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Chapter 8

Boosterism, Brokerage and Uneasy Bedfellows:

Networked Urban Governance and the Emergence of

Post-Political Orthodoxy

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Background

This chapter explores recent experiences of city governance, focusing in particular on the emergence of entrepreneurial governance strategies and considering whether this represents a new orthodoxy in urban policy. Drawing upon its application in different contexts, the chapter attempts to identify the different elements of entrepreneurialism in urban governance, arguing that the evolution of governance in cities is more complex and multi-faceted than is sometimes appreciated. The chapter concludes by considering the degree to which urban governance can be considered 'post-political' and speculating on the scope for a future deepening in the extent of neoliberal governance strategies.

City policy elites in different international settings have over several decades tried to develop governance structures and policy initiatives that place the pursuit of economic growth as their principal objective. This has applied to established cities grappling with the collapse of their manufacturing bases and the resultant social and environmental consequences, where the challenge is to develop new economic potentials and possibilities that might eventually form part of a future *raison d'être*. It has also applied to apparently more successful cities, where the retention of competitive advantage becomes ever more of a challenge in an international context in which capital and labour are perceived to be highly mobile, and in which economic performance is measured relative to rival cities.

Yet identifying effective ways in which to govern these different types of city is far from straightforward. Policy-makers have long sought effective mechanisms through which to govern urban areas in ways that reconcile social and environmental objectives with economic development goals, while simultaneously representing citizen interests in the decision-making process. More recently, added to this historic purpose of urban government has been a different set of challenges. One has been the daunting task of managing the loose and sometimes disparate network of agencies and actors involved in different ways in devising and delivering urban policies. This is reflected in a relentless search for appropriate institutional vehicles through which to govern the reticulated terrain of the city. Bolstering institutional capacity and developing 'thick' governance structures have become important elements of a policy doctrine which suggests that stable, cohesive political relations can help to advance urban economic growth. Alongside these structural challenges, another goal relates to the practice of governance. Some proponents of the modernization of urban governance have posited that behavioural norms amongst urban policy-makers need to be radically reoriented, instilling amongst elite actors a more entrepreneurial, business-friendly

mindset that contrasts with the kinds of bureaucratic culture held to have hampered urban economic growth in the past.

These kinds of principle have helped induce a sometimes radical transformation in the ways in which cities are governed. From the late twentieth century, there has been widespread recognition that public policy formulation and delivery is no longer the exclusive preserve of local government, but is instead developed and implemented through an array of institutions and processes, both formal and informal, which form governance networks that sometimes look quite different to municipal governments of the past (Pierre and Peters, 2000). Previously, responsibility for inducing urban economic and social revival rested largely with the state, through a sometimes uneasy combination of central and local government. More recently, however, the delivery of urban policy has undergone significant change, as the governance of cities has fragmented across a complex assortment of unelected non-departmental public bodies, in harness with a variety of private and voluntary sector actors.

This shift from government to governance has been extensively documented, in part because of the complexity and disparateness of the institutional structures and policy initiatives that have emerged. The emergence of multi-actor, cross-sectoral coalitions and partnerships, the growing significance of elite actor networks as a discrete and specific modality for urban governance, and the emergence of hybrid forms of governance have disrupted the binary relationships between state and market which once underpinned social, economic and political relations in cities. International experience is one in which monolithic local government has been in decline, with power and responsibility dispersed across networks of institutional actors. In part, this has been driven by a consensus around the notion that economic development in cities and regions is best pursued on a multi-sector

'partnership' basis. This view holds that it is through cross-sector, inclusive partnership working that policy coherence can best be maximized and resources most effectively marshalled in the context of otherwise highly fragmented institutional environments. Building capacity across networks and encouraging stable political relations, often linked to consensual ideas about what is appropriate in policy terms, is thus often viewed as a key ingredient of successful urban economic development.

The result is that alongside the fundamental shift in urban governance structures and policy actor views, there has also been an equally far-reaching transformation in the substantive content of urban policy efforts. In particular, there is wide-ranging evidence that urban policies have begun to move beyond their historical focus on 'problem' urban areas and towards a concern with promoting economic growth regardless of urban socio-economic context. Two factors have helped prompt this shift. The first is the emergence of the view that the economic vitality of cities is a critical component of broader national economic competitiveness, and that concerted effort is therefore needed to help maintain and enhance the performance of already successful places (for example, by accommodating growth pressures and facilitating further development), as well as to manage, slow or reverse the decline in 'lagging' areas. A second factor underlying the reorientation of urban policy relates to hegemonic discourses of global urban economic competition and urban entrepreneurialism, and the contested view that the way in which cities, regions and other sub-national territories are governed has become more important in the context of an internationally more integrated economy over which nation-states have limited and diminishing influence (see, for example, Brenner, 1999; Jessop, 2000; Scott, 2001b). This in turn has helped fuel a growing sensitivity amongst urban policy to the performance of their cities when benchmarked against international peers, and a related desire to bolster their standing by focusing policy more exclusively on the promotion of economic growth.

