

**Equity in Access to Local Services: Exploring the Impact of
Urban Form and the Role of Preferences**

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Abstract

Debates within the sustainable development agenda increasingly highlight the principle of intra-generational equity in promoting social sustainability. This research draws upon this principle to explore the role of urban forms in promoting social equity in access to local services. In the context of urban form and social sustainability, there has been relatively little research on the social dimension whilst precise meanings and agreement of what social equity is, in terms of how this may relate to urban forms, is unclear. However, whilst some claims support the view that mixed-use, high density compact urban forms provide better access to services and facilities, empirical evidence is lacking. A key objective of this research aims to test these claims by examining the relationship between different types of urban forms and service access issues. Through exploring the frequency of use of local services, the research uses this as an empirical method to confirm whether urban form factors or other factors, such as the role of individual choice and values, which can act to modify this relationship, influence equity in access. Geographical accessibility as well as local neighbourhood aspects is also examined. The research adopts a multi-methods approach, including secondary analysis of survey data and primary fieldwork involving case studies at the neighbourhood level. Findings reveal that aspects of urban form influence frequency of use, although other explanatory factors such as local social conditions, urban design factors, and individual choice can also have a large influence. Thus the role of urban forms in promoting social equity in access is not as simple as is sometimes portrayed, and depends a good deal on the social context.

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GLOSSARY

Case Study Areas	CSAs
Central Business District	CBD
CityForm Household Survey	CFS
Commission of the European Communities Green Paper on the Urban Environment	CEC
Culture & Sport Glasgow	C&SG
Department for Communities and Local Government	DCLG
Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions	DETR
Department for Transport	DfT
Department of Health	DoH
Department of the Environment	DoE
Department of Transport	DoT
Dwellings per Hectare	Dph
Edinburgh City Council	ECC
Joseph Rowntree Foundation	JRF
National Planning Policy Guidance	NPPG
New Economics Foundation	NEF
Office of Fair Trading	OFT
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister	ODPM
Ordnance Survey Mastermap	OS Mastermap
Planning Policy Guidance	PPG
Policy Action Team	PAT
Population per Hectare	Pph
Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey	PSE
Scottish Executive	SE
Scottish Household Survey	SHS
Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation	SIMD
Scottish Planning Policy	SPP
Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance	STAG
Social Exclusion Unit	SEU
Town & Country Planning Association	TCPA
United Nations	UN
Urban Taskforce	UTF