

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AS POLITICAL GOVERNANCE

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ABSTRACT

In the analysis and planning of economic development, metaphors obscure the crucial relation between development policy and political governance. Beneath this shroud of "value-free" development, it becomes exceedingly difficult for public officials to justify the public's political interests in creating jobs for local residents, boosting tax revenues, and decreasing disparities between central cities and suburbs.

This paper advances a new metaphor -- economic development as "an exercise in political governance" -- as an anchoring referent for conceptualizing politically-relevant allocational consequences. Three counter-arguments against treating development in this way are anticipated and addressed: those that view development, metaphorically, as "problem-solving," as "running a business," and as "building a growth machine." While each counter-argument has merit, each is demonstrated ineffective at clarifying the purpose of development within the broader scheme of political governance. However, by viewing development as "an exercise in political governance," we are reminded that the developmental enterprise could not play a more consequential or immediate role in the governance of the American metropolis.

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INTRODUCTION

For many, metaphors are social constructs (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Behn, 1992; Fox & Miller, 1995, 1996; Morcol, 1997), indispensable to all modes of discourse. They direct our thinking along certain paths; they touch people and crystallize understandings within, and among, them -- not through hype or fad, but personally, through a kind of positive psychological contagion among interested learners. Their understandings are evidenced through each individual's personal experiences, such that certain metaphors make sense of certain aspects of everyday life; they simply ring true.

There is, however, a problem that endures with their use in the analysis and planning of economic development: metaphors (particularly those that suggest the development process is "politically-neutral") obscure the crucial relation between development policy and political governance. This obscurity makes it exceedingly difficult for public officials to justify (to private investors) the public's political interests; interests which often include the creation of jobs for local residents, the boosting of tax revenues, and efforts to decrease disparities between central cities and suburbs. Absent careful examination of the relation between development and governance, development is conducted under a shroud of what Logan and Molotch (1987) call "value-free development." Beneath this shroud, the more technical questions of development take precedent over those regarding governance by asking: When should tax abatements be used? What kinds of new jobs will be created, and at what rates of pay? Who should get the jobs, city residents or suburbanites? Who should pay for development? At some point, each of these questions deserve our full attention. Providing them with the attention they deserve, however, requires prior consideration of the purpose of development within the broader scheme of governance.

Admittedly, discussions of political purpose are frequently more abstract and appear far duller than those involving flashy tax concessions. However, both, are unavoidable. Concessions, as a case in point, in the form of property tax abatements and government loans constitute indirect taxes on educational systems and capital budgets, in that both draw from the same revenue sources; because of

this, additional tax concessions will only serve, at some point, to impair an area's long-term economic competitiveness (Wolman, Hanson, Hill, Howland & Ledebur, 1992). For this, and several other such reasons, serious discussions of abatements, loans and other developmental techniques appear wholly inseparable from those of political purpose.

Failure to observe this inseparability may account for much of the confusion that presently pervades the field of local economic development. We are engulfed by an abundance of techniques, but suffer from a paucity of planning; we eagerly embrace any idea hailed as an innovation, though rarely can we say what we are thereby trying to accomplish. Entire schools have been founded on little more than a commitment to continuous growth, despite the apparent fact that development produces losers and winners, with allocational consequences that are, often, both salient and embarrassing (Sanders & Stone, 1987).

While recognizing how economic development shapes much of the American local government landscape, metaphor is here used as an anchoring referent for conceptualizing different allocational consequences. It is used this way because metaphors are generally capable of embodying powerful, condensed symbolic meaning (Abrams, 1988). They possess tangible particularism, such as with language and history, and durable temporality, as with paradigm and story. This places the metaphor in a more meaningful position as an anchoring referent for political and social change (under a system of government such as ours) than discrete experiences such as linguistic statements or historical events, or looser abstractions such as paradigms or stories (Fox & Miller, 1995, 1996; Morcol, 1997).[1]

The new metaphor encourages us to view economic development as "an exercise in political governance" -- though clearly, the exercise is not a simple one. Thus, three counter-arguments against treating development in this way are, perhaps, more easily anticipated than addressed: those that would encourage us to view development, metaphorically, as "problem-solving," as "running a business," and as "building a growth machine" (Bingham & Mier, 1993). The counter-arguments are presented in tandem and the basic implications of each are contrasted with those of the new metaphor. Ultimately, by viewing development as "an exercise in political governance," we are reminded that the developmental enterprise could not play a more consequential or immediate role in the governance of the metropolis. What this article does not offer are simple solutions or pat answers; it does, however, promote a reorientation in our understanding of the constant interplay between the economic and the political, and a renewed hopefulness about changing the day-to-day circumstances of the city through development. It is, then, to a

discussion of the importance of language and metaphor in development policy analysis and planning that I now turn.

LANGUAGE AND METAPHOR IN PUBLIC POLICY ANALYSIS AND PLANNING

Over the past several decades, there has been a steady decline in the positivist hegemony over social science scholarship in general. Throughout this decline, language has lost its neutral status and has, itself, become problematic (Nelson, Megill & McCloskey, 1987; Walton, 1989; Rein & Schon, 1993; Schmidt, 1993). Within the postpositivist aftermath, language has become recognized as a medium, a system of signification through which actors not only describe, but create, or as some would say, "construct," their world (Fox & Miller, 1995, 1996; Morcol, 1997).

