Chapter 25
Voluntary Standards and Approaches for Sustainable Communities

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25.1 Introduction

This chapter will explore the ways in which voluntary standards for sustainability can shape urban and community development. It is argued that a flexible approach to identifying, implementing and amending standards for sustainable cities and communities will optimise both democratic participation and social learning while recognising that technological, bureaucratic and other interventions, although important, are by no means sufficient for ensuring liveable and ecologically sensitive communities to grow. Two specific guidance schemes exemplify this contention: first, the guidance for community sustainable development (BS8904) recently published by the British Standards Institute; and second, the stages, 'ingredients' and principles that have emerged from within the Transition Movement in the UK and elsewhere. Moving on, Sect. 25.2 outlines the demographic, social, political as well as environment context of urban growth and development in the first half of this century. Section 25.3 will interrogate the concept of risk and resilience as it is applied and developed in sustainable community development making key reference to the debates on risk and vulnerability and the ways in which the community based Transition Movement practically engage with them. Section 25.4 examines the relationship between sustainable community and liveability, particularly as this pertains to health. Section 25.5 shows how the design, moral ownership and commitment to voluntary standards may secure a sense of obligation sometimes understood as being an informal social contract. Section 25.6 examines the ideas, suggestions and prescriptions of BS8904. Finally, Section 25.7 offers some tentative conclusions and recommendations the main one being, the necessity for standards to be a stimulus for continuing social learning and creativity in practice

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avoiding the restrictions and limitations imposed of a managerialist culture that sees a standard as a box that must be ticked.

25.2 An Urbanising World

Over half the world's population live in urban environments and the United Nations anticipates that 9.3 billion people will inhabit this planet by 2050 with 6.3 billion people living in urban areas by 2050. Thus, urban areas are expected to absorb all the population growth in the next 40 years as well as drawing in many people from rural areas (United Nations 2012). Over 180,000 people join the planet's urban population every day. This demographic increase is placing immense strains on the planet's already stressed ecosystems and urban environments. The city, at all levels of spatial organisation, is under huge pressure to reduce its ecological footprint as well as being more socially and economically just (Rees and Wackernagel 1996). In fact, if cities and communities are not effectively sustainable by the end of this century, the prospects for improving the quality and standard of life for most people will be severely impaired. This means that cities will have to consume less, be more energy efficient and implement processes of renewable energy generation—bioenergy, solar, wind and arguably nuclear. Global demographics and population movement will also inevitably mean the construction of more cities and the expansion of existing ones as is currently the case in China. More land is being used for urban development every year. Having said that, there is also a counter trend of urban decline, the hollowing out of older industrial urban areas, which is likely to continue in some regions. Many spaces in rustbelt cities like Detroit may find themselves returned to agriculture and horticulture. Population density is also likely to increase in many places which bring both costs and benefits. Although dense compact cities are perceived as offering significant advantages and opportunities for realising economic and energy efficiency targets, increased urban density also produces other challenges. These may relate to water and food security, housing provision, the availability of meaningful work, crime prevention, transport and accessibility, educational opportunity and fair income distribution. The ongoing maintenance of peace and social harmony among differing groups who may entertain deep suspicions of, or dislike each other, also compromises achievement of social inclusion and social cohesion as overarching policy goals. On the other hand, a compact urban environment may lead to opportunities for enhanced sociability through community action, the development of social capital and economic enterprise. However, a distinction needs to be made between the idea of a compact city, one where proximity to amenities radiating from the urban core is privileged to a densely populated one that entails a simple concentration of dwelling units irrespective of proximity and accessibility to services and amenities. Densely populated cities, districts and neighbourhoods therefore offer both threats and opportunities to human social well-being and the potential for human society to fashion a non-exploitative and respectful relationship with the Earth.

At the heart of this concern for the wellbeing of urban dwellers is the notion of 'the right to the city'. This idea was first coined by the urban sociologist Henri Lefebvre in the late 1960s and further developed by urban planner Peter Marcuse, geographer David Harvey and many others (Brenner et al. 2012). It has since taken root in the public policy and the global human rights discourse. As the UN Habitat report, *State of the World's Cities 2010/2011*: *Bridging the Urban Divide* (UN Habitat 2008, p. 123) stated,

> The right to the city should not be viewed as a new legalistic instrument, but rather as an expression of the deep yearnings of urban dwellers to see their multiple human rights become more effective in urban areas. In this perspective, the right to the city serves as a bulwark against the exclusionary types of development, the selective benefit-sharing and the marginalisation and discrimination that is rampant in cities today. The right to the city provides an adequate platform for action as well as a framework for human rights enforcement.