In the remainder of this chapter, we explore in more detail the politics associated with this networked, entrepreneurial governance of cities. The chapter reviews a variety of attempts to interpret the emergence of urban governance arrangements characterized by a series of complex, often nebulous urban networks of elite actors which can transcend formal institutions and around which policy for economic development, inward investment activity, and the branding, marketing and promotional activities of cities can cohere. Firstly, we look briefly at shifts in the substance of urban economic development *policies*, arguing that boosterist strategies, once viewed as novel, are now central to economic development strategies. Secondly, we highlight some of the research efforts to describe and decode the changing *structures* of governance, noting in particular the characteristics of the shift from first to second generation governance. And third, we devote the bulk of the chapter to a review of *concepts*, exploring critical efforts to interpret shifts in urban governance, and arguing that while there is evidence of the emergence of a post-political orthodoxy, its contours are more complex than is sometimes appreciated.

Boosterism as the New Imperative for Municipal Leadership?

Boosterism has become central to the policy-making agenda for cities. Alongside efforts, *inter alia*, to create flexible local labour markets, stimulate property-led commercial and residential redevelopment, enhance business competitiveness through light-touch regulation, subsidy and non-punitive and non-redistributive taxation, and maintain a physical environment conducive to internal and external business investment, boosterist strategies are at the core of urban economic development policy in many cities (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). They infuse a number of related attempts employed by cities to promote economic growth. Attempts to attract foreign direct investment, for example, have often worked in tandem with place promotion. Similarly, knowledge-based economic development – a prominent element of the strategy employed by many cities – is seen as critically dependant

on a city's ability to promote itself to skilled workers, lured by the promise of 'liveable' neighbourhoods in which affordable housing is situated in secure, well-designed residential areas with good access to employment opportunities and a range of public and private services. In some cases, place promotion has also emphasized the existence of a vibrant cultural life, a social climate of tolerance and liberalism and a sense of enterprizing creativity amongst its residents as further ingredients in the mix of attractions that help entice skilled, 'creative' professionals, drawing upon what is held by some to be the exemplary experience of places like Austin, Texas. Ideas such as this, propounded by policy entrepreneurs like Richard Florida (2002), have proved extremely alluring to urban policy actors. This is despite claims that a focus on liveability and creativity in stimulating economic development can lead to profoundly unjust socio-economic outcomes (Peck, 2005; McCann, 2007), especially when applied inappropriately in the context of low-growth or no-growth industrial cities in a range of different international settings (see, for example, Zimmerman (2008) on Milwaukee, or Sasaki (2010) on Osaka). Under this critique, the fixation with boosterism is said to have concealed the regressive consequences of urban policies which no longer seek to resolve intractable social problems in cities (Paddison, 2009).

The emphasis on boosterist forms of urban economic development relates in part to a world-view amongst policy elites which views cities as competing at a global scale: for events, mobile labour and capital, publicity and so on. A feature of the rise of neoliberal governance of urban economies is the receptiveness of local policy actors to discourses of international urban competition. This particular form of entrepreneurial behaviour amongst urban policy actors has been acknowledged for many years (see, for example, Harvey, 1989a). Yet as Lovering (2001) has argued, it is based on a perception that in important respects is divorced from an empirical reality in which many cities, at least those outwith the major global cities, are weakly integrated with the international economy. This has prompted

critics like Lovering to argue that policy-makers are unrealistically preoccupied with consolidating or improving cities' international standing, at the expense of the more mundane but under-appreciated issues, for example, of building skills amongst the labour force, ensuring an adequate supply of developable land, providing efficient infrastructure, or maintaining and enhancing readily accessible and equitably allocated consumption services.

Alongside competition to attract and retain labour, entice business investment, or lure tourists and prestige events, boosterist strategies employed by urban policy actors have also been geared towards the procurement of public funding. Some cities, as a result, have received regular injections of finance, capitalizing on the adroitness of their urban elites in constructing what Cochrane et al. (1996: 1331) refer to as 'grant coalitions' that can pinpoint opportunities for funding and articulate their case to external funders in central government or supra-national bodies like the European Union. There are, however, losers in this process, as some cities have proved less successful in attracting discretionary grant funding – even in cases where there were ostensibly strong objective arguments for resourcing on the basis of socio-economic circumstances (Southern, 2002; Davies, 2004). In some instances, this has reflected concern from national or supra-national government about inter-institutional friction at the local level, a history of overt local authority hostility to higher levels of government, the supposed marginalization of the private sector or a continued weddedness to what have been seen as outmoded and non-entrepreneurial distributional concerns (see, for example, Boddy, 2003).

This form of 'challenge funding' has nevertheless remained a feature of urban policy. In Britain, it has existed intermittently over several decades, from the City Challenge initiative launched in 1992 to the Regional Growth Fund introduced in 2010 and the competition for the award of Enterprise Zone status in 2011. But even during periods in which central

government opted to allocate regeneration resources on a more objective and non-competitive basis (principally through the use of statistical indices of deprivation), the embeddedness of the idea of inter-city competition amongst local policy actors remained apparent in the continued interest in securing flagship cultural and sporting events. For example, the competition amongst British cities to be awarded European Capital of Culture status for 2008 involved bids, *inter alia*, from Birmingham, Bristol and Newcastle, as well as Liverpool, the eventual winner (O'Brien, 2011). That the competition attracted media interest on a scale entirely disproportionate to the modest funding on offer to the successful city was partly reflective of the degree to which this form of entrepreneurial urbanism had impregnated the outlook and behaviour of policy actors. This, in turn, reflected the policy-maker consensus, following the experience of several other cities, notably Glasgow in 1990 as European City of Culture, which held that substantial spin-off benefits could be generated directly as a result of the award of Capital of Culture status and the resultant growth in tourist and visitor numbers, and indirectly as a result of the fillip to the winning city's international status and visibility (Mooney, 2004; Garcia, 2005).