Thus, Giandomenico Majone (1989: 1) begins his recent Evidence, Argument, and Persuasion in the Policy Process by reminding us that "as politicians know only too well but social scientists too often forget, public policy is made of language. Whether in written or oral form, argument is central in all stages of the policy process." The importance of language and its related problems are witnessed, as well, by Deborah Stone's (1988) Policy Paradox and Political Reason, wherein we are reminded that public policymaking inherently involves discursive struggles over the criteria used to classify subjects and objects, and over the appropriate definition of problems -- especially those related to public affairs. Within these struggles, we find that numbers, causal stories (Hummel, 1991), and linguistic tools such as metaphors (Abrams, 1988; Behn, 1992) are far from politically-neutral; rather, they are used intelligently and selectively to persuade others, in the present case, that local economic development is more like one thing than another.

Significantly, the way in which the developmental enterprise is received or accepted linguistically has important implications for how policymakers are inclined to answer politically-sensitive questions (Hummel, 1991; Behn, 1992; Schmidt, 1993) -- those, for instance, that ask how the benefits and burdens of development (direct and indirect) should be dispersed. For several urban scholars, the mainstream of development policy thought and theory has become more than simply inclined in this regard -- instead, it seems to have become comfortably persuaded -- that the interests of some groups are, somehow, more important than those of others; further, that losses are either inevitable, negligible, or more simply tolerable for some groups than for others (Swanstrom, 1985; Krumholz, 1991; Mier, 1993; Beauregard,

1993).[2]

The following section lays out the substance of the new metaphor, how development differs significantly from other areas of urban policy, and why some of the field's most influential writers have argued that it has a "unique capacity." Unlike other areas of urban policy (e.g., redistributive, allocative), economic development receives substantial support (both financial and political) from local government (Swanstrom, 1985; Kantor & David, 1988; Wolman & Spitzley, 1996), the consequences of which are, indeed, considerable. So much so, that, whether it is viewed as such or not, it plays a pivotal role in the effective governance of the metropolis. The new metaphor takes seriously this pivotal role and the existence of this latent, strategic power. I now turn to the substance of this metaphor, here denoted "economic development as an exercise in political governance."

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AS POLITICAL GOVERNANCE: SUBSTANTIVE CONSIDERATIONS

The primary term *governance* is here used in a broad sense to connote steering, as suggested by Plato's metaphor, the "ship of state." Governance means keeping a straight course or a smooth operation, in this case, for the long-term good of urban society as a whole. It involves setting strategic priorities, and opting for one interim or long-term goal over another -- which is in saying 'yes' to some people, some arrangements, some projects, and 'no' to others.

Political governance is understood, in turn, as a democratically organized system of long-term guidance or steering that relies considerably on the informal arrangements that, as several researchers have noted (Swanstrom, 1985; Elkin, 1987; Kantor & David, 1988; Stone, 1989; De Leon, 1992), surround and complement the formal institutions of governmental authority. These arrangements include locally elected officials, business and financial leaders, and the institutional capacities they control. Ideally, these actors exercise public authority, leadership, and representation of the interests of all, rather than of some citizens, and establish coherent patterns of policymaking over time (Elkin, 1987; Stone, 1989). In following the logic of the "political governance" metaphor, economic or community development corporations and other such mechanisms service the goals of the governance system to the extent they are held accountable to, and draw their legitimacy from, those citizens who are subject to their authority.

Economic development as "political governance" does not here equate with rule in a command-and-control fashion. It is instead about mobilizing efforts to cope and adapt to political and economic changes in the environment. Informal arrangements are ways of bolstering and guiding the formal capacity to act. Though this enhanced capacity occasionally results in unexpected outcomes, these arrangements serve to enhance the long-term welfare of citizens, to meet their common needs, and to further distributive justice -- not necessarily because this is the will of the majority (because in some instances, it may not be), but because this is a moral obligation of government in furthering the tenets of democracy. By distinguishing economic development as "political governance," the metaphor speaks to the process by which the "ship of state" is guided, or how development decisions are to serve in the governance process (Wamsley, 1984; Rohr, 1986; Wamsley, et al., 1990; Warren, Rosentraub & Weschler, 1992; Wolman, Hanson, Hill & Ledebur, 1992). And, by subjecting the development policymaking process to the costly contingencies of democratic government, elected officials and decision processes are ultimately perceived as legitimate.[3]

More importantly, an outlook is fostered that identifies economic development as an exercise in "governance" rather than in "management" (Rohr, 1986; Wamsley, et al., 1990). The past several decades serve to evidence, ironically, that the development enterprise has borrowed from private-sector management's concepts, techniques, metaphors, and even its negative attitudes toward governmental authority (Mier & Fitzgerald, 1991; Beauregard, 1993) -- even while this enterprise has come to rely increasingly on the political authority and financial support of government. Simultaneously, as we approach the beginning of a new millennium, the public's faith in the use of development subsidies to promote economic growth seems to have declined precipitously (Jones & Bachelor, 1984; Swanstrom, 1985; Barnekov & Rich, 1989).[4]

