URBAN GROWTH MANAGEMENT AND ITS DISCONTENTS
Promises, Practices, and Geo-politics in U.S. City Regions

Yonn Dierwechter
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Yonn Dierwechter
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Preface

The origins of this book emerged out of the broad intellectual transitions a person sometimes makes when traveling between different places that simultaneously represent distinct phases in one’s life. Specifically, the general idea for something like this book—where space, planning, politics, and city-regions might be held together in one research project—formed loosely in my mind during a crowded flight from London to Seattle, just after I had completed my doctorate on the new geographies of urban planning in post-apartheid Cape Town, particularly as these geographies intersected (uneasily and tenuously) with the large, fast-growing, and extremely dynamic “informal” economy of the city.

Having worked professionally in urban development in South Africa during the mid-1990s, I had witnessed the rapid transition away from the profound fragmentation of apartheid urban governance to the integrated metropolitanism of the post–apartheid era. Cape Town, for example, simply eliminated dozens of general-purpose (racially constituted) municipalities in the short space of a few years, replacing them with a “mega-city” government that set to reconstruct and gradually reverse the spatial and social legacies of the previous dispensation. Nothing like that seemed possible in the United States—and it was inspiring to watch and study.

During my PhD project at the London School of Economics (LSE), Jenny Robinson, now at the Open University, got me thinking about critical geography (Lefebvre, Foucault, Massey, and Thrift, amongst others) while Margo Huxley, now at the University of Sheffield, helped me to further link these ideas to ordinary planning practices, to become a “planographer” as she once put it to me. I strongly suspect that neither Jenny nor Margo would accept all that follows; but talking about the “spatialities” or the “geopolitics” of urban planning makes a lot more sense to me (and hopefully the reader) because of their early influence and ongoing enthusiasm.
While in London, British-based geographers and planners spoke increasingly of a “new regionalism” in both economy and state, although it was not yet clear what the new region or city-region, as they increasingly insisted, might always promise. That said, over the years, Andy Thornley, of the LSE, and Tassilo Herrshell, at the University of Westminster, have helped me to consider how planning, politics, and city-regions increasingly relate to one another, though they too would depart from many of my theoretical commitments. Andy remains a rare model of how to be a brilliant educator, administrator, and scholar.

Transitioning to Washington State in 2001 meant falling squarely into already well-developed American debates about how to manage metropolitan regions with planning tools and approaches, wherein regionalism, politics, and smart growth collide. Everything started to come together, though it required an interdisciplinary eclecticism that, in an era of growing disciplinary rivalries and even jealousies, not everyone will appreciate. Happily, a small urban studies program is, in the end, a very good home to cross over the otherwise potentially rigid boundaries of planning, geography, politics, and social theory. Working with and thinking alongside of my colleagues—Brian Coffey, Lisa Hoffmann, Tom Carlson, Linda Hurley-Isham, Anthony Falit-Baiamonte, and Marc Pendras, but also, in other academic programs, Michael Forman, Julie Nicoletta, and Michael Kucher—have been a constant source of inspiration and support. All of us at UWT have had to build new programs on this fast-growing campus pretty much from scratch—while also maintaining the energy and drive to think about and deliver new research. Alas, none of these very good people, in Tacoma and elsewhere, have the power to wave away the many problems and faults that surely accompany the discussion that follows here, but each has contributed to whatever strengths this contribution might have.

As always, though, my deepest gratitude is to Tanya. Together we have brought Ella, born September 28, 2005, into our old home on L Street. And so it is to Ella that this book is affectionately dedicated. May this little box of sunshine inherit a future worthy of her latent commitments to do good work in a world that likely hangs in the balance during the years that stretch out before her.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Life is more interesting than utopias.

Lewis Mumford

Mumford’s Ghost

In the depths of the Great Depression during the 1930s, a group of activists in Portland, Oregon, invited Lewis Mumford, the famous urban scholar and planning advocate, to develop a long-range vision for their city. Nestled along the Columbia River in the temperate rainforests of the Pacific Northwest, today Portland is recognized around the world as probably the most livable large community in the United States. But for thirty years, Mumford’s vision gathered more dust than adherents. That vision called for human-scaled development; improved functional balance between living and working in mixed-use neighborhoods; closer attention to the links between urban environments and rural ecosystems; and political regionalism (Bianco, 2001).

Instead, Portland’s civic leaders did what almost all other American communities did at this time: They opened the floodgates to a long pent-up demand for economic and physical growth, using a flush of federal funds in the 1950s and 1960s to subsidize massive highway construction. This facilitated low-density, discontinuous, auto-dependent, suburbanization—in a word, sprawl.

Appalled by the results, a coalition of farmers, business interests, urbanists, and environmentalists successfully pressed the legislature to reverse course. Their prize was one of America’s most influential planning achievements to date: SB100. SB100 established nineteen development goals for the state as a whole. It created a new state agency, the Land Conservation and Development Commission, and gave it the power to reject local plans that did not conform to these statewide goals;
finally it required communities to preserve rural, resource, and forest
lands through the use of simple but untested planning techniques such
as urban growth boundaries (UGBs). In short, it consolidated a new
era of experimentation in American planning history: the era of state-
directed urban growth management.