Boosterism, place marketing and inter-city competition have evolved over several decades to become accepted features of the urban policy landscape in many countries. This has generated extensive academic interest. But while the development of these areas of activity amongst city policy actors confirms that local economic strategies have been driven by an underlying desire to become more entrepreneurial, other types of activity pursued by urban institutions have changed in sometimes more subtle and complex ways. Even in the many instances in which the local state has ceded its role as direct deliverer of services to private and voluntary providers, it has often managed to continue to play an important, if indirect, role as commissioner, planner or regulator ('steering' instead of 'rowing', in Osborne and Gaebler's (1993) widely employed metaphor). This reoriented role, in several European

countries, is now susceptible to further change. 'Austerity' measures introduced in the wake of the international financial crises of 2007–08, in the form of radical programmes of public expenditure cuts, potentially preface a further, more fundamental redistribution of power away from the local state and towards a range of civil society actors and business interests amongst whom an underlying market logic often underpins decision-making (Peck, 2012; Meegan et al., 2014). The need for local actors in many countries to find new ways of delivering services in the face of dwindling resources increases the possibility of further diversification in the range of institutions operating alongside elected local government, thereby rendering still more complex the often elaborate networks through which cities are governed – as the next section of the chapter goes on to explore.

Brokerage, Networks and the Shift Towards Second Generation Urban Governance

A unifying theme across cities in different contexts is that contemporary urban governance has often evolved in ways that have left it more complex and less transparent than before. Unsurprisingly, the complexity of urban governance arrangements has presented some difficulty for the many attempts to conceptualize local institutional and policy networks, resulting in a 'cacophony of heterogeneous concepts, theories and research results' (Oliver and Ebers, 1998: 549). What is clear amidst this variability and complexity, however, is that contemporary governance is characterized increasingly by its network character (Powell, 1991). In place of rigid, hierarchical government dominated by clear lines of accountability and bureaucratic modes of decision-making, contemporary network-based urban governance is held by proponents to offer a leaner and more flexible means of promoting economic development and social well-being (Parker, 2007: 116). To adherents, the rigidity of old-style hierarchical 'big government' ought ultimately to be supplanted by more inclusive and elemental forms of partnership-based governance:

Hierarchy, generally, is losing its legitimacy while partnership is in the ascendant as different interest groups flex their muscles and individuals start to take back control of their lives from organizations and governments. (Handy, 2004: 98)

For many European cities, the embrace of looser network-based forms of governance has therefore been accompanied by a rejection of formal hierarchical government (Parker, 2007). This has involved a transition to forms of governance based on privatization, contracting and marketization. The result has been an upsurge in the array of quangos, cross-sector partnerships, sub-contracted service providers and voluntary sector bodies upon which the local state has become ever more reliant for the delivery of public services (Goss, 2007). Authors such as Kjaer (2009) have argued that this represents a fundamental transition to a new, network-based form of governance, succeeding an earlier post-war settlement in the form of the development of big government, and a second 'new public management' market-facing phase from the 1970s.

A different perspective is provided by Hooghe and Marks (2003), who distinguish between formal and informal governance mechanisms as drivers of different types of multi-level governance (Table 8.1). Under this interpretation, Type I governance is based on 'stacked' or 'nested' institutions, in hierarchical form, whereas Type II institutions are characterized by their flexibility, their connectivity within and between other jurisdictional levels, and their ability to focus on specific policy issues. As a result, Type II institutions are said by proponents to be more fleet-of-foot and flexible – but also less likely, sometimes by design, to be lasting. They may also less likely to be democratically accountable or subject to direct or indirect citizen scrutiny, in contrast to formal Type I institutions. The upsurge of 'government by task force', of concordats, agreements and of institutional and organizational hybrids of varying shapes, sizes and complexity provides evidence of the rise of this type of second generation governance.

Table 8.1: Type I and II governance

TYPE I	TYPE II
General-purpose jurisdictions	Task-specific jurisdictions
Non-intersecting membership	Intersecting memberships
Jurisdictions organized on a limited number of levels	No limit to the number of jurisdictional levels
System-wide architecture	Flexible design

Source: Hooghe and Marks (2003)

The existence of second generation entities is part of the wider emergence of networked forms of urban governance. This is evident in the UK, for example, where efforts in the period 1997–2010 to develop coherent sub-national governance and economic development policy remained restricted to Type II form, as attempts to develop more permanent and democratically accountable institutions ultimately foundered because of the combination of lukewarm support from central government, a wholesale lack of popular endorsement, and a reticence amongst local policy elites to sanction the creation of more formal and powerful institutions. That Type II entities are not susceptible to the vicissitudes of democratic scrutiny may itself have been important in informing the unwillingness of these elites to move beyond the complex but impermanent network of governing institutions in cities and their regions.

