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Article

Policy Intelligence in Urban Ecology: Framework Analysis for Ecosystem Service Integration in Future City Planning

Yifeng Huang*

Sydney School of Architecture, Design and Planning, University of Sydney, NSW 2006, Australia.

***Corresponding author:** Yifeng Huang, 383855012@qq.com.

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Abstract: Purpose: This study develops and applies a comprehensive policy intelligence framework to assess ecosystem service integration effectiveness in urban planning, addressing the need for systematic evaluation approaches that enhance sustainable city development outcomes. **Methodology:** The research employs a three-dimensional assessment model encompassing information intelligence, goal-setting intelligence, and implementation intelligence dimensions. A qualitative policy document analysis methodology examines Melbourne's "Nature in the City" strategy as a comprehensive case study to demonstrate framework application and validation. Findings: Findings indicate that Melbourne's plan is good at collecting basic information and producing a clear strategy. It performs better in mapping ecosystem services and determining how to engage stakeholders. There are huge data analysis gaps, target measures, and adaptive management gaps, though. There are particular failures in predicting outcomes and measuring performance numerically. Conclusion: The policy intelligence frame effectively identifies some performance gaps in various areas. It provides useful recommendations for enhancing policies beyond general planning assessments. In order to effectively include ecosystem services, all components of intelligence need to be enhanced together rather than individually. Practical Implications: The frame provides urban planners and policymakers with a clear mechanism to develop more intelligent and adaptable means to incorporate ecosystem services. It facilitates the development of strong and sustainable urban futures by creating better policies and coordinating implementation.

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1. Introduction

The rapid urbanization of the world creates new challenges for ensuring ecological security in more and more complicated urban environments. Ecosystem services—such as climate regulation, air purification, and provision of green space—are vital for cities to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals [1]. Current trends of urban development continue to reflect the friction between an urban growth model that privileges more infrastructure and one that values ecological services. Quantitatively speaking, city streets often lack sufficient space for bioswales and pocket parks essential for stormwater management [2]. The disconnect between ecological science and urban funding necessitates new valuation methods for real-time assessment of ecosystem services [3].

Conventional city planning has focused on roads, high-rises, and shopping centers, with natural systems treated as optional add-ons [4]. This approach has resulted in fragmented ecosystem service provision, with planning agencies often recognizing missed opportunities only in retrospect [5]. The growing prominence of Nature-Based Solutions in European policy and directives suggests that a paradigm shift is occurring with regard to incorporating living networks as part of urban health strategies [6]. Urban areas now integrate rain gardens, urban forests, and flood meadows into project evaluation, while experimental initiatives such as ecological-protection redlines hold promise for reconciling development with conservation [7].

Artificial intelligence and high-performance computing present significant opportunities for enhancing ecosystem service understanding and policy development. AI-digital twin technology integration enables green smart cities with real-time monitoring and adaptive ecosystem management [8]. Artificial intelligence of things (AIoT) platforms facilitate data-driven environmental management for intelligent urban ecological systems [9]. AI applications in land use mapping have substantially improved ecosystem service estimation and prediction capabilities [10]. Data-driven smart sustainable cities represent crucial advancement in applying computational

methodologies that address both immediate and long-term planning objectives [11]. AI-enabled systems demonstrate particular effectiveness in environmental restoration and urban ecosystem management [12].

Despite technological advances, significant gaps persist in developing comprehensive policy intelligence frameworks. Current research lacks systematic approaches that integrate AI capabilities with ecosystem service valuation, particularly for adaptive management and multi-scale stakeholder engagement. While smart eco-city models provide strategic insights [13], operationalizing policy intelligence within existing planning processes remains insufficiently understood. Research on spatial function zones reveals the complexity of balancing multiple ecosystem services, highlighting needs for sophisticated policy tools that navigate trade-offs while maintaining system resilience [14]. This paper addresses these gaps by developing and applying a policy intelligence framework for ecosystem service integration, using Melbourne's "Nature in the City" strategy to demonstrate how intelligent policy design enhances integration effectiveness in future city planning [15].