However, many people, particularly in the developing world have not fully benefited from the 'urban advantage', do not live in decent accommodation, do not participate in decision making, do not live in healthy and environmentally friendly places and are unable therefore to exercise their full rights to urban citizenship. There is a problem of fairness, equity and equality. Thus underpinning all this and informing much of the work in the development of voluntary standards for sustainable cities and sustainable communities is therefore the concept of environmental justice. For Agyeman et al. (2002, p. 78),

> Sustainability (. . .) cannot be simply a 'green' or 'environmental' concern, important though 'environmental' aspects of sustainability are. A truly sustainable society is one where wider questions of social needs and welfare, and economic opportunity are integrally related to environmental limits imposed by supporting ecosystems. (. . .) The basis for this view is that sustainability implies a more careful use of scarce resources and, in all probability, a change to the high-consumption lifestyles experienced by the affluent and aspired to by others.

This will entail long term significant shifts in human behaviour, mindsets and capabilities that must address the many natural and anthropogenically created uncertainties and risks that our dominant mode of essentially urban economic development and growth has produced.

25.3 Risk, Resilience and Climate Change

A fundamental concern facing all of us is climate change and its anticipated impact on human well being and the general state of the planet. Average global temperature increase, sea level rise and increasing unpredictability and extremes in weather patterns are now universally accepted by national and city governments, business organisations, international agencies and the general public. Despite failures to reach satisfactory and legally binding global agreements regarding targeted reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions and a discernible reluctance from 'the

international community' to move swiftly away from carbon fuelled economic development, considerable efforts are being exerted to address, adapt to or mitigate the effects of climate change in urban environments. The swiftly growing 'Transition Town' movement is one bottom-up example of urban and rural communities working together to develop and then implement carbon descent plans, local food production schemes and new tools for community based conviviality. The aim is to restore resilience and ecological responsibility to a culture that had been carelessly and mindlessly destructive during the age of abundance and affluence. Despite criticisms of the Transition movement as failing to adequately address broader issues of political power, vested financial interests and economic inequality, the movement does offer a fresh perspective on community self reliance, resilience, environmental responsibility and respect for others within and beyond immediate social spheres and geographic locales. Indeed, *The Transition Handbook* is aptly subtitled 'from oil dependency to local resilience' and offers heuristic guidance to communities of various descriptions as to how to embark on this change process (Hopkins 2008). The free edit version of the book, published on the Internet under a creative commons copyright, combines with the accompanying wiki, networked meetings and growing use of social media to ensure the Transition movement remains co-operative, collaborative and dynamic. Significantly, the movement is reluctant to prescribe a set series of standardised steps, procedures and actions for transition. However, although Hopkins (2008, p. 98) does offer his own "Twelve Steps to Transition", he provides only a rough charcoal drawing rather than a finely etched engraving of the transition process,

> [The steps] don't take you from A-Z, rather from A-C, which is as far as we've got with this model so far. These steps don't necessarily follow each other logically in the order they are set out here; every Transition initiative weaves a different way through the Steps, as you will see. These Twelve Steps are still evolving, in part shaped by your experience of using them. There may end up being as few as six or more than fifty!

These Steps to Transition have recently been modified enabling groups to decide what issues and actions to engage with first and how. This enables each group to draw on their own local ecological knowledge thereby creating both a heuristic and iterative approach to sustainable community developments. Transition has moved from adopting a metaphor of steps (and ladders) to one of recipes and 'ingredients' suggesting a creativity tailored to specific tastes and needs (Hopkins 2011). Although more top down perhaps, local government bodies such as the ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability) have been closely involved in nurturing and implementing local sustainability initiatives. In 1994 the ICLEI launched the Local Agenda 21 Model Communities Programme and more recently this umbrella group, representing over 500 municipal authorities throughout the world, announced the start of its Resilient Communities & Cities Initiative which focuses on developing tools for disaster risk management, training and capacity building. Both mitigation measures, designed to reduce carbon emissions, and adaptation measures designed to reduce vulnerability and limit the effects of climate change, are part of the policy and practice mix. So apart from the more traditional planning concerns that deal