The Need for Political Answers and The Response from the Literature

Even more troubling has been that the literature, like the profession itself, has all too often reacted to such challenges by retiring into a defensive posture and by formulating more "technical solutions" (Luke, Ventriss, Reed & Reed, 1988; Kane & Sand, 1988; Blakeley, 1989; Bingham, Hill & White, 1990; Lasser, 1990; Sharp, 1990) -- even though the field's professional wing has become increasingly vocal about its need for nontechnical answers to political and moral questions involving conflict, agenda setting, legitimacy, inclusion, and so on (Mier, 1993; Beauregard, 1993). The most telling consequence of this has, perhaps, been a tendency within the practice to mask normative judgments with seemingly objective

analyses, and to trivialize political questions of the good from development policy analysis (Mier, 1993; Beauregard, 1993). As a result, elected officials are often urged to "leave economic development to the experts," or to just refrain from "micromanaging" developmental affairs altogether. Some admit that, in their professional capacities, they have attempted to shape economic development policy through democratic processes, and have been considered, somehow, "less than legitimate" (Molotch, 1976).

While, from a broader perspective, the city's capacity to provide stability for itself may be beyond its immediate control (Peterson, 1981; Kantor & David, 1988), its political influence may still be significant (Clavel, 1986; Stone, 1989; Elkin, 1987; Clavel & Wiewel, 1991; Mier, 1993; Krumholz & Clavel, 1994) -- particularly where this influence is used strategically, for instance, as "an exercise in political governance." Clarence Stone (1989: 4), one of the strongest proponents of this view, refers to government's significant influence as its "power over" the development process; he understands this influence as considerable and thus argues that public policymakers should treat the development policy areas differently because it, alone, has the capacity to nurture norms of responsibility toward the "public interest." Developmental plans and programs may, for instance, be linked with those that are basically redistributive, in an effort to nurture such norms. The point, however, is that the developmental arena carries with it a financial capacity that makes these other such "public interest" efforts viable.

Stephen Elkin (1987) makes much of the same point in City and Regime in the American Republic, where, in addition, he explains that economic development and the institutional arrangements that support it are not only capable, but are principally important for their role in organizing citizens around the common good of, in his language, the "commercial republic." Todd Swanstrom (1985: 5) would agree. He explains that "growth politics should not be seen as some form of economic determinism." And, Wolman and Spitzley (1996: 146), in a comprehensive review of the literature covering the politics of local economic development, conclude that "although business interests are likely to be strong nearly everywhere, local governments may have some discretion to adopt policies not immediately favorable to business (particularly in communities with high percentages of professionals, renters, and young people and in which there are active neighborhood groups), business is not always a dominant or major player, and does not always win." The literature is not in complete agreement. As these authors suggest, however, there is a growing body of evidence to support the premise of active elected officials, those that use their influence to affect or to specify important *accountability mechanisms*.

A comprehensive city financing plan or "civic vision" might, for instance, serve as one such mechanism. It may lay the foundation for any proposed tax subsidy or off-budget allocation of resources. Local and state governments are usually precise in recording, reporting and monitoring all payments received and expenditures made, but for the sake of conserving the fiscal resources of state and local governments, more governments may need to keep records on tax abatements (Krumholz, 1991). This information may, in turn, be used to determine the costs and benefits of offering such abatements and the circumstances under which they should be offered at all (Krumholz, 1991). By following the logic of the "political governance" metaphor, and focusing narrowly on policymaking processes and accountability mechanisms, public officials may initiate procedural changes that may, in turn, have substantive outcomes. The following section introduces those procedural considerations that flow from the notion of political governance.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AS POLITICAL GOVERNANCE: PROCEDURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Insofar as process is the *sine qua non* of democracy, one might ask: Which developmental processes are most important within the broader process of democratic political governance? Here, an exact answer might vary among local political systems and imperfections in making this determination are not easily detected. However, considerable effort is almost always devoted to ensuring that decision processes are *perceived as legitimate* by interested parties. Four standards are here emphasized as being critical to the political governance of local developmental affairs. Each of these should be familiar to students of politics and public policymaking:

Meaningful Public Participation

The term participation refers to the quality of being involved, of having a chance to discuss and react to development policies while they are still being formulated. This standard is satisfied where public-private officials, or their designates, actively seek and provide meaningful opportunities for interested individuals (rather than interest groups) to participate in the policymaking process (Mayo, 1960; Stivers, 1990). Here, citizens should be permitted to record their values by commenting on whether or not the city should proceed with a given project at all. Public participation is implied by one of the fundamental canons of democratic theory -- popular control by those who are directly affected by public decisions, and by those whose assent appears critical to the acceptability of those decisions.

The existence and extent of these liberties, as manifested in the "freedom to oppose," is perhaps the most crucial test of the extent of democratic policymaking. The participation standard clarifies the extent to which a development project is presented as a *fait accompli*. It is emphasized here both as a right of citizens to knowledge about their government (as evidenced by passage of the Freedom of Information Act and other Sunshine legislation at the federal and state levels), and as a necessary condition for the development of a conscientious citizenry, one that is able to exercise its rights intelligently.

