

NEWS AND EVENTS

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THE POLITICS OF TRYING TO BECOME SUSTAINABLE IN AMERICAN CITIES

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PROFESSOR

One of the most used, and perhaps least understood, terms thrown around in common parlance today is “sustainability.” As a practical matter, sustainability is such a broad and abstract term that it would seem to mean anything to anyone. Yet, over the years, since the term first found its way into our lexicon probably in the 1980s, the underlying concept has evolved and taken form. Although there

are many issues that need to be addressed in research before we can say we know definitively what it means to be “sustainable,” much more is known today than even a decade ago.

Even from the early days, there was more than a hint that somehow cities around the world represent important elements in almost any definition of sustainability, and cities in the U.S., over the last twenty years, have

increasingly taken to heart some of the basic precepts of what it means to try to become more sustainable. One usually hears about London, Frankfurt, Stockholm, the Brazilian city of Curitiba, and many others that have brought the abstract idea of sustainability down to earth.

Although there is a fairly robust literature in the academic world dedicated
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EXPLORE A MAJOR IN POLITICAL SCIENCE WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9TH, NOON EATON HALL, RM 206

The Department of Political Science will host their *Majors Week* event on Wednesday, March 9th at noon in Eaton Hall room 206.

If you are considering a major or minor in political science we strongly encourage you to attend.

Students will have an opportunity to meet the Po-

litical Science faculty, learn about the PS subfields, the Tufts in Washington program, and Pi Sigma Alpha. The Department of Political Science established the Rho Omicron Chapter of the Pi Sigma Alpha Political Science Honor Society. It is student driven and organizes discussions and guest lectures.

To learn more about the Department of Political Science please visit <http://ase.tufts.edu/polsci/default.htm> or call or visit our offices in Packard Hall to set up an appointment with a member of our faculty (617-627-3465).

PIZZA BUFFET & DRINKS WILL BE SERVED!

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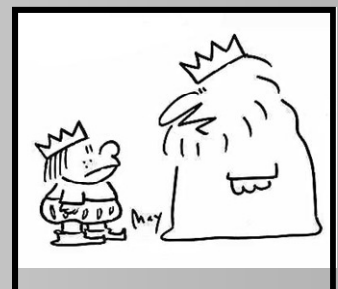
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“Yes! A major in political science is a wonderful idea!”

THE POLITICS OF TRYING TO BECOME SUSTAINABLE IN AMERICAN CITIES

PARTLY AS A RESULT OF WIDESPREAD RECOGNITION (ESPECIALLY IN THE U.S.) THAT NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS DID NOT SEEM UP TO THE TASK OF TACKLING MAJOR ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES SUCH AS CLIMATE CHANGE AND CLIMATE JUSTICE, ENERGY INDEPENDENCE, AND A HOST OF OTHER SUSTAINABILITY RELATED POLICIES, STATE AND LOCAL EFFORTS TO TRY TO BECOME MORE SUSTAINABLE HAVE FLOURISHED.

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to trying to bring substantial definition to the broad concept, most of these efforts harken back to the words found in the original report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (the so-called Brundtland Commission). This 1987 report, entitled *Our Common Future*, stated that sustainability is “... **economic development activity that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.**”

Embedded in these words are ideas concerning inter-generational fairness, with the implication that unsustainable economic development activities take place in such a way as to rob future generations of the ability to meet their needs. Contrary to popular conceptions, this report suggests that economic development that degrades the biophysical environment undermines the ability of future generations to improve, or even maintain, their standard of living.

The work of the U.N. and the development of its “Agenda 21,” the sustainable development efforts looking to the advent of the 21st century, and the associated “Local Agenda 21,” clearly articulated an important role for the world’s cities to play in

trying to become more sustainable. Partly as a result of this effort, and partly as a result of widespread recognition (especially in the U.S.) that national governments did not seem up to the task of tackling major environmental issues such as climate change and climate justice, energy independence, and a host of other sustainability related policies, state and local efforts to try to become more sustainable have flourished. Even though the idea of businesses and companies becoming more sustainable has been around for many decades, this idea started to catch on in cities only more recently.

Early research about sustainable cities was greatly skeptical that anything very meaningful could or would actually be achieved. Some called the idea of a sustainable city an oxymoron, suggesting that the very idea was incompatible with the reasons why cities exist. Still others argued that cities, by their relatively small size and parochialism, could never redress the many externalities that are responsible for making human activity unsustainable in the first place. How, they wondered, could a city government seriously deal with cross-boundary challenges like air pollution and traffic congestion? Over time, consensus seemed to emerge that while no one city could overcome all of these problems, there is much that cities can do to try to become more sustainable,

and that cities have some level of responsibility for doing what they can rather than shifting responsibility and blame to someone else or to some other governmental unit or agency. Perhaps much to the surprise of many, cities around the world, including many in the U.S., have decided that trying to become more sustainable is something they want to do. In the U.S. alone, my research suggests that over 30 of the nation’s 50 largest cities now have official sustainability policies. They include the usual suspects: Seattle, WA; Portland, OR; and San Francisco and Oakland, CA. Today, this also includes the big cities of Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia, and a wide array of others including Albuquerque, Atlanta, Austin, Chattanooga, Jacksonville, Memphis, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Tampa, and others that have created impressive programs.