with floods and public health, climate adaption measures often overlap with those concerned with environmental sustainability such as those designed to protect the viability of ecosystem services, improve urban green space, foster urban agriculture, and promote improvements in green building design and construction, and urban transport infrastructure. Additionally, climate adaptation addresses issues relating to sustaining urban economic vitality, supply chains and attending to the material needs of poor and vulnerable populations. The ICLEI (2011, p. 1), like the Transition movement, places resilience at the centre of its deliberations and its practice defining the concept as referring to "the capacity and ability of a community to withstand stress, survive, adapt, bounce back from a crisis or disaster and rapidly move on. Resilience needs to be understood as the societal benefit of collective efforts to build collective capacity and the ability to withstand stress".

For many people, building urban and community resilience requires an integrated ecosystems approach which, as the World Bank report, *Cities and Climate Change*: *An Urgent Agenda* (World Bank 2010, pp. 11–12) states include a number of key actions, namely:

> (i) robust decision making (incorporating broader-based cost and benefit assessments that include societal values, ecosystem services, risks, and longer time horizons); (ii) buttressing of key infrastructure (e.g. increased robustness of water and power supply systems); (iii) social inclusion (ecosystems abhor extremes, for example, pronounced differences between rich and poor); (iv) urban risk assessments; (v) emergency preparedness (practice, know where the risks are likely, make this information public); (vi) partnerships with other cities, agencies, and governments; (vii) greater adaptive capacity through buildings and critical infrastructure to withstand increased climate variability, for example, metros; (viii) reduced social tensions; (ix) where practicable, and cost effective, streamlining of key services and infrastructure; and (x) protection and integration of key ecosystem services.

It has been apparent for some time that the nature and magnitude of the risks being confronted are of a different order from the more natural and predictable risks of earlier centuries. Ulrich Beck's (Beck 1992) 'risk society' is one confronting both environmental disturbances and climate turbulence with threats to social, cultural and national identity caused by the decline and in some cases collapse of traditional values, norms and customs. The idea and practice of fashioning sustainable urban environments and communities is confronted with many unknowns compounded by the problems of fashioning meaningful work and securing consistent employment in both developed as well as developing countries, shifts in and resistance to changes in gender roles and expectations, changes to the family life and structure, to class consciousness and loss of geographical, and perhaps even spiritual, rootedness brought on by increasing levels of capital and labour migration. New technological and scientific developments such as nanotechnology, genetic engineering, nuclear power and synthetic biology are only adding to a sense of disorientation and dislocation. Newman et al. (2009), see individuals, cities and communities as being essentially similar in that fear destroys resilience and exacerbates risks whereas hope builds strength and confidence. For hope to be realised, human society needs to mend its ways and learn from the past. For instance, building social-ecological resilience requires that we understand

ecosystems and it is not only professionals, the core scientific disciplines and academic experts who have the requisite knowledge and understanding. The tacit environmental knowledge of local people must be properly respected and taken into account by policy makers and practitioners. As Folke et al. (2002) suggest, ecological ignorance undermines resilience and the still all too common assumption that human society is separate from nature rather than part of it continues to be an underlying cause of the vulnerability of human social systems. In this a clear connection needs to be made between social resilience and social vulnerability and economic resilience and vulnerability. Environmental change can impact seriously on a group or community's livelihood and the resilience of social, economic and political institutions. Markets may be disrupted or destroyed, the availability of key resources may be compromised and, as a result, economic well being can be threatened, crime increase and people of working age may lose their jobs and/or migrate to other locations. As Adger (2000, p. 361) writes, "*the centrality of social resilience to sustainable development remains a critical question*".

25.4 Sustainable Community

Community is at the human heart of urban sustainable development, social and ecological resilience. At a moment when globalisation is seen as a fact of life as well as a desirable consequence of neoliberal economic development, there has been a return to community and to the local. Environmentalists have, for many years, articulated the idea 'think global, act local' and problems of social exclusion, alienation and disaffection have seen a flurry of policy activity informed by particular understandings of communitarianism, social capital and social cohesion. There has also been a spatial turn in political, economic and social thinking. A spatially based critical politics of consumption could build understanding and awareness of the global ramifications of the way we live, play and work offering important ethical and material lessons for those wishing to develop more sustainable lifestyles. The belief that a sense or spirit of place is key to health and well being, feelings of belonging and a capacity and willingness to care for self and others (human and non humans) has grown considerably in recent years too. However, Doreen Massey has critically dissected the meaning of space and warned against an excessive attachment to localism and/or globalism. The local, she says, can never be simply walled off from the global but must somehow be weaved in to the changing global environment in ways that are distinctly advantageous for local economies and local communities (Massey 2004). Globalisation is made in local places; the global is constructed out of the local and vice versa. Globalisation is really an abstraction for ultimately it is constituted by a complex network of actors and relationships, phenomenological experiences and place based groups and actions that increasingly transcend one locality. These local places are not, and should not be perceived as being, victims of globalisation but rather as sources of

