will assist the drive towards excellence on sustainability in defiance of the credit crunch.

More specifically, this book is intended to inform and inspire a range of managers in local government working to improve the lives of the communities you serve, as well as the elected members who lead our councils, shaping strategy and holding managers to account for performance. Crucially, the book is not aimed at the converted but rather is intended to persuade and support all council leaders who control or influence the use of natural, financial, human and other assets. This includes more traditional services ranging from economic development and planning to fleet and logistics, and is structured to be most helpful to such a particular reader.

For the first time in a generation, public servants and elected councillors have a critical window of opportunity to engage in new forms of learning and innovation that may actually lay the foundations to increase your council's competitiveness—are you ready to make the 'upside of down' a reality?

1.2 A review of other literature

There is an impressive array of books that provide fresh thinking on sustainability, ranging from major public policy shifts to step-by-step guidance on the implementation of environmental management standards or to mentoring on personal well-being. However, these tend to

be aimed at policy-makers in national government and not leaders in local government who are the ones that have to make this change a reality, as appears to be the case for *Plan B 4.0* (Brown 2009), *Deep Economy* (McKibben 2010) and *Leading Change Toward Sustainability* (Doppelt 2010). Or, the target readers are executives from big business such as with *Business and Economic Development* (Monaghan *et al.* 2003) and *Corporate Environmental Management* (Welford 1997). Or, the advice is aimed at individual domestic audiences such as *Sustainability by Design* (Ehrenfeld 2010), *The Economical Environmentalist* (Vaze 2009) and *Change the World for a Fiver* (We Are What We Do 2007). Crucially, these publications have ignored or overlooked the inclusion of inspirational stories of positive change from peers in local government. More importantly, as public sector budgets are slashed, neither are they contextualised by the need to act in a cost-neutral way.

Furthermore, there are also trade associations or partnership forums serving the public sector which provide insightful policy briefings or propose some practical actions on sustainability-related legislation among other things. Impressive examples include the UN Global Compact Cities Programme (e.g. *Sustainable Cities*, Volume 1 2010), C40 Cities Group led by the Clinton Foundation in the USA, the European Covenant of Mayors, the UK's Local Government Association (e.g. *The Climate Challenge* 2009) and Forum for the Future (e.g. *The Sustainable Cities Index* 2009a) as well as the ICLEI: Local Governments for Sustainability. However, as with the literature above while these are extremely helpful, they are not intended to provide council leaders with practical, cost-neutral advice which is most needed during these austere times.

More information and signposting to several of these respected organisations and other initiatives such as ICLEI or the UN Global Compact Cities Programme are detailed in the section 'Other helpful sources of learning'.

Consequently, all of the above evidence has helped to inform the focus and layout of the book. That is, it allows you to understand and implement the interventions on your own terms, while supporting you and your teams to coordinate tangible and lasting organisation-wide change on sustainability.

1.3 How to use this resource

The primary target readers here are managers and councillors in local government across the world—in either emerging or developed economies. A secondary audience is managers in central government, community organisation leaders, academics and management consultants who work with this sector on policy and performance.

More specifically, for traditional public services it will be relevant to the disciplines listed below:

- Democracy and decision-making (constitutional roles, scrutiny, innovation and transparency)
- Corporate assets and resources (finance, procurement, estates management and personnel)
- Economic development and planning (land use, business incubation and jobs and skills)
- Waste and environmental services (waste reduction, re-use and recycling)
- Fleet and logistics (staff travel, business travel and public travel)
- Community management (localism and neighbourhood participation, education and well-being)

The book is divided into four parts. Part I, ‘The dentist’s chair’, talks about our fear and motivation to act on the big sustainability issues of the day. In Part II, ‘Doing much more with a lot less’, the discussion is then further contextualised in terms of the global credit crunch and its crippling impact on local government spending. Part III, ‘The upside of down with amazing people’, sets out a series of cost-neutral initiatives that you, as leaders in local government, can take during these difficult times. Following this, Part IV, ‘Out of the darkness: golden rules for excellence in austerity’, argues that, in order to realise these opportunities for sustainable living, certain organisational enablers need to be in place for us to battle back and reach the promised land.

Over 100 case studies, anecdotes and practical tips for managers and councillors from their peers across the globe aim to help you build the business case that cost-neutral change is within our grasp. Fortunately, this does not mean starting with a blank piece of paper. Rather, it is about building on existing successes as a clear path to organisational excellence. It involves aligning activities to strategic intent and operational systems and understanding the trade-offs and related risks. All of which is explored in more detail during the course of the book. (For ease of comparability all financial values are calculated in US dollars.)

To help you navigate your way through this learning resource Figure 1.3 illustrates a high-level ‘route map’.