Strictly speaking, Oregon did not inaugurate this new era. Hawaii
(1961), Vermont (1970), and, to a lesser extent, Florida (1972) had
already adopted urban growth management reforms of various kinds at
the state level. But the new era in planning history, however defined or
debated, is still linked disproportionately to “planning the Oregon way”
(Abbott et al., 1994). This approach retains local implementation but
emphasizes greater city-regional coordination within development pa-
rameters established by state institutions. The impact of this approach on
the Portland area most reflects the lingering spirit of Mumford’s original
planning philosophy. As Martha Bianco (2001: 112) compellingly puts it:

Local policy-makers and planners [now] emphasize Mumfordian visions:
the regional institutions; the neighborhood organization network; the
emphasis on planning for mixed use, transit-orientated human-scale design;
the commitment to alternative modes of transportation; and the inclusion
of greenspaces in the regional plan.

The State of Oregon continues to make planning history in the
twenty-first century, though paradoxically of a very different kind than
in previous periods. In the fall of 2004, Oregon voters overwhelmingly
approved Measure 37, which forces local and regional governments to
waive land-use regulations that reduce property values or, if the regula-
tions are retained, to pay landowners the economic difference. It is not
the 1970s anymore.

Widely interpreted as a major victory for property-rights advocates,
Measure 37 is also a shot across the bow of spatial planning in the United
States as a whole. At the very least, it calls into question the Oregon dream
of urban growth management that so many planners and other observers
have admired for so long. While opponents worry that metropolitan
landscapes in the state will soon see the ill-placed return of ranchettes,
subdivisions, and business parks, a few vocal and passionate proponents of
Measure 37 compare Oregon’s growth management approach to the basest
criminal activity: “If Enron does something like this,” one critic remarked,
“people call it theft. If Oregon does it, they call it land-use planning”
(Easley, 2004: B8). What is happening here? How do the practices of
something so promising lead to a politics so bitterly and deeply felt?
Promises, Practices, and Geopolitics

One plausible explanation for the latest discontent out of Portland (and elsewhere) might be found in what many urbanists see as the rise of neoliberalism. In simple terms, neoliberalism is “the critique of ‘big government’ and the attempt to move activities from the state sector to the private sector or civil society” (Fukuyama, 2004 x–xi; cf. Peck and Tickell, 2002; Hackworth, 2007). As an urban geopolitical project, then, neoliberalism is partly a revolt against state authority over individual autonomy, wherein market-based “rationalities”—or taken-for-granted “truths” about the occluded benefits of a putatively self-organizing economy—increasingly crowd out other kinds of rationalities for the organization of metropolitan space (Huxley, 2006), such as those we associate with Mumford’s city-regional philosophy or the new discourses concerned with global sustainability. On this reading, urban neoliberalism is producing increasingly dominant landscapes, whether institutional, symbolic, or physical in nature.

There is truth in this analysis, as far as it takes us. As discussed later in this book, the “smart growth” paradigm as a normative theory for practical action now includes very strong neoliberal rationalities. Examples are legion, such as constant calls for improved regulatory “flexibility,” the proliferation of public-sector “business plans,” new public-private-community partnerships, and, most prosaic of all, the quotidian language of improved service delivery to (economic) customers rather than (political) citizens. These trends reinvigorate an older instinct predating the social accomplishments of the long Progressive Era in the United States (1890s-1930s), when the scope of the state’s involvement in land use and other major environmental arenas first substantially widened.

At the same time, the neoliberal thesis per se should not be taken too far, especially if this implies the uniform dismantling or (re-)containment of the contemporary American state. Indeed, this book argues that other projects, other trends, and other rationalities also shape contemporary efforts to regulate urban growth in metropolitan regions, most notably attempts to forge or maintain landscapes of economic justice and social diversity as well as place traditions of nostalgia and loss, which do not fit that easily into the overall neoliberal argument.

Even as market rationalities (and libertarian ideals) have successfully insinuated themselves into smart growth theory and practice in metropolitan America, an important theme throughout this book, the territorial scope if not always the institutional strength of state involvement in urban growth management has concomitantly expanded at multiple
scales over the past thirty years, at least in many regions of the United States. In fact, the basis for this expansion of state power over territory is more variegated and, in the end, more politically open than the synoptic triumph of neoliberal rationalities and governing techniques might otherwise lead us to conclude. We are not at the end of metropolitan history.

In addition to a geography of neoliberal retreat, other kinds of territorial dynamics are also at work, including a politics of passionate support for the regulatory expansion of state power over local land-use decisions, albeit for conflicting, sometimes surprising reasons, as well as a less-heated, even elegiac, politics of disappointment and regret with the “actually existing” practices of this particular state-organized activity. Here discontent relates less to the oppressive authoritarianism of state power over individual rights à la Measure 37 than to the insufficient strength or state capacity to organize socially preferred futures. The (planning) state is not too strong, in other words, it is too weak. Discontent, then, has multiple sources and varied authorships. While there is plenty of neoliberal revolt in the land, there is also an ongoing geopolitics of engagement, diversity, and tradition that also need sustained attention.