social reproduction and cultural innovation. In this way, a global sense of place implies that local communities and cultures are a product of relations that extend far beyond their specific boundaries. We know that there are many transboundary flows . . . of information, capital, people, pollution, commodities, etc., and we know that climate change is a global phenomena and we know that cities do not move. They may grow or shrink and although various 'imagined communities' and social identities may be quite cosmopolitan they will invariably be physically located in specific spaces and places.

With many towns and cities hosting a wide array of different cultural and ethnic groups, many opportunities to examine the place of locality, economic opportunity and social and environmental (in)justice within a globalised world exist. Groups and individuals tend to frame their behaviour according to context or 'sites of practice' thereby exposing themselves to a number of contradictions and conflicts. Whether or not to fly to that wonderful ecotourist holiday destination on the other side of the world may be just one example albeit only for the relatively well off (Barr et al. 2011). An understanding of the role of place in public health is also of considerable importance and here four aspects of the built environment are of critical importance: nature contact, public space, buildings and urban form. Nature contact may reduce stress and enhance work performance. Green open space together with what is known as 'green infrastructure' such as woodlands and wetlands, etc., help cool urban environments, contribute to flood protection and the provision of clean air and water (Marton-Lefevre 2012). Green building design and construction may not only be energy efficient reducing the seriously high rate of greenhouse gas emissions of urban areas but also have direct health impacts on their inhabitants. Public spaces are important areas for physical activity, the free exercise of sociability, the building of social capital and fostering of individual and collective mental well being. Sustainable urban form, good transport and accessibility, proximity to leisure amenities and work, address issues of poverty related ill health, educational under achievement, drug use, crime and disorder (Frumkin 2003). Local food systems, specifically urban and peri-urban agriculture, can help integrate more sustainable food diets with the management of natural resources and ecosystem systems and build rural and urban connectivities that are of central importance to urban resilience (Custot et al. 2012). With a focus on the local and with activities cognizant of the global but resolutely emerging from the community or the neighbourhood, it is possible that sustainable development can resonate with the needs, desires and life experiences of groups and individuals. As Bridger and Luloff (2001, p. 461) write:

> by focusing on sustainability at the local level, changes can be seen and felt more immediately. Further, discussions of a "sustainable society" or a "sustainable world" are relatively meaningless to most people since they require levels of abstraction not relevant in their daily lives. The community, in contrast, is more conceptually manageable. After all, the consequences of environmental degradation are most keenly felt and the results of intervention most noticeable in one's own backyard (. . .). To the extent that successful intervention becomes a tangible aspect of local life, we increase the likelihood that sustainability will acquire the widespread legitimacy that has thus far proved elusive.

Community economic development may also go some way to addressing issues of social and economic inequality which are themselves prime indicators of relatively low levels of wellness and quality of life and high levels of deprivation and ill health. Unfortunately, community based economic activity alone is not sufficient to transcend the systemic nature of these inequalities although they may stimulate political action that may usher in a new social contract that may shape more sustainable ways of living, being and creating wealth (Wilkinson and Pickett 2010).