Over the last ten years or so, I have embarked on an effort to develop an understanding of what cities in the U.S. and Canada are actually doing as a matter of public policy when they claim to be working toward becoming more sustainable. Although there is no shortage of people willing to put forth prescriptions for what cities should do, I wanted to know what they are actually doing and why. *continued on page 3*

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Are there cities that really seem to be doing a lot – much more than anyone would have expected? If so, what are their local policies and programs? What are they actually achieving? And most importantly, why are some cities willing to do so much more than others? Is there some way of understanding and explaining these differences from one city to another?

Cities vary in what kinds

of local policies and programs they are willing to put forth to address issues of sustainability. Some focus their attention just on the biophysical environment, trying to make sure they protect the livability of their physical spaces through smart growth policies, open space acquisition, environmental zoning, and many other programs. Others stress energy conservation, sometimes simply motivated by a desire to save money by looking at green building, building retrofits of insulation and installation of energy efficient trials. Still

others engage in the pursuit of alternate energy including generating and purchasing renewable energy, converting their vehicle fleets to hybrids and biodiesels, and even sometimes providing incentives for consumers to drive more fuel-efficient vehicles. More recently, partly because of federal stimulus funds for green jobs and partly because traditional models of local economic development increasingly prove to be more ineffective, cities have started to look closely at the potential for developing a green local economy.

There is no shortage of ideas for what cities can do if they want to try to become more sustainable. All in all, I have identified at least 38 different specific kinds of policies and programs that cities in the U.S. have enacted and implemented in their efforts. What distinguishes cities that are doing more from cities that are doing less, or perhaps almost nothing at all, is “political will.” Where scholars once argued that decisions to implement sustainability policies were the bailiwick of those few places that had lots of money to spend, we now *continued on page 4*

WHAT THEY FEAR, WHAT THEY SEEK: UNDERSTANDING YOUNG ARABS WHO ARE RESHAPING THEIR SOCIETIES

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2011, 12:00 PM—1:30 PM
THE COOLIDGE ROOM, BALLOU HALL

The Department of Political Science, The Fares Center for East Mediterranean Studies, The Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut in conjunction with the Mediterranean Club will host *What they fear, what they seek: Understanding young Arabs who are reshaping their societies*; a forum and panel discussion with Rami G. Khouri and Mohamed Younes on Tuesday, February 22nd, 12:00 pm - 1:30 pm, The Coolidge Room,

Ballou Hall.

Rami Khouri is Director of the Issam Fares Institute (IFI) for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut and a visiting Fellow at the Fares Center at Tufts University for the month of February. In addition, he managed a team of researchers at American University of Beirut (AUB) that worked with Unicef, and scores of other analysts and scholars across the region, during the past 18 months to produce the first Arab Youth Report, due to be published March 2011 by Uni-

cef and IFI-AUB.

Mohamed Younes is a GALLUP senior analyst based in Doha, Qatar. In addition, his research focuses on attitudes on governance, socio-economic challenges and well-being in the MENA region. He is the primary author of the Silatech Index, the most comprehensive, semi-annual, public opinion study of MENA youth.

According to a GALLUP *Young Egyptians Increasingly See Their Potential Untapped* (February 14, 2011), “the

youth in several Arab countries were less likely in 2010 to believe that their leaders made full use of their human capital. Of the youth in the region, Egyptian’s perceptions experienced one of the largest declines: “fewer than 3 in 10 fifteen to twenty-nine-year olds say Egypt’s leadership maximizes youth potential, down from almost 4 in 10 in 2009.”

We hope to see you there! **The event is open to the Tufts Community. A buffet lunch will be served.**

The new, undergraduate-managed **Institute for Political Citizenship** at the Tisch College will have its first **General Interest Meeting**, on **Thursday, February 17th at 7:30 pm in the RABB Room**. Come learn about internships, their discussion series, speakers, civic engagement activities, social events, & partnerships. Questions? Email tufts.ipc@gmail.com.

THE POLITICS OF TRYING TO BECOME SUSTAINABLE IN AMERICAN CITIES

IF SUSTAINABILITY IS NOT DRIVEN BY RESOURCES OR BY POLITICAL IDEOLOGY, THEN WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE? WHAT IS IT THAT GIVES SOME CITIES THE POLITICAL WILL TO TRY TO BECOME MORE SUSTAINABLE THAN OTHERS?