Accordingly, in making a concrete case for a planning story crosscut by multiple, contending, even contradictory spatial rationalities and political tensions, I am arguing more abstractly, with David Perry (1995: 145) and others (e.g., Huxley, 1999, 2006; Kenney, 1992; McCann, 2001; Brenner, 1997), that we should “think about planning spatially,” that we should try to locate “the varied politics and technologies of planning—its various discourses—in their contextualized place[s] in society” (cf. Cooke, 1983). I am arguing, in other words, that we should see the smart growth paradigm for urban growth management, in particular, as an ongoing territorial struggle—as a still open project of geopolitical agency that concomitantly reflects both progressive and regressive tendencies pulsing within society as a whole, but not necessarily as a sequential displacement of one for the other. For space not only holds multiple stories; it is malleable, reversible, and thus deeply political (Lefebvre, 1991; Latour, 1993).

The overall purpose of this book is to chart the contours of these geopolitics, or state territorialities, linking them in specific places to the larger promises and everyday practices of, arguably, one of the most pressing issues of our times: the need to manage urban growth in metropolitan regions increasingly structured by the accumulation imperatives of the global economy, yes, but also by the “long emergencies” of global
ecological sustainability and the profoundly deleterious urban consequences of social injustice. To do this, the book sets out to introduce and synthesize our collective knowledge of urban growth management experiences in the United States even as it offers a specific (geographical) interrogation and interpretation of these land-planning experiences in related but also different settings across the country.

Why offer such a contribution? In short, because no treatment of this kind is currently on offer. Despite a well-developed and rich literature on urban growth management practices in the U.S. context, little work is available that pulls together and thinks through the historical, theoretical, practical, evaluative, and political dimensions of the experience in different geographical settings in different regions of the country. In particular, we lack geographically inclined scholarship that interrogates the interplay between local, regional, and state levels of policy implementation across the varied institutional terrain of the country. Instead “knowledge of program effects has been built in a piecemeal way,” as John Carruthers (2002: 391) rightly laments, “often without explicit recognition of the relevant institutional setting. Scale clearly makes a difference. [But] without a clear understanding of this relationship, supporters are left to defend against criticisms that are more a problem of political organization than of specific growth management policies.”

This book attempts to fill a major gap in the literature by focusing not only on the promises and practices of urban growth management but, as just indicated, even more on the geopolitics—by which I mean the contested politics of spatial governance at various scales—associated with these promises and practices. This methodological commitment takes place, space, and scale seriously in thinking through the general politics of urban governance (Martin et al., 2003; cf. Perry, 1995; Huxley, 1999, 2006; Yiftachel, 1998, 2000; Brenner 1997, 1999, 2002; McCann, 2001; Murdoch and Abrams, 2003; Soja, 1989, 2000; Hanson and Cowell, 2002). In this sense, this book also attempts to relate recent scholarship within critical geography to a particular set of planning problems. Let us therefore consider these problems in more detail in the next section before further outlining the main questions and overall organization of the book.

Confronting the “City-Regional” Condition

Whether urban planning is perceived as progressive or regressive, whether it is about social investment or political theft, indeed whether it
is all these things and more, future demographic and economic growth in the United States is now all but certain. In recent decades, the American population has grown an average of 1.23 percent per year, a rate that far outpaces most other advanced economies in the world. From 1990 to 2003, for instance, the population of the European Union grew only 0.31 percent per year while Japan’s growth, which dipped to 0.17 percent per annum in 2005, will actually begin to shrink sometime after 2010 (OECD, 2005). In contrast, over the next fifty years the United States will likely add a hundred million people to the country—about twenty-eight Oregons. Dealing skillfully with rapid growth is therefore one of the truly important political challenges in the contemporary era.

This political challenge is a metropolitan challenge. That is to say, future growth will occur neither on our great-grandfathers’ farms nor in the Pleasantvilles of the Hollywood imaginary, but in large, multijurisdictional, areas influenced by the global economy—or city-regions, as discussed in this book. Strictly speaking, “cities” in the United States refer more narrowly to general-purpose municipalities of various kinds, such as the City of Seattle, a large central municipality, or the City of Fircrest, a small suburb outside of Tacoma. Both these cities are located in bigger urban areas, which are technically defined by core census blocks that exceed 1,000 people/mile² plus adjacent census blocks that exceed 500 people per square mile. Metropolitan Areas (MAs) are counties, much bigger than urban areas, that are greater than 100,000 people and have at least one urban center of more than 50,000 people, such as Olympia, Washington. Finally, Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Areas (CMSAs) are contiguous clusters of MAs, such as the Seattle-Tacoma-Bremerton CMSA.

