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GREEN ECONOMY AND DEVELOPMENT: TOWARDS PLACE MAKING AND COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY

Abstract:

This research explores an important yet under-investigated topic on Ontario's small urban municipalities (SUMs) concerning green economy and development in relation to local initiatives and strategies for framing sustainable communities in Ontario, Canada. The research interest is on place making as a function of initiatives by local economies concerning green economy and community sustainability. Canadian communities are adopting environmental action strategies to protect natural resources and the environment on issues associated with climate change, resource competition and rising demands for social, cultural and economic development. Though many municipal jurisdictions have put in place Environmental Action Plans (EAPs) and Economic Development Strategies (EDS), these often operate in parallel, not in concert with each other to consequently transform places into 'sustainable communities'. The research has three research objectives. The first objective is to increase understanding of the relationship between 'green economy,' sustainability and local development strategies for place making in sustainability context. The second is to contribute to an emerging research agenda on sustainability and economic prosperity of local communities. By understanding how environmental action plans and economic development strategies are linked toward sustainable development in SUMs, the tension between economic prosperity and sustainability can be clarified. Third, the research hopes to contribute toward policy research on local development and environmental sustainability in the medium- if not the long-term. The paper presents the results from the survey on green economy and development of environment and economic development professionals and practitioners from two case study SUMs in Ontario, Canada namely: Orillia and North Bay. The research adopted a 'sustainable community development model' as a framework to explore community efforts (local initiatives) as translated into local environmental strategies and priorities to pursue green development and sustainability. The research on SUMs involved a questionnaire survey and statistical assessment using Mann-Whitney U test and other quantitative spatial analysis. The aim of the survey was to determine how three components namely- green economy priorities, planning for green development and energy-related priorities are perceived by those engaged in the framing and implementing strategies, priorities and policies for building sustainable communities. The results from the survey indicated that local priorities and strategies for green economy and development are important components for sustainable community development. Not surprisingly, the survey found that key informants viewed the green economy priorities and strategies in their respective municipalities to be contributing towards community sustainability.

Keywords:

green economy, place making, community sustainability

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