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see many relatively poor cities pursuing sustainability. Cleveland and Philadelphia are just about as committed to achieving sustainability results as are San Francisco and Phoenix. Where scholars once thought that sustainability must be the province only of those liberal “left coast” cities, we now see cities like Chattanooga, Tampa, Indianapolis, and Charlotte, to name just a few, that are extremely interested in sustainability.

If sustainability is not driven by resources or by political ideology, then what is it that makes a difference? What is it that gives some cities the political will to try to become more sustainable than others? The answer seems to be rooted in how cities are governed, particularly how different residents’ interests and preferences are organized and represented to local policy makers. Although local politics have traditionally been thought of as “groupless” politics, devoid of much in the way of interest groups, by now it is clear that city politics is anything but groupless. What seems to make the most difference is the presence of local groups that advocate for sustainability and the environment.

The kinds of groups that are active advocates for sustainability are usually nonprofit organizations. They may not be allowed, by law, to engage in electoral politics; but cities that have sustainability policies have extremely active nonprofit organizations advocating for sustainability. The specific types of groups vary. In Seattle, a nonprofit group called “Sustainable Seattle, Inc.” formed in the late 1980s, and through its effort to create a comprehensive set of sustainable city indicators, eventually got city leaders to incorporate much of their work into the city’s official comprehensive strategic plan. Other cities have environmental, climate protection, environmental justice, and even health-related nonprofits serving to advocate for sustainability. These groups engage in many different kinds of activities, but all focus their attention on pushing their often reluctant local public officials to adopt sustainability policies and programs. In some places, neighborhood associations have become important catalysts for sustainability.

Many U.S. cities can count nonprofit organizations as constituting the heart of their local economies today. Anchored by hospitals and health-related nonprofits, private universities and colleges, and social service and religious groups, nonprof-

its have often become the largest employment sector in a large number of major cities. These nonprofits frequently find that their own missions dovetail nicely with the pursuit of sustainability, and this frequently forms the basis of political support.

The rise in importance of local nonprofits advocating for sustainability has started to create some very strange bedfellows. Unions have not always been terribly supportive of environmental protection, but in recent years, many local trade unions have become strong advocates. Their members are the ones who stand to benefit from green building, installing solar panels, and insulating existing buildings. It makes perfect sense. And the business community has increasingly embraced the idea of sustainability, especially through local nonprofit business associations like the chamber of commerce. Local chambers of commerce, unlike their national counterpart in Washington, have started to see the importance of green businesses and green jobs for their local economies. Chamber organizations in Chattanooga and Boulder, Colorado, have been active partners in, rather than opponents of, local sustainability policies. One

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businessperson in Manchester, NH, who has pushed the local Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce to become green and advocate for sustainability policies, told me that it was the local elected officials, not the business community, that has been most resistant. As the number and size of green businesses grows, and as these businesses get increasingly engaged in their respective chambers of commerce, advocacy for sustainability will in-

evitably grow as well.

There is little question that the presence of sustainability advocacy groups makes a huge difference. Local leaders who see some political risk in supporting “environmentalists” feel much less vulnerable when groups advocate for sustainability. Even in this era of extreme local resource shortages, advocacy groups have helped move a sustainability agenda. All of this has given rise to a rapidly changing local political landscape, and provides a gold mine in terms of important issues about which to research and teach. In my advanced Seminar on the Politics of Sustainable Cities,

there is no shortage of political science, economics, environmental studies, and community health majors who seek answers to many relevant and related questions. They want to know whether the programs and policies really work. How can they be made to work better? Can cities work with other municipal, county, regional, and state governments to overcome the externalities that they face? What are the consequences of local sustainability programs, both intended and unintended? How much do sustainability programs cost? Can they be made truly cost-effective? What kinds of groups seem to be most effective in what kinds of settings

in the pursuit of sustainability? Are there specific advocacy approaches that seem more effective than others? These are but a few of the many questions we address and continue to search for answers to.

Professor Portney teaches courses in methodology, judicial politics, political behavior, public administration, survey research, and environmental politics. He is the author of “Taking Sustainable Cities Seriously: Economic Development, the Environment, and Quality of Life in American Cities” (MIT Press, 2003).

Americanism in the Twenty-First Century: Public Opinion in the Age of Immigration

(Cambridge University Press, 2011)

Congratulations to Deborah J. Schildkraut, Associate Professor of Political Science, who received outstanding reviews for her work *Americanism in the Twenty-First Century: Public Opinion in the Age of Immigration*. The book analyzes public opinion about American identity among immigrants and the native born. It evaluates the claim that all Americans should prioritize an American identity instead of an ethnic or national origin identity and shows that this claim is more complicated than it is typically cast. The book also offers influential

contributions for contemporary immigration debates.