2. Methodology

2.1 Analytical Framework Development

The evolution of the analytical framework is centered on the definition of policy intelligence as the systematic capacity of urban planning policies to effectively integrate ecosystem services through enhanced information processing, formulating strategic goals, and adaptive implementation measures. Policy intelligence extends beyond traditional policy analysis, encompassing informed decision-making and adaptable management systems for addressing complex urban challenges. This concept addresses the issue of reconciling various ecosystem services in city planning, which must accommodate the construction of infrastructure and the preservation of the environment.

The three-dimensional model of assessment allows us to comprehend policy intelligence in three interlinked areas: information intelligence, goal-setting intelligence, and implementation intelligence. Information intelligence encompasses comprehensive data collection, sophisticated impact prediction techniques, and

verification of monitoring systems that guide ecosystem services. Goal-setting intelligence is concerned with developing strategic objectives, establishing quantifiable goals, and altering policies as situations evolve. Implementation intelligence examines how effectively groups collaborate, the way resources are utilized, and management measures that ensure policies are enhanced on the basis of actual practices and monitoring feedback.

These three components interact with each other. Information intelligence provides the data that goal-setting intelligence requires. This enables implementation intelligence to convert strategic objectives into actual action. The structure emphasizes the value of each component and demonstrates how all of them are required for improved ecosystem services. It also offers a mechanism to assess everything unambiguously, yet still flexible enough to suit various urban planning approaches and environmental conditions.

2.2 Policy Document Analysis

Policy document analysis is a straightforward procedure that examines policy texts and guidelines for indications of effective policy in projects involving ecosystem services. The procedure applies specific coding categories derived from the three-dimensional evaluation framework: information processing, goal setting, and plan implementation. This identifies and evaluates indications of effective policy across all three dimensions, making the analysis systematic and equitable. The content analysis examines both explicit policy statements and latent design features that reveal the utilization of good policy, including the utilization of data, goal-setting methods, and involvement of stakeholders.

Melbourne Strategy Document Review examines closely the “Nature in the City” strategy. The strategy seeks to link city services with caring for wildlife, enhancing ecosystems, and engaging people with nature. The document review involves close verification of vision statements, policy objectives, implementation procedures, and monitoring progress. This provides information on how the policy operates in three overall areas. The review verifies how effectively the strategy utilizes data, specifies objectives, and aligns actions with those objectives. It also identifies where policy information is applied and where it can be improved.