The evolution of urban governance, and its network form, rests in part upon an optimistic stance which views it as best able to promote urban economic development. However, this is not a view that has gone uncontested. The black box nature of many of the second generation networked governance mechanisms has attracted the critical attention of many scholars.

Skelcher (2005), for example, argues that Type II governance entities break down into three distinct sub-categories (club, agency and polity-forming), on the basis of their variable legitimacy, and the form and extent of democratic consent and accountability (Table 8.2).

Table 8.2: Democratic Alignment of Type I and Type II entities

	Type I entity	**Type II entities**		
		Club	**Agency**	**Polity-Forming**
Features	Established through constitution building or legislation by higher level of government	Self-generated to deliver benefits to members	Created by government to deliver policies through flexible management under arm's-length political supervision	Established to engage well-defined constituency of users/residents in formulation and delivery of specific public policy
Legitimacy	Electoral system and civic support	On basis of benefits accruing to members	On basis of central government mandate	On basis of popular participation
Consent	Elected representatives	Self-interested assessment	Appointment or nomination by government	Deliberative processes between board and constituency
Accountability (TO)	Legislative body of elected representatives and to citizens	Organisational stakeholders in terms of cost-benefit ratio	Government at higher level on basis of policy performance	Constituency on basis of democratic process and policy achievement

Source: Skelcher (2005: 98)

Clearly the three different types of Type II entity can vary in character. In focusing on distributed public governance and the specific differences between Type I and II governance mechanisms, Skelcher's perspective is more critical than those propounded by advocates of looser, network-based governance as a normative means of promoting economic growth. It is to the critique of 'governance enthusiasm' that the chapter now turns.

Uneasy Bedfellows: The 'Democratic Deficit', Post-Politics and the Governance of the Neoliberal City

Other, more radical critiques have tended to view the emergence of networked urban governance in quite different terms. For critical geographers, in particular, fragmentation in city governance and the changing nature of the vertical relationships across scales of governance reflect wider political and economic changes in the form of concerted efforts to neoliberalize public policy, linked in part to the reorganization of politico-institutional space in response to the internationalization of economic activity. For Jessop (2002) and others, change in governance arrangements is driven by the crisis of the Fordist regime and the associated decline in the ability of the state to employ Keynesian demand management policies. The response involves the increased importance of local state power, expressed not through local government but via new sets of institutions espousing an entrepreneurial urbanism aimed at strengthening place competitiveness (Brenner, 2004). Building on this, Ward (2006) and many others present the argument that the proliferation of governance actors and agencies within cities and regions is symptomatic of a wider process of rescaling: a restructuring of the territorial basis on which the state is organized. Driving this process is said to be economic internationalization, the response to which involves the 'roll-out' of a variety of policies influenced, to varying extents and in different ways, by neoliberal thinking. Reflecting this, the restructuring of the state has been guided by a desire to promote economic growth and reassert the dominance of capital over labour, through new governance

arrangements and policy initiatives that are super-imposed in complex fashion on residual, inherited government structures (Peck and Tickell, 2002). This leads to a diversity of institutional and policy outcomes in cities, as neoliberal reforms encounter widely differing inherited economic, social and political landscapes, reflecting the uneven outcomes engendered by economic restructuring over several decades. The super-imposition of neoliberal forms of urban governance on quite different inherited political landscapes – perhaps especially beyond the particular circumstances of Europe and North America – can result in the emergence of hybridized policy, driven by local contestation: the existence of multiple 'local neoliberalisms' (Geddes, 2010: 163).

The argument here is that urban governance structures and policies have been informed by a pervasive neoliberal consensus, manifested in variable, 'variegated' and path-dependent ways in different places at different times, adapted to suit local circumstances and modified (but rarely fundamentally challenged) in the face of criticism (Sites, 2007; Brenner et al., 2010; Haughton and McManus, 2011). Reflecting this view that the precise expression of neoliberalism in urban governance arrangements varies locally but adheres to a common core of ideas, Guarneros-Meza and Geddes (2010: 116) argue that 'neo-liberalism is complex, diverse and contested…[but involves] a deep, taken-for-granted belief in neoclassical economics, [and] consequent normative principles favouring free market solutions to economic problems, …a lean welfare state, low taxation and flexible labour markets'.

The extent and depth of the apparent agreement amongst urban policy actors around these core aspects of neoliberalism has led some authors, drawing upon Mouffe (2005) and others, to argue that the governance of cities is increasingly 'post-political' or 'post-democratic' in form. Policy debate, it is argued, is increasingly narrow in scope, restricted to largely technical matters and eschewing more fundamental questions about the nature and form of policy intervention. The market logic that underpins urban governance is therefore left

unchallenged, and alternatives implicitly or explicitly deemed not to merit discussion (Swyngedouw, 2009). This explains in part why the scope for meaningful political involvement in urban governance via formal channels is increasingly restricted; citizen participation and in-depth discussion are seen almost as inimical to the kind of expeditious, business-like, evidence-based decision-making that adherents of growth-focused city government are keen to promote (Peck, 2011). For some authors, the apparently diminishing scope for choice about urban development strategies, and the ubiquity of purportedly ideology-free objective scrutiny of policy efficacy, means that policy is much more mobile than before, undergoing international export as 'best practice' is sought by conference-attending and video-conferencing local elites seeking '"hot" policy ideas' as an 'evidence-based' justification for their actions (McCann, 2011: 109). The obvious danger, however, is that policies devised in different political, economic and social contexts may be applied inappropriately on an off-the-shelf basis, without recognition of the need for adaptation to suit local circumstances (Hutton, 2011).