This figure shows how the chapters are brigaded together into four distinct parts and ‘where you are now’ in your reading journey (so, given you are currently reading Part I this is highlighted accordingly). Then within each of these four parts, at the beginning of the relevant chapters (2, 3, 5 and 7–15), you will be able to refer to summary tables which list all ‘cost-neutral interventions’ associated with ‘typical sustainability actions and outcomes’ for that particular section (note that the long list of over 100 interventions are numbered at the start of the book). An example of a summary table is shown in Table 1.3 (taken from Chapter 9 ‘Economic development and planning’).

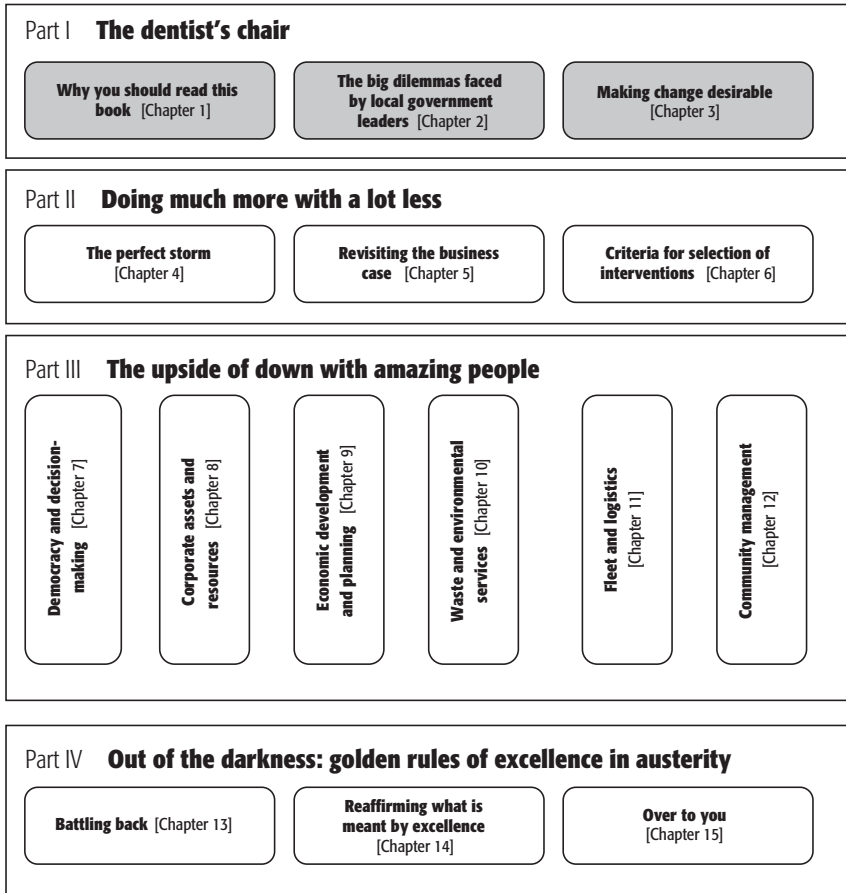
TABLE 1.3 Example of a summary table

Typical sustainability actions and outcomes	Cost-neutral interventions
Land use and climate adaptation	#5, #66, #22
Low-carbon trade zones	#23, #67
Business incubation, signals and control	#68, #69, #70, #24
Green space infrastructure	#71, #25

And then, finally, at the end of each chapter, the ‘Key learning’ is all brought together.

So, regardless of whether you are a seasoned professional or just starting out in sustainability, this book is written to be an invaluable resource tailored to the challenges you are facing, as suggested below.

FIGURE 1.3 Route mapping



- For the more experienced practitioner who is primarily interested in the case studies or management tips, the list of the 100 cost-neutral interventions will direct you quickly to these
- Practitioners who are beginners to the field may wish to take it step by step from cover to cover through Part I to Part IV. Or perhaps focus on a particular council function; if so, Part III is structured accordingly
- For those who wish to refresh their learning or are possibly more interested in revisiting the power of their business case to act as part of ‘competing’ for scarce resources, Part II will be helpful in building the persuasiveness and stickiness of your programmes
- If you are primarily intrigued by management theory and models, then Part IV is the best place to spend your time, before checking back to earlier sections of the book
- Furthermore, if you are skilled in a particular discipline, you may simply wish to look at how you incorporate sustainability thinking into your day job. If so, again start with Part III and select the appropriate chapters: for instance, if you work in personnel or finance, then begin with the chapter on ‘Corporate assets and resources’, and take it from there
- If you are an academic you may simply want to focus your time on the case studies compiled from primary research, with interviews from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America. Again, these are listed in the 100 interventions
- Finally, if you are a business person looking at ideas for ways to partner with local authorities, you may find it useful to flick through the numerous anecdotes, particularly those related to ‘Economic development and planning’ or ‘Waste and environmental services’, again contained in Part III

Key learning

- ✓ This book aims to fill a hole in the available advice on practical, cost-neutral ways for local government to improve sustainability performance.
- ✓ The target audience is primarily council managers and elected members from authorities around the world.
- ✓ This book is structured in a way that will assist established service providers such as finance or fleet in making the best use of this learning resource.