Accountable Policymaking Structures

Accountability is always a key concern whenever public funds are at stake. Public monies always have a unique legal status to protect them from being abused by officials, public, or private. Its normative basis is also established in democratic theory. Accountability reflects the need, from time to time, to alter certain parts of, or parties in, the policymaking process. In order to determine which part or party needs to be altered, interested parties need to be able to trace, as closely as possible, the origin of certain decisions, particularly those to do with the granting of tax abatements, tax incremental financing, and industrial revenue bonds.[5] More importantly, they need to know that developmental policymakers and their decisions are answerable and subject to a legal authority which may exact redress in case of default. Usually, at all levels of government, there are several such mechanisms for correcting unaccountable situations.[6]

Civic Vision

The term vision is widely used in business today; however, as with most popular terms, its meaning has become distorted. Here, vision denotes an explicit, broadly-shared image of a city's political-economic character, and of what that city should strive to become (i.e., a financial center, a vacation spot, an entertainment capital, etc). Powerful visions, like powerful metaphors, provide graphic images and a basic ideology for understanding and guiding a city's discretionary choices. Visions may help determine the capital markets within which a city may intend to compete, and its specific plans for establishing or sustaining a favorable position within those markets. Even though plans are incapable of determining success, visions remain useful because where they are successfully established, they reinforce changes in institutions, classes of wealth, and in local systems of power. Unless various local interests (i.e., corporate, community, homeowners, small businesses, etc.) are as "unitary" as pluralists suspect

(Peterson, 1981) there may be considerable room for competing visions.

Procedural Legitimacy

The point, thusfar, has not been that participation or accountability should be sacrificed to vision. Nor has it been that any of the previous standards should always receive top priority. The important point here has to do with the way in which tensions between these standards are handled over time. While specific situations may lend themselves moreso to the expression of certain standards over others, the reasonable expression of all four standards will certainly, over time, have an important impact on the perceived legitimacy of the policymaking process.

Here, legitimacy is associated with acceptable procedures -- and by implication, with accountable structures within governing institutions -- rather than with any particular goal or outcome. Moreover, legitimacy goes further than mere conformity to the law. It refers to the general satisfaction of citizens that policymaking processes adhere to the morally or politically accepted standards of their communities. While legitimacy will inevitably incorporate some substantive concerns as well, the initial focus should be on the importance of developing a proper set of procedures as a concern unto itself. Once this is done, the necessary groundwork is laid for entertaining any additional substantive concerns (Gormley & Peters, 1987: 155-57; Warren, et al., 1992:).

Considering the landscape of democratic theory, the above standards are perhaps quite minimal. They do not, for example, require the direct consent of all voters; they do not insist on proportional representation; nor do they presume which substantive goals or outcomes are necessarily in the "public interest" (Goodsell, 1990). By keeping these standards to a minimum, we allow local policymakers to use their own experience in determining whether, in consideration of their community's recent experiences with growth and governance, additional standards are necessary. Typically, these standards will assume a richer, more detailed definition through the habit of discretionary choices made within the structure of democratic values and with the intent of promoting the "common good" (e.g., the enhancement of life, health, security, jobs, income, education, housing, recreation, and the like). It is this possibility that implicates the "political governance" metaphor and its accompanying procedures as appropriate heirs to the task of guiding the practice of local economic development -- though clearly such an inheritance does not go unchallenged.

THREE COUNTERARGUMENTS

In Theories of Local Economic Development (1993), co-editors, Richard Bingham and Robert Mier attempted to synthesize seven metaphors (representing more than fifty inter-disciplinary theories, models, and case studies) of the local economic development process. Metaphors offer different views, but insofar as they represent fundamentally different values, they made any attempt at synthesizing them impossible. Thus, the authors were forced to revise their initial objective and to settle for a less ambitious task: that of identifying certain metaphors that, as objectively as possible, would join the scholastic body of economic development research to the actual practice (Bingham & Mier, 1993). Their intent was not to prescribe an ideal approach, to postulate what might be accomplished under the auspices of development, or to identify the most efficient approach to development, but to simply describe what actually happens. Three of their seven metaphors are most indicative of the contemporary practice of development. These dominant metaphors frame development as "problem solving," as "running a business," and as "building a growth machine."

For these writers, these metaphors are understood as touching readers and as crystallizing new understandings within, and among, them -- not through hype or fad, and not "strategically" -- but more personally, through a kind of psychological contagion among thoughtful learners. These understandings are presumably evidenced within each individual's personal experiences with development such that these three metaphors make sense of certain aspects of development -- they simply, in other words, ring true.

The authors hope that, as these understandings are shared with others, they will bring about a more critical and integrative mass of developmental thought, inspiring scholars, practitioners, and their respective communities to work together towards institutionalizing some of the more "progressive" professional efforts that, in many cities, have already begun (Clavel, 1986; Mier, 1993). Otherwise, efforts to manage development with an eye towards ensuring collaborative decisionmaking or distributive justice may be completely disrupted, or worse overturned, by subsequent, less progressive, administrations. For reasons discussed later, the three dominant metaphors of development have not oriented policymakers toward collaborative decisionmaking, civic vision, distributive justice, or toward other types of "progressive" efforts, as discussed by Pierre Clavel (1986). The three dominant metaphors of development, listed below, may help explain some of the reasons for this.