Such a risk may be especially marked if there is restricted room for dissent and debate about policy choices. Post-political urban governance, it is argued, allows only for informal self-scrutiny by a narrow range of policy actors, as an alternative to more broadly-based and formalised oversight in which fundamental debate about the nature of policy is permitted (or even actively encouraged). Post-political modes of decision-making purport to be apolitical, technocractic and able to bring to urban governance a focused business-like mindset that stands in contrast to the unwieldiness of old-style city government.

The result of this highly restricted form of decision-making is that policy rarely departs from a core of neo-liberal ideas which emphasise the pursuit of urban economic growth as the paramount objective. Though dressed in appealingly neologistic language, these ideas about

the need for lean and efficient decision-making are not new; urban economic development agencies in the United States and Britain under the Reagan and Thatcher administrations of the 1980s imported working methods from the private sector and consciously positioned themselves as business friendly alternatives to the bureaucratic sclerosis of elected local government (Barnekov et al., 1989). But as Allmendinger and Haughton (2009) argue, what is noteworthy here is the persistence and pervasiveness amongst policy actors of the notion that democratic debate – protracted and messy as it often is – is an unnecessary impediment to the pursuit of urban economic growth.

The basic critique offered here is that 'governance enthusiasts' have tended to view state restructuring simply as a process of pragmatic policy adjustment rather than a fundamental shift connected to broader social, economic and political processes that affect the local state (see, for example, MacLeod and Goodwin, 1999; Geddes, 2006). Part of this critique holds that hyperbole about new forms of urban governance masks the erosion – or even dismantling – of local democracy, as post-political forms of governance begin to emerge. In contrast to past urban government, new networks of governing institutions and policy actors in cities tend often to reject democratic involvement in, and scrutiny of, the policy-making process on the grounds that it is too unwieldy, unresponsive and a hindrance to the kind of flexible, fast-moving market-oriented governance they favour (see Imrie and Raco, 1999; and Table 8.3).

Table 8.3: Characterising local government and local governance

Local Government	Local Governance
Bureaucratic	Flexible and responsive
Democratic	Post-democratic
Centralised	Decentralised
Collectivised	Privatised
Municipal	Entrepreneurial
Pursuit of Social/Welfare Goals	Pursuit of Market Goals

Spaces of post-political governance, some have argued, are inhabited by policy actors whose backgrounds look quite different to those historically charged with governing cities. This is important because connectivity within and between actors and agencies is likely to be critically important in an environment in which network-based forms of governance predominate (Mulgan, 2010). Stephenson (2004) argues that 'whether the jungles are green and leafy or concrete, they are brimming with intricate webs of relationships, which when viewed from afar reveal elementary structures'. For cities, this means that the nature and form of governance and policy reflects the actions not just of politicians and their urban bureaucrats, officials of mandated (Type I) government entities who exercise agency through hierarchical and formal means. Alongside them is a disparate assortment of 'policy entrepreneurs' (Mintrom and Norman, 2009) who deploy technocratic rationales for a governance project which emphasizes flexibility and engagement with the business community. They are accompanied by a wider set of 'imagineers': influencers who help contribute to policy agendas through 'spectacle', and cultural and artistic endeavours (Short, 1999).

There is an abundance of empirical evidence, then, to show that urban governance has become more entrepreneurial, the outlook of policy elites more growth-fixated and the emphasis of public policy influenced to an increasing degree by neoliberal thinking. However, this is not to deny the existence of alternative governance strategies. The extensively documented Brazilian cases of Porto Alegre (on neighbourhood-based participatory budgeting and deliberative democracy) or Curitiba (in relation to sustainable

development), for example, illustrate the degree to which there is scope for socially, politically and environmentally progressive and innovative forms of policy-making even in an international context in which, as we have seen, growth-oriented approaches to governance abound (see, amongst numerous examples, Baiocchi, 2001; Irazábal, 2005; Novy and Leubolt, 2005). Despite the seeming globalization of the neoliberalization of urban governance, the unevenness of its specific application, both in form and intensity, means that scope for progressive politics remains. In Bolivian cities, neoliberal-influenced attempts to encourage citizen participation as a means of bolstering legitimacy had the unintended side effect of creating space in which progressive politics could develop, and around which oppositional social movements could cohere (Geddes, 2010). Likewise, chronicling the experiences of Mexico City and Buenos Aires, Kanai and Ortega-Alcazár (2009) note the variable ways in which local circumstances mediate the processes of economic globalization and the neoliberalization of governance, creating possibilities for the emergence of policy (in this case related to culture-led urban regeneration) in which grassroots interests have significant voice. As the boxed text below demonstrates, the import of neoliberal perspectives on urban policy has sometimes created complex amalgams of different styles of governance.