25.5 Sustainability Standards as a Social Contract

Voluntary (and sometimes compulsory) sustainability standards, codes and indicators have become increasingly important management tools, guides and learning devices in sustainable community and urban development. Indicators, for example, are tools which provide information for community members that may inspire action, lead to constructive deliberation and better decision making. In this way, indicators can empower both citizens and local government officials although they often are a cause for discussion and sometimes even dispute. Similarly standards, particularly those with a voluntary status, play an important role in reshaping knowledge, understanding, social awareness, ethical perspectives, normative frameworks and cognitive mindsets. If they become established they may help to create a form of social contract within civil society between businesses, community groups, local government, professional bodies, campaign organisations, education and research institutions and so on. Although not legally binding, in time they establish a set of expectations, cultural proclivities, (pre)-dispositions and structuring frameworks that in effect form a type of habitus. It is also worth recalling that for the political philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the social contract meant that a community recognised having a collective good which is not the same as private interests and through this collective good, civil liberty and social progress could be achieved. Of course, the concept of community is one that has been subject to almost as much debate as sustainable development but it nonetheless has a considerable degree of public acceptability. It is a term, a presumed reality, to be applauded, protected, developed and aspired to particularly at a time when risk, uncertainty, insecurity and competitiveness dominate (Bauman 2001). The conceptual relationship between habitus and community is therefore quite important, but complex. For Bourdieu (2005), habitus should not be considered in isolation but must be used in relation to the notion of 'field' which is a dynamic space of tensions, contradictions, conflicts and struggles in which various actors seek to make adjustments according to their own skills, understandings, interests and needs. The concepts of community and habitus are both relational, engaging both structure and agency. They have a spatial dimension, a political aspect and have implications for both governance and governmentality i.e. those organised practices including the various mentalities, calculations, analyses, reflections, techniques, powers, apparatuses and rationalities that shape the way we create, administer and

manage sustainable lifestyles, social practices, communities and cities (Dean 1999). For the OECD voluntary standards for sustainability help guide consumer behaviour in more pro-environmental directions, they foster corporate responsibility, raise public awareness, establish grounds for new sustainable learning experiences, shift NGO campaigns away from being purely oppositional, inform future governmental standards for sustainability and establish new or enhanced certification regimes (Salmon 2002).

Processes of developing standards, like those of sustainability indicators, are most effectively accomplished when undertaken in a democratic and participative manner. They need to be sensitive to place and enable future learning, revision and refinement. If applied thoughtfully and critically, voluntary standards for sustainability may become a form of distributed intelligence (Innes and Booher 2000). They may also enable the emergence of a more developmental and generative approach to design, construction, management and community engagement. Raymond Cole (2012) has analysed the development of building codes and practices distinguishing between those he considers to be largely technical and confined to the actual building itself (LEED, BREEAM, the UK Code for Sustainable Homes); those he considers to be sustainable which has more of a relational dimension being sensitive to the wider built, natural and social environments such as Arup's Sustainable Project Assessment Routine; and, those he considers to be regenerative which go way beyond eco efficiency and stable state sustainability measures. Cole writes (2012, p. 47):

> Regenerative design thereby requires a fundamental re-conceptualization of the act of building design primarily in terms of imagining, formulating and enabling its role within a larger context. It would therefore seem appropriate that the representation of regenerative design in support tools should reflect this interplay. (. . .) Regenerative design prioritizes the understanding and engaging in the unique qualities of place and continues the Bioregionalist commitment to developing communities integrated with their surrounding ecosystems.

In contrast, the UK Code for Sustainable Homes (2008), closely linked to current Building Regulations, simply establish basic performance measures which are known to reduce environmental impacts and can be objectively assessed, evaluated, delivered and verified. Each criterion carry a certain number of credits which in sum inform the rating awarded to the building. A certificate is then issued with anything from one to six stars and this can then be appended to the building. The UK Housing Corporation, a government QUANGO that funds and regulates housing associations, includes the initial iteration of the Code for Sustainable Homes (see Table 25.1) as an element in its *Design and Quality Standards* (Housing Corporation 2007) which sets out its expectations and recommendations for all new affordable homes, registered social landlords and housing associations that receive the Social Housing Grant. New affordable homes must at least attain Code Three.

There are now a wide range of tools and voluntary standards available to help promote urban sustainability and sustainable community development but lessons from their use are not always learnt or applied in a serious, rigorous or consistent manner by those using them. This may be because a genuinely inclusive vision of

Table 25.1 Summary of environmental impact categories and issues (*Source*: Department for Communities and Local Government 2008, p. 10)

Categories	Issues
Energy and CO_2 emissions	Dwelling emission rate (M)
	Building fabric
	Internal lighting
	Drying space
	Energy labelled white goods
	External lighting
	Low or Zero Carbon (LZC) technologies
	Cycle storage
	Home office
Water	Internal water use (M)
	External water use
Materials	Environmental impact of materials (M)
	Responsible sourcing of materials—building elements
	Responsible sourcing of materials—finishing elements
Surface water run-off	Management of surface water run-off from developments (M)
	Flood risk
Waste	Storage of non-recyclable waste and recyclable household waste (M)
	Construction waste management (M)
	Composting
Pollution	Global Warming Potential (GWP) of insulants
	NOx emissions
Health and wellbeing	Daylighting
	Sound insulation
	Private space
	Lifetime homes (M)
Management	Home user guide
	Considerate constructors scheme
	Construction site impacts
	Security
Ecology	Ecological value of site
	Ecological enhancement
	Protection of ecological features
	Change in ecological value of site
	Building footprint