Economic Development as "Problem Solving"

The first such metaphor views local economic development as "problem solving," the essence of which is to simplify, "frame," (Rein & Schon, 1993) or, in Herbert Simon's (1976) terms, to "satisfice." From this point of reference, the development enterprise succumbs to the imperatives of bounded rationality -- thriving, as it were, on models and formulas that, in turn, invite the analyst to discard that which cannot be measured, known, or understood. Although they are now outdated, the transportation cost minimization models are excellent examples of bounded rationality, along with present developmental strategies to "target" those industries that seem to thrive in certain geographic locations (Bingham & Mier, 1993).

After defining the problem, the emphasis of this model shifts to problem solving and the selection of instrumentally rational means. Here, there is often a pattern of uniform blindness, owing to a tendency to reframe the developmental agenda such that certain problems and certain institutional responses (i.e., those that further private interests) are systematically favored over others (Elkin, 1987; Beauregard, 1993). As a result, the metaphor serves to legitimize only part of that which is fundamental to an understanding of the development process that is consistent with our democratic norms and expectations. Simplification, in this way, masks political judgments with seemingly objective analysis; it serves to obscure government's legal requirements, to neutralize political opposition, and to delegitimize the public's practical interests in creating jobs for local residents, in boosting tax revenues, in decreasing disparities between central cities and suburbs, or in the meaningful inclusion of women, minority, and community-based development interests. All of which reaches its fullest expression where, with the next metaphor, local economic development is conceived even more narrowly in business terms.

Economic Development as "Running a Business"

The "running a business" metaphor exemplifies that which Beauregard (1993) refers to as the "mainstream" model of local economic development practice, what Marris (1987) describes as the "corporatist" model, and what Elkin (1987) calls the "entrepreneurial" approach to development. The logic of this metaphor proceeds from the correct observation that private capital within the intergovernmental marketplace is mobile, as a matter of law, and that a city's capacity to provide stability and growth for itself is determined by forces over which it has little or no control. It then follows, that cities are forced to compete with one another for both private investors and high-income residents.

Paul Peterson's City Limits (1981: 37), which exemplifies this metaphor's line of logic, arrives at the same conclusion by teasing out one of his most basic premises: that the city's primary "practical interest" is, or should be, "to operate as efficiently (in the Pareto-optimal sense of the term) as possible." [7] Doing so requires cities to compete with one another on the one hand, and on the other, to leave redistributive -- or other "Robin Hood" types of efforts (e.g., to assist the poor, elderly, handicapped, or unemployed) -- to the federal government. After all, the intense competition among local communities all but precludes any concern for distributive equity, least of all by way of redistributing incomes.

The policy corollary to this is that, if there are to be government subsidies, they should be used to encourage investment, not to reduce poverty, and certainly not to promote equity. Rather, the business metaphor prompts cities to pursue those measures that provide material incentives for investors and high-income residents to relocate within their jurisdictions. All of which is consistent with that which this metaphor suggests is the main function of local government: to promote low business taxes, a sound infrastructure of municipal services, vigorous law enforcement, an eager and particularly docile labor force, and a minimum of business regulations.

By adopting this approach to development, policymakers are given the impression that they can do little more than "hunker down" and engage in increasingly more intense levels of competition. Competition is, therefore, not only the most basic prescription that emerges from the business metaphor's line of logic, it is the only prescription -- all else either derives from this prescription, or is irrelevant. One of the least endearing aspects of this metaphor, however, is its need to relegate the voices of elected officials as secondary to those of business representatives. It is indeed this implication of the metaphor that so frustrates elected officials in their attempts to subject economic development policymaking to the scrutiny and accountability that one reasonably expects in a democratic society.

After all, where such considerations are ignored, policymakers are given a green light to conduct policy deliberations in private, to place feasibility analyses in the hands of those with material interests in projects under consideration, and to conveniently disregard the more democratic procedures that might, otherwise, assure the public that its money has been spent on primarily public goals. [8] Still, for better or worse, the image of development as "running a business" has, to a considerable extent, set the general tone for public perception and political debate on issues involving local economic development.

Economic Development as "Building a Growth Machine"

For Harvey Molotch (1976), the initial creator of the "growth machine" metaphor, the city is conceived as an areal expression of the capital interests of a land-based governing coalition. This coalition is called a "growth machine." It has, at its core, a set of corporate and other land-based interests who view their futures as linked, owing to a common desire to increase the monetary value of their individual parcels. This value increases whenever their land parcels are used more intensively -- as when the local population rises, when new industries move in, or when developmental and/ or financial activities are expanded.

The "senior partners" of growth machines are particularly interested in land use and other developmental policies. They include developers, contractors, mortgage bankers and related real estate businesses. "Junior partners," those who have a lesser stake in developmental matters, include building trade unions. And, while Logan and Molotch (1987) argue convincingly and at length that there is little evidence that urban growth eases problems of high unemployment, of high housing costs, or of impoverished city budgets -- union members are generally convinced that growth is unproblematically linked with an increase in jobs, and that their fates are thereby connected. Indeed, this belief has become one of the basic arguments used by local government officials to sell development projects to the public. Interestingly, the main function of local government (treated, similarly, as "junior partner" in the growth machine) is to promote a "good business climate."^[9] In this way, the growth machine captures governmental authority in cooperation with private interests -- each supplying something the other needs. However, for most urban political-economists, these interests typically use growth as a means of benefiting themselves first and their communities second.