Box 1: Policy Mobility and the Emergence of Hybridized Urban Governance in Mexico

Networked forms of urban governance, exported beyond their European and North American heartlands, have been applied in a variety of ways in different international cities. Established local political cultures, pre-existing administrative structures and inherited economic histories can affect the ways in which new, imported governance innovations are applied, resulting in uneven institutional and policy outcomes. As McCann and Ward (2011: xv) argue, local policies evolve both relationally and territorially in that their shape is influenced both by a process of international import and export of 'mobile' policies across 'global circuits of

policy knowledge', but also simultaneously by the spatially-rooted legacy of economic, political and social phenomena which vary from city to city. The former could be said to promote conformity and similarity in that local policy actors looks to emulate perceived best practice elsewhere; the latter militates against uniformity by imprinting a specific local stamp on the shape and form of local governance arrangements.

The development of networked urban governance in Mexican cities illustrates the degree to which the precise application of imported policy orthodoxies is contingent upon local specificities. In the context of historically authoritarian, corporatist politics and bureaucratized and hierarchical institutional structures, Guarneros-Meza (2009) explores the interplay between the processes of neoliberal reform of governance and policy-making, consolidation of democracy, and political, administrative and fiscal decentralization from the national-state. Although the roots of these three processes differ, their combination has meant the evolution of locally particular politico-institutional forms in which a variety of styles of governance coexist within a wider network-based framework which involves a much broader range of non-state actors than before. This means, on the one hand, a familiar, neoliberal-influenced landscape of urban governance, populated by public-private regeneration partnerships and cross-sector local economic development agencies. On the other hand, it also means that more progressive forms of governance have been able to persist – and in some cases to grow. Urban social movements, in particular, have played a key role in Mexican cities in delivering services and encouraging citizen participation. Their efforts have in some instances been co-opted by strengthened urban governments in developing other forms of participative democracy.

There is evidence, however, that despite this broadening of the participative base for decision-making, marginalized groups remain excluded. In the cities of Querétaro and San

Luis Potosí, for example, Guarneros-Meza chronicles the limited levels of participation by neighbourhood-based citizen groups and street traders in new public-private regeneration partnerships, whose focus has been directed predominantly at enhancing the external image of the historic urban cores, rather than allocating housing or delivering services more equitably. This provides a compelling illustration of the complex and variable ways in which internationally-sanctioned received wisdom about urban governance and policy-making is interpreted and applied locally in light of specific local political and economic circumstances.

Source: Guarneros-Meza (2009)

Experience of recent innovation beyond Latin American cities also illustrates the complex and varied ways in which neoliberal perspectives on urban governance have been interpreted and applied outside the North American and European heartlands in which they developed over the last quarter of the twentieth century. Sorensen (2011), in an assessment of Japanese cities, concludes that although overall experience of the governance of urban development is one in which the national state has tried increasingly to promote deregulation, local political and environmental pressures for the reinforcement of land-use planning and environmental management continue to play an important role, as part of a complex, multi-scalar process in which interplay between centre and locality contributes to a sometimes uncertain trajectory of change. This reinforces the conclusion of Tsukamoto (2011), who argues that economic development policy in Japan has followed a paradoxical path, with the longstanding commitment to national growth (latterly, increasingly neoliberal in its emphasis) juxtaposed against efforts to promote socio-spatial equality, with uneven results for different cities and regions as local actors respond with varying degrees of enthusiasm or opposition to the import of Western neoliberalism.

Bold, oppositional political leadership has sometimes been important in challenging the ubiquitous neoliberal tenets at the heart of entrepreneurial city governance strategies and developing alternative policy approaches. Indeed, on the basis of experience in cities like Los Angeles, some authors have argued that the shift towards network-based urban governance has had the unexpected effect of enabling pioneering and progressive cross-sector and pan-ethnic coalitions to respond to intensifying socio-spatial disparity and environmental degradation by challenging neoliberal hegemony in urban governance and promoting an equity-based politics of 'spatial justice' as a viable alternative (Pastor, 2001; Pastor et al., 2009; Soja, 2010; Nicholls, 2011). Such experiences, though, have not been the norm, and much of the recent discourse around leadership and political capacity in cities has been pitched in terms of wider policy debate informed by market-oriented pro-growth thinking. This applies to attempts to develop more potent forms of city governance, sometimes involving the creation of leadership structures – what Stone (2008: 150) refers to as 'miniature presidencies' – that might eventually help to attract the kinds of charismatic, risk-taking mayors who are said to have effected the revitalization of some US urban economies, but who have been notably absent in other contexts like the UK (Hambleton and Sweeting, 2004).