City-regions in this book are, in practical terms, analytically larger than individual municipalities but typically smaller than ecological regions such as the Pacific Northwest or even metropolitan counties. City-regions therefore refer mainly to groups of clustered and highly integrated census blocks along with unincorporated areas adjacent to (but still articulated with) these blocks. These unincorporated areas may be considered rural but are nonetheless tied to the urban core at least in spatial policy terms, particularly where this involves state-coordinated growth management techniques, such as farmland preservation zoning; forest, nature and habitat protection; and/or the use of regional planning tools such as UGBs and the transfer of development rights.

The typical case for the expanded use of these kinds of planning tools—the case for urban growth management in U.S. city-regions so
defined—is based on a series of aesthetic, social, economic, and ecological concerns (Barnett, 1995; Ewing, 1997; Dreier et al., 2001). Suburban areas, in particular, are seen by many as a hodgepodge of illegible cul-de-sacs and chained-out retailers spatially fragmented in homogenous, car-dependent pods and commercialized strips—placeless spaces defined by droll architecture that facilitates privacy and consumption, but degrades environment and community. Meanwhile, for some critics, too many parcels of urban land sit vacant, unattended and starved of appropriate care—dispiriting wounds in otherwise interesting landscapes that are well-serviced but tragically underutilized. This state of affairs is, for these same critics, geographically unsound (see Pagano and Bowman, 2000).

It is also unfair. Average cost pricing for basic urban services, such as gas and electricity, often means that “low-income ratepayers in the city pay more than what it costs the utility to serve them. The excess revenue in the city subsidizes utility service in expensive-to-service development in far-flung suburbs” (Richmond, 1998: 11). Compounding this prosaic but consequential inequity, federal tax policy subsidizes home-ownership, making “expensive-to-service” space far cheaper to households than to society as a whole (Jackson, 1985).

In themselves, home-ownership subsidies bring many positive benefits to many people, including a cultural sense of “control” and “success.” But renters, who typically make up over half the population of central cities, do not receive similar federal largesse. The steady drain on urban wealth through subsidized suburbanization thus invariably forces city governments to spread diminished tax bases too thin in order to fill ever more potholes while they try to reinvent their battered economies with convention centers, waterfront condos, and tourist attractions—spatial policies that, it has been argued, benefit actually existing people far less than hoped-for elites (see Keating and Krumholtz, 1992).

Justice and fairness arguments aside, other researchers point out that the spatial location and fiscal demands of contemporary development may negatively influence a region’s long-term competitiveness (Bank of America, 1995; Mattoon, 1995; Nelson and Peterman, 2000). Building on Alfred Marshall’s classic view that clusters of interdependent firms and workers do most to structure city development, for example, Cervero (2000) posits that productivity gains accrue to urban arenas that foster dense labor markets, vibrant centers, and efficient transportation systems. By implication, diffused labor markets, lifeless centers, and traffic congestion likely push up collective transaction costs, which in turn damages regional competitiveness.
Despite employment decentralization (Coffey and Sheamer, 2001), the argument here is that suburbs cannot easily escape the powerful gravity of urban neglect because cities and their suburbs remain “specialized parts” of the same metropolitan economy—different “worlds,” but orbiting within the same city-regional system (Downs, 1973; Voith, 1998). At the very least, suburbs may well fare worse when their central cities are in serious economic decline (Pastor et al., 2000). For this reason, Voith (1992), Savitch (1993, 1995), and Ledebur and Barnes (1993) suspect that central city decay may ultimately generate long-term economic under-performance and stagnation, an important theme in the broader literature that calls for a “new regionalism” (cf. Orfield, 1997; Rusk, 1995, 1999; Savitch and Vogel, 2000; Frisken and Norris, 2001; Hodos, 2002). While these claims are hotly debated (Swanstrom, 2001), they form key planks in the case for a metropolitan approach to urban growth management, especially where this links together the twin problems of suburban sprawl and urban poverty (Wiewel and Schaffer, 2001).

Most dramatic, though, is the synoptic concern that antiurban, low-density, discontinuous, and car-dependent landscapes threaten not only metropolitan ecosystems but also life on earth as presently understood (Riddell, 2004). At the metropolitan scale, poorly located urban development paves over farmland, destroys poorly understood and ecologically undervalued habitats, and fragments forestlands. While there is plenty of blame to go around, Honaschevsky (2000: 5–6), in particular, casts a stern eye on conventional land-use planners, who “insist on pursuing land-planning practices that should have been discarded ages ago” and who, more to the point, “remain appallingly uninformed about the structure, functions, and overall health of the environment they want to protect.”

Far more instrumental than influential, Honaschevsky’s argument is slightly unfair: Professional planners are only one set of actors in the urban development arena. But his core critique remains seminal: The ecological impact of conventional land-planning practices does not stop at the metropolitan edge. In part because they are so spread out, “American [city-regions], especially,” Beatley (2000: 3–4) laments, “have high carbon dioxide emissions, produce large amounts of waste, and draw in large amounts of energy and resources.”