Note: (M) denotes issues with mandatory elements

an urban sustainable community has not been created; or because equitable and communicative partnerships between community stakeholders, developers and local governments were not properly formed; or because either concerns for land and property market valuations remained prominent; or because the material realities of local communities were not understood or effectively articulated. Collaboration is not the same as either consensus or agreement and where this is lacking the new social contract, and in time habitus, will struggle to take shape and become a spatially embedded reality (Deakin 2011). Islands of sustainability, green buildings and eco home developments may emerge because they can but in terms of urban strategy something is lacking. Clearly a growing 'toolification' and

'normalisation' of sustainability within urban sustainable development is evident as various tools, indicators and standards increasingly come to define and manage sustainability. However problems persist particularly when there is limited knowledge about sustainability or when these tools are applied too rigidly. Even when they have been integrated into policy frameworks, strategies and action plans, they may not be sufficiently or sensitively adapted to either place or circumstance (Jensen and Elle 2007).

25.6 BSI 8904: Sustainable Communities

In the United Kingdom, during the 13 years of 'New' Labour Government from 1997 to 2010, a significant amount of attention was given to developing frameworks, processes and strategies for developing sustainable communities. A Sustainable Communities Plan was published in 2003 (Department for Communities and Local Government 2003) together with a set of regional variations which was reviewed by Professor Anne Power of the London School of Economics for the Sustainable Development Commission in 2004 (Power 2004). A Sustainable Communities Act was later passed in 2007 and amended in 2010 establishing a statutory framework whereby local councils in England could work with community groups to devise proposals aimed at improving sustainable economic, environmental and social wellbeing. The Act provides a checklist of potential community issues ranging from the use of local waste to community health, jobs and organic horticulture that ought to be considered. The Commission saw sustainable communities as being defined by a set of aims, tools and measures. These included (Power 2004, p. 5),

The Three Aims

> *a healthy environment* involves minimal ecological impact, minimal waste or pollution and maximum recycling, protection and enhancement of the natural environment, wildlife and biodiversity, so that all may enjoy environmental benefits such as greenery, careful planning for physical and social wellbeing, space to walk, cycle, meet, play, and relax.
>
> *a prosperous economy* generates wealth and long-term investment without destroying the natural and social capital on which all economies ultimately depend; minimises resource use and environmental impact; develops new skills through education and training; meets basic needs, through local jobs and services.
>
> *social well-being* arises from a sense of security, belonging, familiarity, support, neighbourliness, cohesion and integration of different social groups, based on respect for different cultures, traditions and backgrounds.

The Four Essential Measures (or Building Blocks)

planning, *design*, *density and layout* will influence the shape of a community, the level of services and the way people interact with each other and their environment, e.g. low density sprawl makes public transport and local shops unviable; higher densities support shops, buses, neighbourhood schools and a sense of community.

minimising energy use and environmental impact contributes to sustainability, helps combat global warming and encourages 'long-term stewardship of' communities; e.g. recycling buildings helps to reduce resource use and encourages care and low impact approaches.

a viable local economy and services provide the rationale and underpinning for community development and survival; e.g. loss of manufacturing has made many traditional urban communities unviable and requires a major economic shift and new uses for existing infrastructure if they are to flourish again. They also require transport links to wider job markets, and education and training for new skills.

community organisation and neighbourhood management are essential to social networks and urban viability, ensuring well maintained, secure conditions which are the prerequisite of stable, long-term, participative and cohesive communities; e.g. regeneration companies, local housing companies and neighbourhood management organisations can transform basic street conditions, community safety and security, social contact and youth engagement, by acting as a local conduit for decisions, co-ordinating supervision and frontline service delivery.