Attempts to develop more expansive city-regional or metropolitan spaces of governance also illustrate the decreasing extent to which equity concerns feature in debates about urban governance. Over recent years the impetus for metropolitan institution-building has tended to relate overwhelmingly to a desire to advance economic development and allow cities to compete with international rivals. For a time, this related to the idea that powerful city-regional institutions were beginning in a few celebrated cases to acquire a global significance, and perhaps starting to supplant the role of some nation-states in creating conditions in which capital accumulation could best occur (Scott, 2001a). As we have seen, some authors

extended this thesis, arguing that sub-national governance appeared to be undergoing a profound transformation, as the geographical organization of the state began to alter fundamentally in complex multi-scalar ways in response to the internationalization of capital and the associated rise of the politics of neoliberalism (see, for example, Brenner, 2004). The result in some cases was an attempt by local (and sometimes national) policy actors to return to the long-standing goal of creating more powerful – and therefore more competitive – metropolitan territories. Historically, the stimulus for metropolitan regionalism has tended to derive from the combination of fiscal consolidation for poorly resourced under-bounded local government units, and enhanced strategic planning of services linked to the creation of more meaningful jurisdictions that reflected functional labour market geographies, commute sheds and service spheres-of-influence. More recently, the impetus for efforts to modify local political and administrative geographies has come from quite different sets of factors: from a wish to consolidate governance structures and address institutional proliferation, and to build local political and institutional capacity, 'thickness' and reputational capital. This, in turn, has been viewed as a means of providing a firmer base on which to procure extra-local private and public resources and, ultimately, promote growth in order to maintain or enhance a city's national and international standing.

These kinds of reform of metropolitan governance, it is clear, have been informed by a growth-oriented entrepreneurial outlook which has neoliberal politics at its heart. There have, of course, been some interesting and important attempts to challenge this. The influential social movement regionalism documented by Pastor et al. (2009) illustrates how community interests can challenge established policy orthodoxy by mobilizing on a regional basis and – as in the San Francisco Bay Area – latching onto established structures initiated originally to promote private sector growth. Clark and Christopherson (2009), likewise, draw on examples from Rochester, Atlanta and Los Angeles to highlight the possibility of an equity-led

'distributive regionalism' of endogenous development as an alternative to the growth-led 'investment regionalism' that has predominated in contemporary governance strategies. And some cities in the United States have made progress in developing city-regional structures through which to promote environmentally-focused growth management policies, as the celebrated experience of Portland, Oregon, outlined in the box below, shows. However, such efforts are substantially outweighed by the battery of governance reforms inspired by the kinds of neoliberal ideas which the chapter has tried to document. In the final part of this chapter, we consider whether this process of neoliberalization is intensifying, and whether it is reasonable to characterize the consensus underlying contemporary urban governance as post-political.

Box 2: Regionalism and Growth Management in Portland, Oregon

It is tempting, so potent is the thesis that urban governance has become ever more entrepreneurial, to identify neoliberal influences in institutional and policy reform where none exist. Institutional innovations that elsewhere have been interpreted – correctly – as symptoms of wider efforts to make governance more entrepreneurial and market-focused can, in some cities, have a less clear-cut rationale.

This is illustrated by the experience of governance reform and policy innovation in Portland, Oregon. Over several decades, the city has garnered sustained international interest from academics and policy-makers drawn to what is seen by many as a compellingly far-sighted effort to build metropolitan regional strategy and manage urban growth. With the establishment of Metro in 1979, Greater Portland gained the first elected regional government in the United States, building on an already established history of metropolitan-scale policy-making over the previous two decades. Alongside the advantages conferred by formal

regional government, Portland's approach to growth management is said also to have benefitted from a high degree of consensus and tradition of pragmatism in local political affairs, popular buy-in from residents linked to concerns about environmental issues, and the existence of a well-developed and inclusive partnership that extends across a range of private and voluntary sector stakeholders (Seltzer, 2004).

This has provided a strong institutional base on which to develop growth management policy, and the region has been widely lauded by proponents of the development of a normative, planning-led metropolitan 'new regionalism' in North America (see, for example, Calthorpe and Fulton, 2001; Wheeler, 2002). Beginning with a series of ground-breaking efforts to develop regional public transport infrastructure, Greater Portland has subsequently been at the forefront of attempts to manage the distribution of land-use, combat sprawl and promote smart, environmentally sustainable growth as a viable alternative to low-density suburban and ex-urban development. Portland, according to Downs (2004: 10), has become 'the poster child of smart growth'.

Some have argued, however, that Portland has been unjustifiably lionized, and that its exemplary status ignores frustration and failure in relation to some aspects of regional policy-making. As Calthorpe and Fulton (2001) note, some critics, notably house-builders' lobby groups, have bemoaned the perceived constraints that urban containment and densification policies have posed for economic growth, arguing (contentiously, and in the face of considerable evidence to the contrary) that the city's urban growth boundary has led to an increase in house prices and shortfall of developable land. Others, from quite different political standpoints, have noted the failure to ensure an adequate supply of affordable housing in a wider context of economic growth and increasing demand for land (Provo, 2009).

These debates notwithstanding, Portland is widely seen as a pioneer in its attempts to develop cohesive city-regional structures in the often fragmented context of local government in urban America. But what is especially interesting is that the structures and policies through which growth management strategy has been pursued look on first inspection to be similar, superficially at least, to some of the governance innovations developed elsewhere, not least in English cities. This emphasizes the importance of looking beyond structures, and considering content when reviewing the degree to which, and the ways in which, urban governance has become genuinely more entrepreneurial. Whereas spasmodic and often faltering efforts to develop city-regional governance in England have been driven almost entirely by a desire to promote economic growth (Harrison, 2007; Deas, 2014), the impetus for structural change and policy development in cities like Portland lies in a more multi-faceted and nuanced desire to regulate growth, for social and environmental as well as economic reasons. This is not to say that economic development goals have not formed part of the rationale for governance reform in Portland, but that the city and its regional institutions have embarked on a more broadly-based strategy that is less preoccupied with growth than is the case for some of the neoliberal informed policies catalogued elsewhere in this chapter.