So while city-regions are part and parcel of America’s overall aesthetic, fiscal, social, and ecological challenges, they are also necessarily at the heart of any serious political effort to address these challenges in the
coming years. The focus in the coming chapters, then, is on metropolitan areas—functional city-regions—that are also located politically in states with moderate to substantial land-use legislation broadly comparable, if by no means identical, to Oregon’s SB100 as it has evolved over time. In addition to Portland, Oregon, the book discusses recent developments in Seattle-Tacoma, Washington; Metropolitan Baltimore, Maryland; and Madison-Dane County, Wisconsin. Moreover, examples from Florida, New Jersey, California, and other states are also addressed, especially in chapters 2, 4 and 5.

Several synoptic questions are asked: How has urban growth management evolved over time, not only in pioneering states such as Oregon but also in other regions across the country? What theories inspire urban growth management practices? What tools and techniques, such as UGBs, are applied in actual territorial strategies and what do we know about their environmental (and geopolitical) results so far? Finally, within the empirical context of the detailed case studies in particular, what sorts of new geographies, material or otherwise, might we begin to associate with these new efforts? Put another way, what are the new state territorialities of this particular form of urban planning and what do these state territorialities teach us about the prospects for ameliorating some of the most threatening aspects of the city-regional condition?

Outline of the Book

These and other more specific research questions are interrogated over the next eight chapters, which are organized into three main parts.

Part I sets the stage for the overall discussion by first addressing key historical and theoretical issues. Chapter 2 provides a historical overview of urban growth management. The main idea advanced is that the contemporary smart growth paradigm represents a new geographical solution for “pro-growth” and “anti-growth” histories, a “solution” that highlights political regionalism, stronger attention to design traditions, as well as so-called neoliberal ideals, such as improved regulatory flexibility and institutional efficiency. The powers of planning systems are discussed and the historical purpose of local government in managing and regulating the urban environment is briefly explicated. Most importantly, the changing role of state-level government is highlighted as a key political theme in U.S. planning and urban history. Central to this latter discussion is a synopsis of several of the country’s strongest urban growth management programs, where reform has gone well beyond mere tinkering.
Extending this historical analysis, chapter 3 develops an overall theoretical framework with which to interrogate what I call the territorialities of the smart growth paradigm. Drawing on recent work in post-structural geography, the analysis builds on the opening assertion that planning is both space-making and place-contingent—a geographical instrument of the state but also an empirical object for geographical analysis. The chapter lays out the case for thinking about urban planning, in general, and smart growth, in particular, as a contested, contradictory exercise in state territoriality, arguing that the essential hybridity of the smart growth paradigm means we are likely to observe sometimes odd, seemingly incompatible landscapes, relating different spatial rationalities and territorial logics, not only within the same metropolitan region but sometimes even within the same project. A simple analytical tool is provided in order to conceptualize the variegated spatialities of the smart growth paradigm as a territorial project.

Part II then turns to a discussion of the main goals and planning tools of this paradigm. A key component of the smart growth agenda for urban growth management is taken to be the rhetorical articulation of spatial goals, a statement that adopts Henri Lefebvre’s (1991) famous view that “representations of space” partially constitute the (re-)production of urban space. Or as Wilson and Wouters (2003: 131) nicely put it, spatial goals offer “potential landscapes [which both] trap and illuminate what people are told they should dream about.” Accordingly, chapter 4 surveys common smart growth goals articulated in urban growth management documents and policies. The discussion is developed around four types of policy arenas: open space preservation; urban regeneration and fill; design and regulatory flexibility; and regionalism.

Chapter 5 shifts the analysis away from what contemporary programs seek to accomplish (the spatial promises of chapter 4) to how actual agencies around the country implement these goals and aspirations, that is to say, to the tools and techniques of these planning practices. The chapter describes regulatory and nonregulatory growth management tools; explains how they are used with one other, in what combinations and under what specific circumstances; and, most importantly given the book’s central themes, considers what we think we have learned about their empirical performance as contested territorial tools and techniques associated with the multiscaled state. The chapter thus links back to issues developed in chapter 3 even as it anticipates the case studies elaborated in Part III of the book.

Part III provides four detailed discussions of urban growth management systems in different regions of the country and develops the overall
thesis of the book in greater detail. Each of the chapters integrates material presented in the opening chapters and is organized around a critical interrogation of growth and built-environmental trends (including, for example, empirical shifts in building-permit activity and the use of smart growth tools) as well as qualitative analyses based on a range of data sources, including interviews, newspapers, plans, minutes, and so on. In particular, each case study develops a specific component of the overall argument, providing new interpretative layers to the overall analysis.

Taken as a whole, the case studies proceed chronologically in time, “traveling” not only through different periods in planning history discussed in chapter 2 but also across different political regions in the United States. Chapters 6 and 7 look at two cases from the Pacific Northwest, where urban growth management is sometimes considered to be “advanced.” Chapter 6 explores Portland’s experiences, which date back to the 1970s, while chapter 7 focuses on the Seattle-Tacoma city-region, whose expanding efforts to coordinate growth at multiple spatial scales date mostly to the early 1990s. Specifically, chapter 6 both contextualizes and places borders around the “neoliberal turn” within America’s most mature smart growth regime, while chapter 7, building on these insights, focuses ultimately on questions of state rescaling and the complex, competing spatial rationalities and concerns now characterizing this process.