For most urban theorists, the growth machine thesis is quite persuasive. However, its success turns on its ability to remain unaccountable while maintaining an appearance of openness in the politics that guides development. The facade of democracy is necessary because the true benefits and costs of development are hidden from the public domain (Holupka & Shlay, 1993: 180). Major development projects are "sold" to communities on a "go/ no go" basis and are often provided large public subsidies following the rationale that development will benefit the entire community, even though the benefits of growth are almost always skewed in favor of landowning elites. And, in many instances, growth appears to be accompanied by many negatives -- higher housing costs and problems of housing affordability, increased congestion and air pollution, greater demand for public services, and higher taxes (Swanstrom,

1985; Kantor & David, 1988; Beauregard, 1993).

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Each of the above metaphors has merit insofar as they provide us with convenient handles. Lakoff and Johnson (1980), and more recently, Morcol (1997), extend our understanding by explaining how metaphors are embedded in the "conceptual system" of our culture. Metaphors, as such, are mechanisms for convincing others of the correctness of the arguer's position, rather than as mechanisms for telling right from wrong.

Local economic development, from this more strategic perspective, is neither expected, nor capable, of addressing normative or political issues of power, legitimacy, conflict, and so forth -- even though these issues are clearly reckoned with as an important part of developmental policymaking and professional practice. This seems to be much of what Donald Schon (1983: 42) is getting at in the following, often-cited passage: "In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high hard ground where practitioners can make effective use of the research-based theory and technique, and there is a swampy lowland where situations are confusing 'messes' incapable of technical solution. The difficulty is that the problems of the high ground, however great their technical interest, are often relatively unimportant to clients and the larger society, while in the swamp are the problems of greatest human concern."

If Schon's read on the above situation seems plausible, it may be argued that the field of local economic development badly needs new literature that proceeds from a reexamination of its basic premises and underlying assumptions. Several factors seem to prevent this, however.

First, the field has been quite selective; it has chosen to rely almost exclusively on insight and knowledge from those disciplines that most directly advance its own commitment to positive science. Several of the field's more prominent scholars have lamented over the field's tendency to cleave to the tenets of logical positivism (Mier & Fitzgerald, 1991). Theories of regional science, international development, industrial location, and firm behavior, for instance, have all had far more impact on the field than those of history, politics, contemporary social philosophy, or qualitative social science research. Similarly, the field's dominant metaphors, "problem solving," "running a business," and "building a growth machine" have had far more impact than those that might look at development more broadly as a

"quest for distributive justice," as "building a sustainable community," or as "working in the best interests of our beloved neighbors."

The accompanying pedagogical problems are equally severe. It is extremely difficult to relate philosophic and political theories, in a manner that is readily accessible, to those who may have little background in such areas. As well, it is just as challenging to show practitioners how they might relate such theories to professional practice in concrete ways, and, conversely, how they might criticize the relevancy of certain theories from the standpoint of their everyday experiences.

Furthermore, while the field's preoccupation with logical positivism is identified as a drawback among its academics, this is not understood as such by the field's practitioners. Academic movements calling attention to metropolitan fragmentation based on class and race, the role of politics, the distributive effects of development policy, and so forth have had surprisingly little impact outside of scholarly journals. Thus, while scholars have demonstrated that an exclusive concern for financial or other such technical matters is an invitation to mismanagement and the commingling of public and private interests (more often than not, to the disadvantage of the public), several practitioners have tried to defend themselves by arguing that suspicions of mismanagement are not the same as breaking specific laws, and that academic critics may be building their own careers by arguing against economic development (Chema, 1996)

Taken together, these rigidities signal a crucial limitation for the local economic development literature. It may have little utility for those who attempt to understand the role of politics and public administration in developmental policymaking -- much less for those who attempt to analyze local systems from a governance perspective or to re-design those systems that fail the underlying criteria of such perspectives.

It is, nevertheless, becoming more difficult for practitioners or scholars of economic development to explain away, write off, or otherwise dismiss the very real political issues of economic development because, in a very meaningful and financially consequential sense, these issues are *our* issues. And, this is ultimately why viewing and treating local economic development as "an exercise in political governance" is so important.

CONCLUSION

That local economic development has enjoyed exemption from the more critical assessments associated with other areas of public policy has been sufficiently stressed by other scholars (Elkin, 1987; Logan & Molotch, 1987; Euchner, 1993; Holupka & Shlay, 1993; Beauregard, 1993). Nor, perhaps, is there serious doubt regarding the substantial support, both financial and political, that the development enterprise receives from local government (Swanstrom, 1985; Kantor & David, 1988; Wolman & Spitzley, 1996). These, however, explain only part of the present concern with this enterprise; there is also its crucial role and its potential power in local governance. And, there is the more than convenient tendency for conventional thought and theory to conceal both its crucial role and the existence of its potential power.