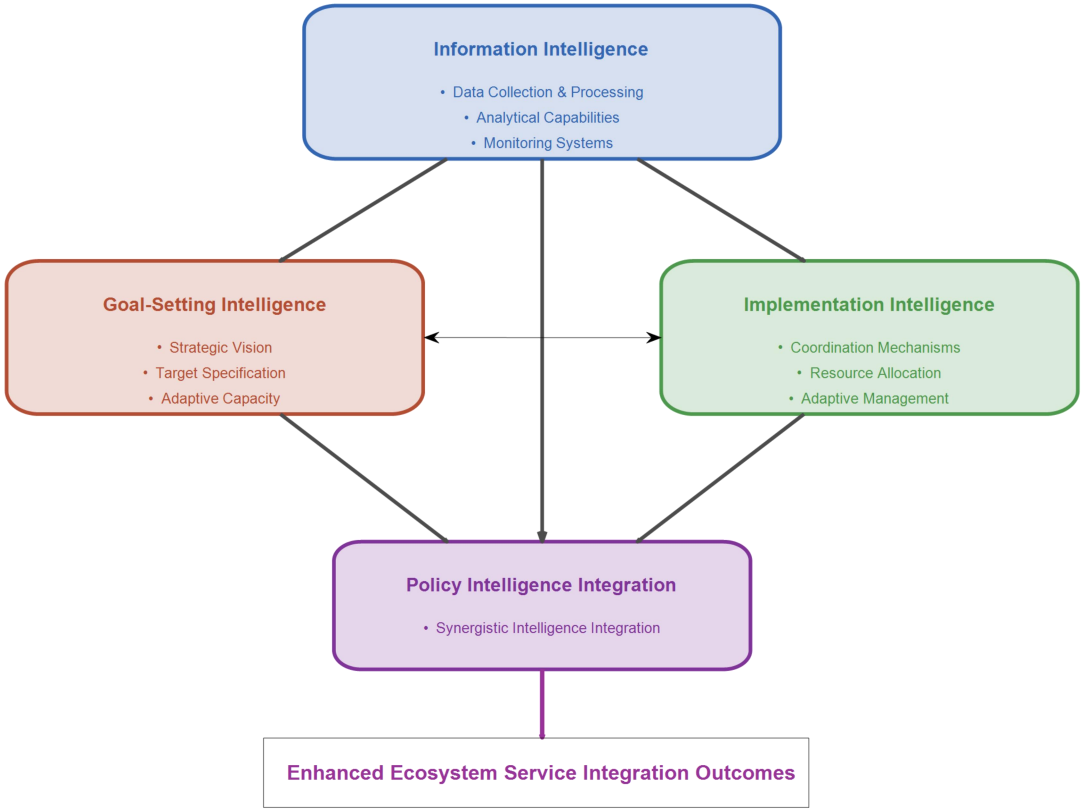
2.3 Framework Application Design

The framework application design employs a single case study to examine in some detail the application of policy intelligence in policy frameworks for Melbourne's urban planning. It also provides valuable insights for other ecosystem services projects. The approach examines the appearance of policy intelligence ideas in actual policy frameworks, presenting successful approaches and persistent issues.

Qualitative evaluation criteria provide precise criteria to consider each aspect of policy intelligence. The standards consider the design and content of the policies. They also examine how information, setting goals, and implementation interact and evolve in management. The three components of policy intelligence are related and collaborate to form effective policies for integrating ecosystem services, as illustrated in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework for Policy Intelligence Assessment



3. Results

3.1 Policy Intelligence Framework Construction

The model provides a comprehensive framework for the application of ecosystem services in urban planning. Information intelligence refers to the comprehensive data collection, effective analysis, and robust monitoring systems for ecosystem services. Goal-setting intelligence examines the capability of policy systems to formulate a vision, set clear goals, and develop the capacity for adaptation to evolving city conditions. Implementation intelligence examines the effectiveness of interaction among different groups, the use of resources, and how the management learns to adapt, which results in constant policy improvement. The model illustrates the interaction of these three components in a feedback system. Within the feedback system, information intelligence contributes to goal-setting, goal-setting intelligence offers assistance for implementation, and implementation experience generates new information. This results in a responsive and adaptive policy system that is effective in addressing challenging problems on integrating urban ecosystem services.

3.2 Melbourne "Nature in the City" Strategy Assessment

The information intelligence analysis reveals that Melbourne's "Nature in the City" strategy demonstrates significant strengths in ecosystem service mapping and baseline data collection, particularly through comprehensive documentation of 77,000 urban trees (as of 2023) and detailed ecosystem assessments. As shown in **Figure 2a**, the strategy achieves high performance in data collection (8/10) and monitoring systems (7/10), but demonstrates limitations in advanced analytics (6/10), risk assessment (4/10), and predictive capabilities (3/10). The analysis identifies significant gaps in predictive modeling and risk assessment sophistication regarding climate change impacts.

Furthermore, goal-setting intelligence evaluation demonstrates comprehensive vision for biodiversity conservation and human-nature connectivity. **Figure 2b** illustrates the strategy excels in vision clarity (8.5/10) and strategic alignment (8/10), but shows substantial weaknesses in target specification (5/10) and measurability (4.5/10). The evaluation identifies critical opportunities for improvement in quantitative ecosystem service targets and performance indicators. Finally, implementation intelligence review indicates the strategy incorporates multiple coordination mechanisms including stakeholder engagement and cross-sector collaboration. **Figure 2c** reveals stakeholder engagement demonstrates high complexity (8/10) with moderate effectiveness (6.5/10), while resource allocation

shows low effectiveness (4/10). The review identifies significant gaps in enforcement mechanisms and adaptive management protocols.