Chapter 8 selectively interrogates how the Maryland discourse of smart growth—much celebrated in recent U.S. planning studies—has influenced dynamics and spatial development in the Baltimore area since the mid-1990s. Highlighting the central importance of race, the Baltimore case study nonetheless specifically suggests that the expansion of state power is not only more variegated but also more politically open than the synoptic triumph of neoliberal rationalities and governance might otherwise lead us to conclude. Finally, arguing for the conflict-laden but still real possibility of a progressive city-regional project, chapter 9 explores how the recently instituted Wisconsin approach to urban growth management has begun to shape urban planning and territorial governance in the Madison-Dane County region.

Chapter 10 concludes the book by linking the smart growth paradigm’s recent impact on urban growth management practices to the future of urban planning in metropolitan America, that is to say, to the next steps that need to be taken in both researching and activating this project. Of special interest are the promises and practices of urban growth management as balanced alongside the varied geopolitics of discontent.
with the planning systems now being built across the vast and differentiated terrain of the United States. Most importantly, the chapter argues for more research of a global comparative nature, a dénouement that seeks to link American urban and planning studies to broader debates associated with international scholarship on cities and urban socio-environmental change.
This part of the book develops the overall theme that contemporary theories of how to plan for urban growth and metropolitan change emerge in large part, though not exclusively, from collective historical experiences. So while chapter 3 generally focuses on more theoretical concerns, particularly in regard to defining and mapping the potential impacts of the smart growth paradigm for urban growth management, these theoretical concerns emerge out of a history that stretches across the long twentieth century. For this reason, this historical experience is first addressed in chapter 2.

Not all ideas directly reflect social history, of course, though few if any theoretical claims can escape history. As Karl Mannheim (1949: 239), the Hungarian sociologist of knowledge and a major planning philosopher once put it, “thought adapts itself to the needs of society.” These needs change. Like all other bodies of thought and action, those associated with urban planning have not only adapted to but also reflected broader tensions within, the “needs” of a fast-changing American society and settlement space. Whether or not contemporary theories of smart growth are able to address these needs, and indeed what sorts of politics and geographies are produced and/or transformed as theories guide actions, is a general theme picked up later in the book. For the moment, the discussion focuses on selective moments in the history of urban growth management in the United States. These moments demonstrate the importance of understanding how the state has tried to facilitate and to control growth in the urban and suburban context. The contemporary paradigm of smart growth seeks to mobilize this sometimes conflicted, contradictory history even as it links itself to newer discourses and rationalities in planning and social action.
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CHAPTER 2

Pro-Growth, Anti-Growth, Smart Growth: Urban Growth Management for a “Usable Future”

The past was “usable” when it allowed Americans to pry open spaces in the present for future innovation.

Casey Nelson Blake

Introduction

Contemporary urban growth management in the United States has largely coalesced around a smart growth paradigm that, nonetheless, draws on a much older planning history stretching across the long twentieth century. This history matters to our present analysis not simply because it creates a reservoir of cultural experience and memory that society (selectively) calls upon for guidance—what Lewis Mumford’s friend Van Wyck Brooks (1993 [1918]) first called “a usable past”—but also because it creates material and mental path-dependencies that invariably influence what can be done both today and tomorrow.

Contemporary urban growth management is geographically, politically, and historically constituted. As problems develop, solutions are proposed and institutions are built; once built, institutions house particular forms of political agency and organizational culture. These cultures must accommodate new calls for new reforms when new problems are created from the very use of these once novel institutions. Accordingly, the past invariably shapes the present and partly determines the contours of the future, for societies cannot—and do not—break from the past so much as work with it to create, adapting Brooks, a “usable future.”
The main argument of this chapter is that smart growth, discussed further in chapter 3, is trying to become a usable future for urban growth management, both by drawing on and by reimagining the geographical possibilities of a particular historical experience. What a growing number of planning advocates mean by urban growth management today—politically coordinated smart growth in cities and suburbs (Daniels, 2001)—is different from what they meant by it only a few decades ago (either pro-growth in cities or “growth control” in suburbs); however, urban growth management is also making heavy use of this past as it seeks to shape the future. Specifically, smart growth is seen here as a legitimately new phase in the evolving history of urban growth management that, nonetheless, should be interpreted as a geographical solution to both pro-growth and anti-growth histories (and politics); further, this tension-filled solution highlights the incipient importance of the city-region as the preferred space and scale of territorial governance, a development that has invariably implicated state legislatures.

To detail this argument, the discussion that follows unfolds in four main sections. After outlining the development of urban planning systems in response to problems of (sub)urbanization, the post–World War II emergence of local growth control and growth management in the 1950s and 1960s is explicitly detailed. The discussion then focuses on the steady maturation of urban growth management strategies in the 1970s and 1980s, particularly as these strategies have involved state legislatures in urban and regional planning; finally, the more recent turn to the smart growth paradigm since the mid-1990s is addressed.