We have seen its elements -- and its concealment -- in that the more formal or influential discussions of economic development are typically guided by one of three metaphors, and here I must refer back to matters earlier discussed. The development enterprise, it is assumed and taught, operates in service to the local community and is subject in all important respects to the community's interests, if not its sovereign authority. This service is said to be solely in pursuit of capital growth -- which is justified in that it is broadly shared (Molotch, 1976; Peterson, 1981). There can be imperfect competition between cities, allowing developers to exact undue compensation for their role in a city's growth (Mier, 1993; Euchner, 1993); there can also be blind political ambition and bureaucratic incompetence, though these are rarely discussed. Still, these are aberrations. The community's interests remain in command. This is what the thousands who are subject to scholarly instruction in the field of economic development are taught every year (Kane & Sand, 1988; Luke, Ventriss, Reed & Reed, 1988; Sharp, 1990; Lassar, 1990).

In fact, the community is substantially in the service of business interests (Swanstrom, 1985; Elkin, 1987; Logan & Swanstrom, 1990; Galbraith, 1992; Mier, 1993). It is to this end that advertising and merchandising, and all their related costs and diversity, are directed; the community's interests -- which might, otherwise, include the social and political -- are narrowly framed as financial interests (Peterson, 1981; Kantor & David, 1988) which, in turn, are conveniently shaped to serve the purposes and financial interests of business. Management, in large corporations in particular, is primarily concerned with its own security, prerogatives, perquisites and power, and with defending these against all intruders - - a deeply destructive phenomenon brought to bear on the development process, and thereby upon our capacity to govern effectively. And, on several occasions, politicians exhibit fundamental commitments to enhancing their own careers (Elkin, 1987; Stone, 1989). Such are the frequent, wholly visible tendencies

of the economic development enterprise.

These are not, however, visible in the mainstream teaching or in the more general discourse on local economic development. Here, market competition is treated as a semireligious totem pole (Peterson, 1981; Kantor & David, 1988); in the market economy, instruction as to wants and needs proceeds unencumbered from the community to the developer. That the former is in some measure the instrument of the latter, that development firms serve not a long-term civic vision or governance purpose but their own, is removed from sight, and thus from mind. In formal discussions of development, extending from academic journals to textbooks, there is often a measure of discontent and sometimes impatience when these matters are pressed. Capital markets have their own truths, upon which no broader reality treads, particularly those that turn on politics or on some supposed "role" of political actors (Beauregard, 1993).

We see, however, through our analysis of development metaphors how preferred ideas and actors (couched metaphorically) make graceful, compelling, and sometimes obvious "normative leaps" from description to prescription, from fact to value, from 'is' to 'ought' -- and, in so doing, smooth over the political realities that are, otherwise, reckoned with as an important part of the professional practice -- realities with which local communities must somehow cope. Still, the self-contained power of business, as exercised in the development process, is less important than its much greater consequence for the political governance of the metropolis.

On any detached examination, the latter -- the process of governance, the associated and supporting bureaucracy, and the public's practical interest in, somehow, determining how the costs and benefits of development should be dispersed -- has consequences that are more grave and far transcend those of business, and certainly those of any particular business firm. Metropolitan areas experience concentrations of poverty, increasing crime and segregation, declining older suburbs, costly urban sprawl, and upper-middle-class flight. Thus, at no time in our history has there seemed a greater need for local governance.

In my explanation, I reviewed three metaphors that dominate contemporary thought and theory in the field of local economic development, how in following their lines of logic, development serves the business community's interests -- often to the exclusion of the public's interests. This bias, and the problems it presents for the long-term material, social, and political lives of local citizens, are then remedied by re-framing local economic development as "an exercise in political governance." This

metaphor is deemed preferable because it stems from four basic principles that we have come to expect from any effort to make public policy under a political system such as ours; more importantly, it clarifies the crucial relation between economic development and political governance.

Yet here, a final notation must, indeed, be made. The long-term welfare of citizens, their common concerns and needs, the legitimacy of their elected officials in development policymaking and the role of government in ensuring distributive justice are not small considerations. Each of these raises political questions of the good and more. The American metropolis may well not escape the consequences of resource scarcity and capital mobility, and no one can know the ultimate effect of these on its future. Modest political-administrative changes are, indeed, possible. But, even more certainly, we can say that business will yield neither easily nor completely to political governance or democratic processes. Capital mobility will continue to be encouraged and financed, business managers will continue to focus on profits, and politicians will continue to seek funding for re-election campaigns. Understanding the contemporary developmental enterprise will thus continue to require an appreciation of the depth and breadth and influence of the metaphors we use to frame our discussions of it. By remaining cognizant of how our discussions are thereby framed, we ultimately place public officials in stronger positions to articulate the relations between development and governance that we authorize, to raise political questions of the common good, and to serve as best they can the long-term needs and interests of our local communities.