3.3 Framework Insights and Implications

The strengths and gaps identification reveals that Melbourne's strategy demonstrates considerable policy intelligence capability, particularly in information base development and strategic vision formulation, while highlighting critical opportunities for enhancement in analytical sophistication, target specification, and implementation mechanism strengthening. **Figure 2d** presents the overall framework application summary, showing current performance levels of 6.5/10 for information intelligence, 6/10 for goal-setting intelligence, and 5.5/10 for implementation intelligence, compared to target performance levels of 8.5/10, 8/10, and 7.5/10 respectively. The strategy's comprehensive approach to ecosystem service integration provides a solid foundation for urban ecological planning, but would benefit significantly from enhanced policy intelligence application across all three dimensions to achieve optimal ecosystem service integration outcomes.

Improvement recommendations focus on enhancing policy intelligence through integration of advanced analytical tools, development of measurable ecosystem service targets, and strengthening of implementation coordination mechanisms. Specific recommendations include establishing real-time monitoring systems for ecosystem service performance, developing quantitative targets for canopy cover, species diversity, and air quality improvement, and creating robust enforcement mechanisms for ecosystem service protection policies. Additionally, the framework application suggests implementing adaptive management protocols that enable systematic policy adjustment based on monitoring feedback, stakeholder input, and changing urban ecological conditions, thereby creating a more intelligent and responsive policy system for ecosystem service integration that can achieve the target performance levels illustrated in **Figure 2d**.

As illustrated in **Figure 2**, the comprehensive analysis demonstrates Melbourne's strategy performance across all policy intelligence dimensions, with **Figure 2a** revealing information intelligence gaps, **Figure 2b** highlighting goal-setting weaknesses, **Figure 2c** showing implementation challenges, and **Figure 2d** providing an integrated performance overview that guides targeted improvement strategies for enhanced ecosystem service integration effectiveness.

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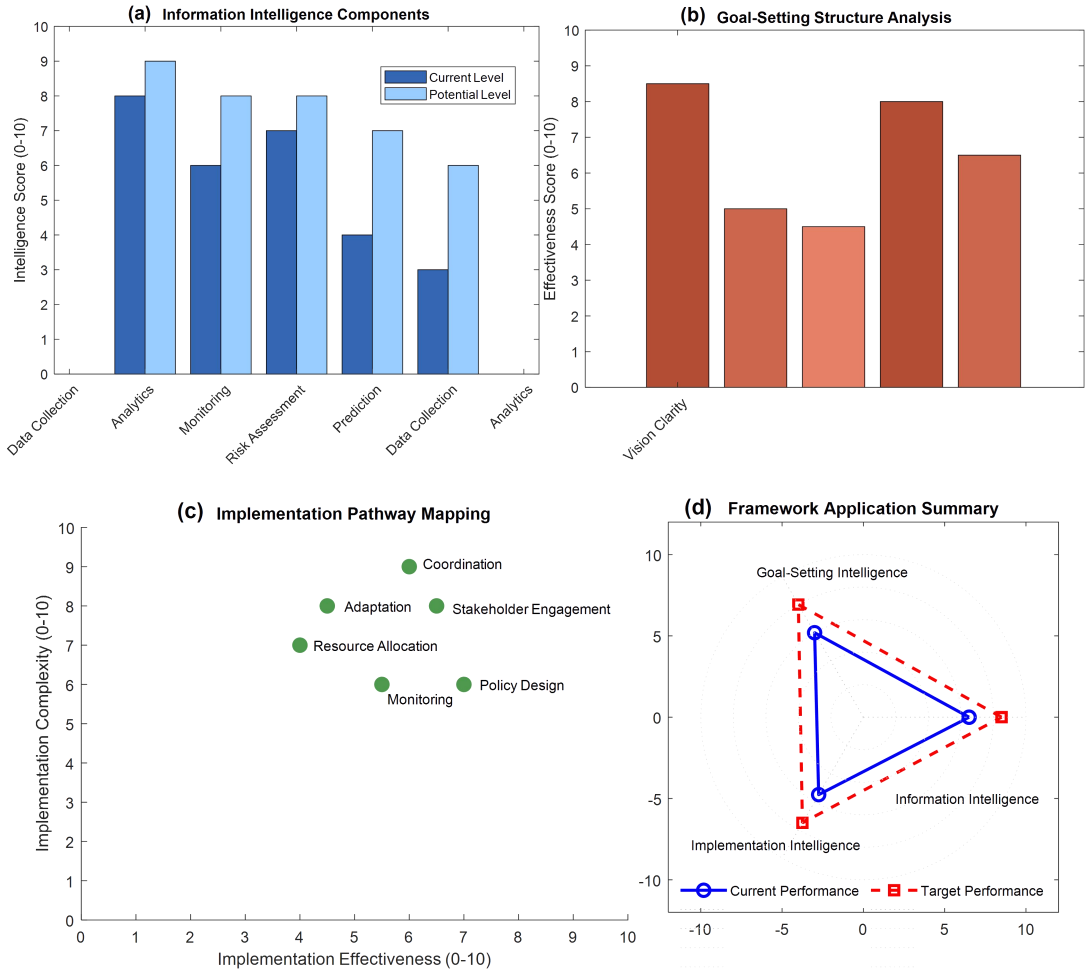
Figure 2