(Sub)urbanization and Urban Planning

Urban planning—the conscious attempt to shape urban form and function according to an overall schema, set of values, and/or interests—dates back centuries and characterizes multiple civilizations and cultures. But the modern origins of the U.S. planning profession are typically located by most urban scholars in the late nineteenth century (Dear and Scott, 1981; Klosterman, 1988; Solnit et al., 1987; Hall, 1988). In brief, urban planning emerged as an institutional response to the kinds of daily conditions experienced in cities like Chicago during the Gilded Age (1877–1893), which Max Weber had hauntingly likened to “a human being with his skin removed” (quoted in Larson, 2004: 11).

From the period just before the Civil War to the mid-1920s, the United States fitfully and unevenly shed its slave, rural, and small-town settlement patterns, if not necessarily its cultural orientations. The country
emerged from WWI as a leading industrial power, having moved from the periphery to the core of the world’s economy in little more than five generations. One major consequence was that cities became extremely dense nodes of mass-manufacturing activities, attracting millions of poor migrants from rural regions of the nation as well as immigrant laborers from a diverse range of foreign countries.

Urban industrialization was the spatial expression of an extremely dynamic economy. But it also created startling socio-environmental problems, particularly around public health, aesthetics, safety, and housing quality. Unfortunately, American society was, by and large, culturally and institutionally unprepared for this new reality. “During the first half of the nineteenth century,” Donald Krueckeberg (1997 [1983]: 2–4) observes,

virtually no governmental actions were initiated to control or redirect private development in order to ameliorate worsening housing and living conditions. As a result of this laissez-faire policy, the weakness of municipal authority [. . . ], and the antiurban bias of agrarian philosophy, some of the worst housing and living conditions of the modern era were experienced during the next half century.

Caught in this confusing maelstrom, fast-changing municipalities initially had few regulatory powers to right their course. But eventually—as the problems required solutions—the largest cities began to “manage” the geography of urban growth more deliberately, using basic tools and techniques like comprehensive sewerage systems, zoning ordinances, building codes, and multichaptered “master plans” to harness, service, and ultimately shape urban land markets. Public involvement in private development dynamics was, therefore, increasingly deemed an appropriate responsibility of the state, not only to put the “skin” back on shock cities like Chicago and other industrialized spaces but also to excise what were routinely called “cancerous” growths and physical “malfunctions” that more laissez-faire markets seemed especially skilled at generating, such as highly incompatible land uses and bloated slums periodically wracked by killer diseases such as cholera and yellow fever.

In time, a “special culture of planning,” as Krueckeberg (1997 [1983]: 2–4) further observes, evolved out of a “townsite consciousness” that perceived the city, for the first time in American history, as “a system of interdependent parts and as an object of scientific inquiry.” The city was not exactly managed in the contemporary sense of this word, but a new group of engineers, architects, and civic reformers believed
that it could—and should—be improved. Like all cultures, the special
culture of planning and its townsite consciousness generated new arti-
facts, such as illustrated plans in the early 1900s; new rituals, such as
annual conferences and academic papers in the 1910s; new administra-
tive institutions, such as citizen-driven planning commissions in the
1920s; and finally, new educational and professional credentialing sys-
tems, particularly at the university level in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s.

Until well into the twentieth century, though, the limited powers of
urban governments to impose restrictions on private land uses and other
environmental assets reflected their constitutionally subordinated status.
Because U.S. municipalities are considered “creatures of the state,” they
draw all their regulatory and spending powers—including the power to
plan, manage, and/or invest in land development—from state legisla-
tures, who literally enable or constrain municipal and county activities
through state land use and other laws. Before the adoption of subdivi-
sion regulations, as Eric Damian Kelly (1993: 17) has specifically noted,
private developers simply graded streets to the standards that seemed
most practical and profitable; only later, soon after the developers
departed, would urban voters pressure local (and state) governments to
improve the “often shoddy infrastructure.”

The City Beautiful Movement, which produced the Burnham Plan
for Chicago in 1909 (and John Nolan’s 1911 vision of a future Madison),
relied mainly on public investments in public spaces, parks, and street
systems. Like other plans of the day, the Chicago Plan lacked much con-
trol over privately held land. It also paid scant attention to serious social
problems, such as the slums and tenements of the new immigrant neigh-
borhoods. However, the Chicago plan’s regional vision; its long-term
imagination of deliberate, state-organized spatial ordering; its focus on
the practical benefits of strategically sequenced public investments; and
perhaps most important, its savvy attention to involving the broader
public represent important “moments” in the institutionalization of plan-
ning systems, in general, and early growth management mentalities, in
particular.