BIOGRAPHY

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POSTSCRIPT

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NOTES

1. Technically speaking, metaphors represent a departure from what speakers of a particular language understand to be the literal meaning of their words, or from the standard order of their words, in order to achieve a special meaning or effect. When a word or expression, which in literal usage denotes one kind of thing or action, is applied to a distinctly different kind of thing or action, *without asserting a comparison*, it is a metaphor. In a simile, *a comparison between two distinctly different things is indicated* by the word "like" or "as." Thus, when Stone (1988) explains that "we are living on Spaceship Earth," technically speaking, she uses a metaphor, not a simile. And, when Molotch (1976) describes the "city as a growth machine," he uses a simile rather than a metaphor. These are, however, treated as minor distinctions for present purposes.
2. Sanders and Stone expand on this argument by adding that "the realization that growth and redevelopment produce losers as well as winners makes the political imperative paramount. Coalition building and conflict management become urgent, and they do so under conditions in which particular allocational consequences are salient" (Sanders & Stone, 1987: 538). Where the general public is concerned, government support and subsidy are seriously suspect -- as to their need, as to the effectiveness of their administration, and because of the adverse effect they have on morals and working morale. However, the same is not true of government's support -- in the present case, through large-scale developmental enterprises -- of the comparatively affluent (developers, major corporations, banks, owners of capital). Presumably, they can withstand the adverse moral effect of being subsidized and supported by tax abatements and government loans; not so the poor (Galbraith, 1992: 14-15).
3. The term "legitimacy," as in John Rohr's (1986: x) To Run a Constitution: The Legitimacy of the Administrative State, means more than a "grudging acceptance" of the legal roles that elected officials hold. Here, the term suggests, contrary to the norm (Beauregard, 1993), that the views and justifications of such officials are taken as seriously and as important as those of private investors, industry representatives, and corporate executives whose insights into potential investments typically command unquestioned respect and confidence.
4. The present argument turns on the idea of "political governance" -- which, for some, presumes an element of unity, that we are, somehow, "all in this together." To the contrary, the present argument suggests the need for a political discourse that (a) acknowledges the different allocational consequences of development for different groups, (b) concedes that these consequences have resulted, in large part, from differences in power relations. The need is not, however, to proceed from a nostalgia of the past, from the idea that our society has already achieved a reasonable measure of distributive justice -- least of all as we witness how our society has effectively written off or ignored so many of its citizens (Swanstrom, 1985; Galbraith, 1992; Warren, Rosentraub, & Weschler, 1992; Beauregard, 1993; Mier, 1993). This topic is important and deserves a depth and breadth of treatment that is, however, presently unavailable.
5. The importance of accountability is evidenced by several recent situations, involving the investment fiascoes of Orange County, California and Cuyahoga County, Ohio. The theme of accountability runs throughout a recent journalistic account of public policymaking and the decision to keep professional

sports franchises (Euchner, 1993).

6. Accountability may be determined through interviews with development policymakers and through comparisons of the accountability structures in question with those in similarly-complex negotiations. Here, the public needs to determine the lines of accountability, who selects public-private development administrators, who oversees them, who evaluates them, whether independent or ongoing audits are performed, and whether mechanisms exist for determining the validity of these audits. More strategically, accountability involves the means by which public agencies and their workers manage the diverse expectations generated within and outside their organizations (Romzek & Dubnick, 1987).
7. The public authority stands as the institutional embodiment of the business metaphor's line of logic. Public authorities are instruments of the state to the extent they exercise state powers, though legally, they are separate from the state. Depending on the specific circumstances, an authority may be created to coordinate the many aspects of stadium construction -- everything, that is, from running the state lottery that raises funds, to letting construction contracts, to evicting residents from the neighborhood(s) that would be the site of the new facility (Euchner, 1992). Depending as well on specific circumstances, the fund-raising capacity of the authority may lie in its legal capacity to sell tax-exempt bonds, to operate lotteries, to directly tax the public, or some combination of these. However, the fact that the public's financial burden is usually indirect makes it easy to obscure this burden. This, in turn, makes it easier to blur the authority's legal responsibilities with regard to the public by toying with the idea of whether it is essentially "public" or "private." For example, the state may claim, as did Maryland in the late 1980s, that the authority is "private," in the sense that it does not impose a financial burden on the public; it could then turn around and claim the opposite, at its convenience, that the authority is a full-fledged part of government (Euchner, 1993: 121).

The point is that, absent a clear definition of its organizational form (i.e., whether it is "public" or "private"), a meaningful public discourse becomes almost impossible. In the meantime, public authorities are politically and administratively advantageous: they enable governments to undertake large public projects with minimal scrutiny, sometimes without negotiations, and usually without the inconvenience of openly arguing with local interests. Their underlying appeal turns on their ability to remain, in the words of Robert Stoker, "public enough to garner resources, yet private enough to limit popular participation" (cited in Euchner, 1993: 121; Caro, 1974).

8. Although market economic theorists diminish the importance of political values in local development policymaking, they ignore what many cities have found out the hard way -- that "what's good for business" is not necessarily good for the city. Indeed, an entire school of urban political thought has been devoted to cataloging the negative effects of unbridled growth on the quality and level of public services, on the distribution of income, on the availability of local jobs, and on other important indicators of the quality of urban life (Swanstrom, 1985; Krumholz, 1991; Krumholz & Clavel, 1994; De Leon, 1992; Imbroscio, 1995; Elkins, 1995).
9. A community with a "good business climate" is defined as one which has low business taxes, a sound infrastructure of municipal services, vigorous law enforcement, an eager and docile labor force, and a minimum of business regulations. These types of (structural) reforms ensure, to some degree, that it will attract the growth it needs. However, to serve the broader purposes of governance, several writers have argued that this growth cannot be broken up into a competitive geography of suburban winners and urban losers. Rather, class interests need to be unified through a governing arrangement which ensures a dominant central city (Peirce, 1993; Burns, 1978; Tichy & Devanna, 1986; Keller & Perry,

1991).

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