Interestingly, although the 'resilience' concept frequently appears in many approaches to sustainable community development, it is not explicitly referred to in 'New' Labour's Sustainable Communities Plan, the Sustainable Development Commission Review or the Sustainable Communities Act. Nor did it feature explicitly in the guidance provided for the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government's Localism Act of 2011 which is ostensibly designed to give back power from central government to local authorities and for local communities, "*giving them the freedom and flexibility to achieve their own ambitions*" (Department of Communities and Local Government 2012). Even so, given the contexts in which the Acts operate, resilience remains of key underlying importance albeit implicitly.

In January 2012 the British Standards Institute (BSI), the UK's National Standards Body (NSB), published its own standards for sustainable communities. BSI standards are designed for voluntary use and are not regulations. NSB standards are produced 'to make life simpler' and, as the NSB states, to increase reliability and effectiveness by providing a bridge between expert knowledge and experience. Essentially, standards are an agreed, repeatable way of doing something. A published document is invariably produced containing a technical specification which is expected to be used consistently as a rule, guideline, or definition. Based on the 8900 series of sustainable development management standards, the *BS 8904—Guidance for Sustainable Community Development* outlines 'a step by step' process by which sustainability may be embedded into the everyday lives of local communities. BS 8904 addresses issues of cost efficiency by seeking to reduce environmental impacts and to improve social relations broadly understood in terms of social cohesion and inclusivity. It also claims to lay out the grounds for a robust economic resilience which will mitigate risks relating to health, shelter and food.

National government departments, local authorities, higher education institutions, community-building organisations, planning officers, representatives from consumer groups, the National Health Service and a number of independent experts on sustainable development were involved in the iterative development process that lasted over a year. The process took into account related developments by the International Organisation for Standardization (ISO) and the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) but BS 8904 is the first standard of its kind and has been presented by the BSI as a valuable contribution to the professional 'toolkit' for sustainability. These standards are claimed to ensure quality as it would do for any other product, service or management system.

The drafting of BS 8904 was informed by five key 'principles':

1. That users would use the standards to identify the community it aims to serve as well as possible benefits and desirable outcomes.
2. That the embedding of sustainable development in everyday community life would be continually evolving and challenging.
3. That the process of building sustainable communities could be either grass roots or local authority led.
4. That some communities may wish to apply some form of verification to their achievements although the BSI is not empowered to recommend any specific auditor or certification system.
5. That a 'maturity matrix' would be important for assessing future progress, clarifying next steps and identifying future actions and the linking of sustainability principles with practice.

These principles were then extrapolated for ease of comprehension in tabular form (see Table 25.2).

Where academics may find the concepts of community and sustainable development difficult to pin down, the Guidance document sees the concept 'sustainable communities' as making sustainable development 'tangible' for the sustainable development process which may become rooted in a specific place or 'community of interest'. Such communities may be of any size and dimension but to benefit fully would most likely already possess some degree of social cohesiveness that would foster empowerment, participation, ownership, engagement, flexibility, adaptability and resilience. A flourishing local economy, enhanced quality of life, reduced ecological footprint and a greater degree of social and intergenerational equity than presently exists is all part of this standards package. Self reliance, self sufficiency and an ability to overcome vulnerability are additional qualities a sustainable community will need to develop to successfully deal with future uncertainties and BS 8904 will help achieve this in eight clear steps:

1. People coming together to agree core principles such as mutuality, sense of place, connectedness, resilience, etc.
2. Involving others and engaging stakeholders—individuals, community groups, and local organisations.

Table 25.2 Sustainable development maturity matrix (illustration/extract, *Source*: BSI 2012, pp. 17–18)

Principles of sustainable development	Key issues	Start up	Gaining momentum	Self-sustaining commitment	Leadership and innovation
Engagement and inclusivity	Facilitating as many as possible using good governance and democratic principles. Good decision making and governance will embrace peer review to challenge and steer progress	Informal and formal communications open to all interested parties in accessible format	Good organisational governance along accepted principles of local democracy	Full accountability for decision making and records kept on open access. Wider evaluation of sustainability e.g. community health and happiness	Engaging in national and international projects on sustainability. Relationships that will help perform critical friend and peer review roles
Environmental limits	Enhancing biodiversity, stewardship of natural resources	Identifying what parts of the environment are important for the community	Start projects that illustrate the history of the local natural environment through old maps. Start annual back garden wildlife surveys	Name local nature reserves and identify volunteer wardens	Build a partnership with a voluntary organisation and the local council to protect and enhance natural resources
Resilience and adaptability	Embedding collaboration so that it continues and adapts in times of pressure or complacency	Increasing diversity of job opportunities, protecting local services and reducing risk, e.g. flood control	Developing mixed energy sources in a policy that is owned by all	Developing renewable energy schemes locally e.g. HEP, ground water, wind, solar	Share energy sources between neighbours or community and economies of scale. Co-housing becomes a norm