Melbourne Strategy Policy Intelligence Analysis



4. Discussion

Policy intelligence in the management of ecosystem services is superior to conventional city planning practices. Policy intelligence applies structured data management, more precise goal-setting practices, and adaptive actions to manage the complexity of city ecosystems. Recent advancements in artificial intelligence and smart city ecological planning indicate that intelligent policy systems enhance precision in ecosystem service estimation and decision-making [5]. Evidence shows that policy intelligence-enhanced decision support tools significantly improve inter-agency coordination for ecosystem services. Policy intelligence systems link

ecological science to city planning better by enhancing information processing, making goal-setting more transparent, and structuring actions.

Framework application analysis reveals that the policy intelligence assessment model is applicable across various city environments while remaining comprehensive and valuable. The approach to utilizing ecosystem services based urban ecological carrying capacity assessment in city decision-making reveals that structured policy intelligence techniques are significant in many urban planning scenarios [9]. Nature-based solutions and sustainable urban planning in European environmental policy reveal how the concepts of policy intelligence can function efficiently in various government mechanisms and regulations [6].

Technologies in smart city ecology have the potential to significantly enhance policy intelligence with artificial intelligence and real-time monitoring tools. The application of artificial intelligence in land cover and land use mapping assists in estimating ecosystem services, illustrating how sophisticated tools facilitate easier processing of policy intelligence data. For technology to be effectively employed, proper data management guidelines and a results orientation toward ecosystem services are necessary. Implementation challenges include resource constraints, institutional coordination difficulties, and stakeholder engagement complexities. The comprehensive analysis of green stormwater infrastructure ecosystem services highlights implementation challenges associated with balancing multiple ecosystem service functions within complex urban planning frameworks [15]. Study limitations encompass the single case study approach and reliance on policy document analysis, suggesting future research directions including comparative case studies and longitudinal implementation analysis. These findings have significant implications for future sustainable city planning by demonstrating how policy intelligence frameworks can enhance ecosystem service integration effectiveness.

5. Conclusion

This study constructed and applied a comprehensive policy intelligence framework to investigate the integration of ecosystem services into urban governance (UG) planning. It shows that careful attention to information management, goal setting, and coordination can improve the outcome in making sustainable cities. Analysis of Melbourne's "Nature in the City" policy reveals that ecosystem service

integration policy is strong in data collection and strategic planning but weak in analysis, operationalizing goals, and adaptive management. This three-dimensional policy intelligence framework effectively identified deficiencies in information processing, target planning, and implementation, and it offered useful suggestions for improving policy beyond routine planning review. The framework showed that real integration of ecosystem services cannot be achieved by isolated enhancement but rather requires the simultaneous strengthening of multiple policy domains. This highlights the importance of policy intelligence in urban planning.

These results deepen our understanding of policy intelligence about urban ecology and provide some suggestions for the application of ecosystem services in more appropriate ways to address difficult issues in building sustainable cities. Policy intelligence provides an effective framework for identifying and improving urban environmental policy. It provides a transparent way to measure success in integrating ecosystem services, useful in different urban planning contexts. Future studies may also need to examine other cities, long-term usage, and stakeholder feedback to assess how the framework performs and becomes more advanced with policy intelligence. These results have implications for policymakers, scientists, and urban planners in seeking better approaches to maximize ecosystem services. Ecosystem services application can facilitate the transition to sustainable and resilient cities, especially considering such challenges as climate change and urbanization.

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