Conclusion: Future Directions – More Entrepreneurial Still?

The notion that entrepreneurial styles of urban governance have become the norm is not new. Its roots lie in Harvey's (1989a) observations about the ways in which cities began to respond to related sets of political and economic pressure, in the form of the apparent disintegration of the post-war Fordist-Keynesian consensus, the intensification of economic globalization, and the accompanying restructuring of urban economies. The upshot was significant change in the ways in which cities were governed, putting in train a process over the next two decades and beyond that saw the role of urban governance move decisively from its roots in allocating services, mediating conflict and representing citizen interests. This has subsequently

developed for many cities into a powerful, deeply ingrained conventionality in which policy actors feel compelled to compete – and to do so by employing a neoliberal approach to urban economic development which emphasizes the pursuit of private sector growth, the value of self-regulating markets, the desirability of privatized provision of public goods and the importance of governing cities in a business-like, non-bureaucratic way.

As we have seen, some authors have argued that the effect of a two decade long process of neoliberalization of the governance of cities has been the creation of a post-political or post-democratic form of urban politics (Mouffe, 2005; Crouch, 2004). What this does not imply is that urban political relations have ceased to be important; even cursory examination of the way in which cities are governed reveals an abundance of conflict – particularly since network-based forms of governance can mean friction related to rival institutional affiliations within, as well as between, cities. Instead, urban governance can be viewed as post-political in the sense that there is significantly reduced scope for departing from core neoliberal assumptions as a result of the depth and breadth of consensus about of the nature and purpose of urban economic development policy (Deas, 2013). Cities can be viewed as post-political in the sense that traditional representative forms of democracy have become less important, as voter disenchantment and disengagement has grown and as governance, decision-making and policy formulation have come to be seen as essentially technical, managerial exercises, off-limits to voter scrutiny or serious debate.

One consequence of the seeming preponderance of this form of urban politics, and of neoliberal or entrepreneurial forms of city governance, is to reduce the level of heterogeneity in local economic development policy. Despite a welter of high-profile rhetoric about the importance of tailoring policy to local circumstances, the salience of the neoliberal accord – and the extent to which debate is curtailed in a post-political environment – means that policy

often takes on a one-size-fits-all uniformity, regardless of uneven development and inter-city disparities in economic health and social well-being. This is perhaps again a reflection of the removal of genuine choice about the direction of policy in a post-political world dominated by a consensual, conventional wisdom which, as some authors see it, amounts to a neoliberal hegemony in the governance of urban areas. The point here (notwithstanding some notable exceptions documented earlier in the chapter) is not only that social equity goals are subordinated to economic development objectives, but that the latter are interpreted narrowly: to mean growth rather than redistribution.

The marked degree to which local actor autonomy is restricted by central government might also explain why there is a degree of uniformity in the economic development strategies employed by cities. On the one hand, their scope for rejecting consensus and embarking on more progressive approaches is limited because the national state plays the key role in setting the context for local policy, in terms of allocations of resource, the setting of objectives for policy and the inception of new policy initiatives. On the other hand, the potential for embarking on more radical variants of neoliberal economic development is also reduced: the adoption of, say, flatter, less redistributive local taxation would be a practical impossibility for cities in the many national contexts in which local fiscal autonomy is weakly developed and reliance on the centre for funding acute.

This chapter has argued, then, that urban governance has undergone radical change, driven by a desire to neoliberalize policy, perhaps resulting in what might be described, somewhat tautologically, as a post-political urban politics. It has attempted to chart the emergence of the consensus around the notion that urban governance ought to be entrepreneurial, as evidenced by attitude and behaviour amongst elite actors, the rhetoric underpinning policy, and the actual shape of economic development policy and the institutional structures through which it

is pursued. Although it is important to acknowledge that change in urban governance is complex and sometimes contradictory, the overall direction of travel is clear in that evidence of the neoliberalization of policy abounds. Moreover, there is the prospect of a quickening in the pace of the neoliberalization of urban governance, as retrenchment in public finances, in the aftermath of international financial crises, compels state actors to operate more creatively, to engage capital, work alongside civil society actors and so on. The extent of any such redistribution of power within urban governance networks may be limited because of the absence of any obvious sources of funding for non-state actors, especially for European cities lacking a US-style tradition of corporate social responsibility and activism. However, the prospect of further contraction in funding for local government means that, several decades in, the process of reform of urban governance is not yet exhausted.

Useful Websites

European Urban Knowledge Network (http://www.eukn.org/): This provides information about the activities of the EU, where they impact upon cities and city-regions.

OECD's Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate (http://www.oecd.org/gov): This is a repository for advice and guidance, statistics and policy research, intended to inform efforts to reform public sector governance at national and sub-national scales.

UN Habitat Agenda (http://ww2.unhabitat.org/campaigns/governance/): Information linked to the UN Habitat Agenda goal of promoting 'sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world' through the reform of governance.

World   Bank (http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/LACEXT/EXTLACREGT

OPURBDEV/0,,menuPK:841079~pagePK:34004175~piPK:34004435~theSitePK:841043,00

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