3. Defining key issues including services such as health and lifelong learning, energy conservation measures, sustainable farming, and retrofitting homes.
4. Identifying community capability including existing human and material resources, assets as well as mapping out potential risks and hazards.
5. Planning and selecting options with the application of sustainable development principles, SMART (i.e. specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) objectives and pointers for building confidence.
6. Executing the plan including resource allocation and budgeting.
7. Evaluating and analysing agreed measures, outcomes and reviewing the continuing relevance of the community's vision, values and purpose in order to identify and implement any necessary future changes.
8. Learning and building community capability by acquiring new knowledge, skills and dispositions whereby future issues may be successfully addressed.

25.7 Conclusion

At the time of writing it is difficult to estimate the extent to which BS 8904 will be taken up by communities and local authorities. It clearly has some correspondence with the aims and purposes of the Transition Movement although standardisation is not something that always fits easily with sustainability practitioners at local level. It also has some resonance with organisations such as The Young Foundation in the UK whose work on building resilient communities has involved creating a community action toolkit and a Wellbeing and Resilience Measure (WARM) (Young Foundation 2008). In claiming to measure life satisfaction by capturing information on how well, or otherwise, a community is faring by mapping local assets such as self efficacy and resilience as well as vulnerabilities, WARM is largely about informing local decision-making. There are also other standards, measures, guides, toolkits and indicators in the sustainable and community development market place that individuals and groups may select. They all offer variations on a familiar theme and in some ways it is hard to choose between them. In fact, as guides they are probably best used heuristically and should be adapted to time and place. This means that although there may be an overlap in categories, concepts, steps, actions, advice, guidance and putative strategies on offer, it is really up to local communities to work things out for themselves. Indeed, this is what the Transition Movement in its many manifestations in the UK and elsewhere is actually doing. For Scott Cato and Hillier (2010) Transition towns and communities encompass the development of sustainable local economies and renewable energy capabilities but most importantly offer spaces for experimentation in sustainable living and opportunities. Only through experimentation will an alternative sustainable reality emerge.

However, the drive for standardisation continues. In October 2011 the French certification body AFNOR proposed a new CEN Technical Committee to develop a series of European Standards on Sustainable Development in Communities. The ISO was also busy throughout 2012 working on its own 'Guidance for Communities

Sustainable Development and Resilience' building on its earlier guidance work on incorporating sustainability in the development of standards. These community standards, as one would hope, focus on action that will be meaningful and are credibly within the power of individuals, community groups and organisations to do something about. Discussion of climate change or global warming rarely dominate these community based approaches as they so often do in the more city wide agendas and strategies or the mentalities of international bodies. However, this is not to say that climate change is of little regard for those wishing to build more sustainable communities, it is rather that social and economic issues weigh at least equally or more heavily. Anthropogenic climate change affects everyone and its effects are evident at all spatial scales. Low carbon initiatives are frequently referenced but the issues at community and neighbourhood levels are usually those that are perceived as immediately relevant to and fall clearly within the bounds of individual and community efficacy. One major task for sustainability practitioners, educators and others is therefore to connect the local with the global in ways which Massey (2003) suggested. Voluntary sustainability standards may help to some extent but awareness and recognition also comes with intuition and reflection on one's lived experience and the trying out of new and different thinking. Managerialist frameworks and toolkits sometimes invite some thinking 'out of the box' but this may be compromised by having to record any consequent outcomes of in the box. Thus box ticking, although sometimes derided, remains a too common experience. It is important to go beyond this and perhaps even standards and standardisation though they may indeed be a help, a guide and a support to get things moving. If there is one key recommendation emerging from this discussion then it is one shared with Rob Hopkins. It is important for the processes of sustainable community development to be creative and to empower. Standards and recipes are guides we need to fashion sympathetically to culture, heritage and ecology, to taste, preference and fulfilment. Think of Transition like cooking; and like cooking building sustainable communities requires some order, guidance and some clear stages. However, as writes Hopkins (2011, p. 90),

> There are all kinds of amazing ingredients we can assemble in order to make, say, a cake, and the creation of every cake will be unique, reflecting his or her abilities and culture, and the local resources available.

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