“Schildkraut’s book masterfully explores how Americans contend with these competing forces; it is a seminal contribution to our basic understanding of identity and what it means to be American in the 21st century,” raved James N. Druckman, Professor of Political Science at Northwestern University.

David O. Sears, Professor of Psychology and Political Science at the University of California, Los Angeles said, “The volume should become

a reference point for all future studies of a phenomenon so vital to the nation’s future.”

Professor Schildkraut is embarking on a new project that explores public opinion about political representation in the United States. The project hopes to address: Do people want their representative to resemble them, or do they want their representatives to be “better” than them? Do they prefer competitive elections, or would they rather live in “safe” districts where the partisan outcome of elections varies little?

What makes them feel that they are being represented well in government? To what extent do they think that our dominant mode of electing representatives territorially based single-member districts with plurality rule results in quality representation? Do white, non-whites, and immigrants share similar views on these matters, or do their preferences differ in noteworthy ways?

Associate Professor Schildkraut is also the author of *Press ‘One’ for English: Language, Policy, Public Opinion, and American Identity* (Princeton University Press, 2005).

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FACULTY AND STUDENTS ARE
ENCOURAGED TO SHARE THEIR
STORIES AND THEIR IDEAS.

STUDENT RESEARCH BRIEFING SERIES

The Department of Political Science recently introduced the *Student Research Briefing Series*. The Series is designed to cover a broad range of topics in American Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations, and Political Theory & Philosophy. The briefings are also intended to enhance student appreciation of student research completed in the Department of Political Science. In addition, the publication hopes to serve as outreach to interested undergraduates and prospective students considering a major in Political Science.

The Department would like to thank Zach Witlin (A '10) for his piece on *Necessity as Virtue in the Thought of Machiavelli*. Zack was a double major in political science and international relations, the recipient of The Belfer Award, and the Prize Scholarship of the Class of 1882. In addition, he is a Fulbright Fellow in Ukraine for the 2010-11 year, for the project "*Gazpolitik: the Politics of Energy in Ukraine*". To read *Necessity as Virtue in the Thought of Machiavelli* please visit <http://ase.tufts.edu/polsci/studentresearch/Necessity.pdf>

If you are a student interested in contributing to the Student Research Briefing Series or a professor, within the Department of Political Science, and have a student paper you would like to highlight, please contact jeannine.lenehan@tufts.edu.

ADVISE THE ADVISOR

On February 9th, David Plouffe, Senior Advisor to the President, distributed an email, *Advise the Advisor*, to gather public opinion on various subjects. The idea is simple: one of the President's advisors posts a short update about issues being discussed at the White House and poses a question for anyone to answer. The White House team reviews all of the answers received by the end of the day each Friday and puts together a report regarding the weekly submissions which will be published on www.WhiteHouse.gov. If you are interested in participating please visit <http://www.whitehouse.gov/advise>. You may also want to receive *Advise the Advisor* video via the Daily Snapshot email: <http://whitehouse.gov/daily-snapshot>.

SECOND ANNUAL PSALUMNI-STUDENT OUTREACH EVENT

Coming this spring for PS Juniors and Seniors: Second Annual Department of Political Science Alumni-Student Outreach Event. The Department of Political Science will host their second annual Alumni-Student Outreach Event geared towards current PS juniors and seniors. The purpose of the Event is to generate dialogue between PS students and PS alumni. The Department understands that students are considering their options after graduation. We are fortunate to have many wonderful Political Science alumni who may be able to answer many of your questions regarding resume and career building strategies. The event will take place in May via email and phone. An email will be sent to all juniors and seniors outlining the guidelines. For any questions or additional information contact Jeannine Lenehan at jeannine.lenehan@tufts.edu.

IN THE NEWS

Jeffrey Berry quoted in the February 3, 2011 issue of *The Boston Globe* in an article by Staff Reporter Mark Arsenault, *GOP-backed bid to repeal health bill fails in Senate*. Democrats held back a Republican effort in the Senate to repeal the healthcare overhaul law. Arsenault described the vote as "largely symbolic and tactical" by the Republicans to demonstrate the overhaul as a "flawed government overreach and Democrats as free-spenders". "Just having a vote on the repeal was considered a victory for Republicans, since Senate Democrats had vowed to ignore the House vote to repeal," said Jeffrey Berry. "In doing so Republican leaders were able to uphold a campaign promise to conservative voters and give the freshman senators, who campaigned on repeal, the opportunity to cast their first high-profile votes on the matter. The Republicans are trying to show fidelity to their base."