Eventually, state-level support for local government control over pri-
ivate land development strengthened during the 1920s and thereafter, in
part because the federal government helped local innovations—such as
the 1917 zoning ordinance in New York City—diffuse rapidly across
the country. Specifically, as secretary of commerce in the early 1920s,
Herbert Hoover, a civil engineer by training, commissioned standard
enabling legislation for planning and zoning. After the U.S. Supreme
Court upheld the right of municipalities to regulate private land through
zoning in 1926, state legislatures steadily adopted these two standard statutes (Florida was one of the last states to do so, in 1939). One consequence was that community-based plans for future land use and infrastructure needs became increasingly common, focusing public attention on the management of land-use patterns, transportation systems, recreational facilities, and the overall aesthetic quality of built and natural environments.

This does not suggest that urban planning swept uniformly across the governance landscape of the country, especially in more rural and conservative areas. The comprehensive plans that did exist were not that comprehensive by contemporary standards, especially in terms of housing strategies and urban ecological concerns. Moreover, they were frequently unrelated in everyday governing practice to a community’s zoning and other land-regulatory tools—and they were, as it turned out, technically insufficient to guide meaningfully what was about to hit the country. For the densest period in American history, roughly between 1880 and 1920, was now coming to an end.

Although the Great Depression slowed the pace of urban growth, the United States was already in the early stages of what Jon Teaford (2006) calls the “metropolitan revolution.” Signs of change were visible for many years: Streetcar suburbs had already elongated nineteenth-century settlement patterns well before WWI, for instance. But Henry Ford’s mass-produced cars and five-dollar per day wages blew apart these older patterns as ordinary factory workers could now afford the cars they were making. Though still tied to central cities during WWII, auto-induced suburbanization in the 1920s and 1930s had already started to devalorize urban space in core areas, with decadal growth rates for central cities starting to decline. As the humorist Will Rogers quipped during the Great Depression: “We’ll be the first nation in the world to go to the poor house in an automobile.” Ultimately, much of the nation drove to suburbia—and stayed.

Over time, a number of grand, older cities like St. Louis and Baltimore would lose one-third or more of their residents to peripheral areas. Newly suburbanized residents soon gained enough political and voting clout in state legislatures to reform incorporation laws, locking central cities into contained spaces that were smaller, poorer, and during and after WWII, blacker. As Beauregard (2006) puts it, the country had now experienced a major “rupture.”

Poignantly, Teaford’s metropolitan revolution was at one time an open political and spatial project. The opening years of FDR’s New Deal, particularly under Rex Tugwell’s efforts as head of the resettlement
administration, included the possibility that Mumford’s (1938) synthetic vision of “concentrated decentralization” might actually be realized, or at least given the breathing space and time to compete as an alternative human settlement strategy. Broadly put, this alternative combined the garden city model propounded by the Englishman Ebenezer Howard with the cultural, ecological, and political regionalism of the Scottish polymath Patrick Geddes. Peter Hall (1992: 49-52, emphasis added) explains the intellectual role Mumford played in drawing these ideas together:

The conclusion Geddes drew was a logical one: if [suburbanization] was happening and would continue to happen under the pressure of economic and social forces, town planning must be subsumed under town and country planning, or planning for whole regions encompassing a number of towns and their surrounding spheres of influence. Howard and his supporters had already drawn the same conclusion; and between the two world wars aided by the persuasive writing of Geddes’ American follower Lewis Mumford—whose 1938 text the *Culture of Cities* became almost the Bible of the regional planning movement—the idea gained a great deal of credence among thinking planners and administrators.

As in Chicago a generation earlier, regionalism again formed an important planning principle in the American context. But the “thinking planners and administrators” were, it seems, mostly located in Britain, Sweden, and Holland, where such ideas were more influential than they were in the liberal United States. Instead, a new spatial development agenda emerged from the unanticipated but ultimately powerful interplay of four government-led programs (Levy 2006): urban renewal in central-city environments, which cleared the ground of slums to make room for public-institutional and corporate reinvestments; the segregation and functional isolation of public housing projects in central cities; federal subsides for home-ownership and mortgage insurance in Fordist suburbs; and, most importantly, the financing of an integrated national highway system, which opened up more land for suburban and residential development.

The new highway system, as John Levy (2006: 9) argues, was probably the most important catalyst that sped the spatial and environmental interaction of the other programs in “one great concentrated metropolitan transformation.” All in all, Mumford’s visionary moment had (temporarily) passed as the early policy experimentation of the New Deal gradually gave way to the economic and demographic consequences of a
second global war—and a new domestic spatial identity befitting a new kind of geopolitical power (Beauregard, 2006).

**Local Pro-Growth, Anti-Growth, and Growth Management**

The spatial development patterns that emerged after WWII had two profound implications that, in many ways, continue to shape the country in the present millennium. The first was the urban crisis of the 1960s, arguably reaching critical mass in the race riots of cities like Los Angeles, Chicago, and Detroit. Well before these horrific and painful uprisings, though, when the suburban writing was already on the wall, most of these older, fast-decaying cities pursued pro-growth planning, with issues of equity and social justice often sacrificed upon the altar of urban economic development (one of the reasons for the riots in the first place).

Indeed, according to many scholars writing in the interdisciplinary field of urban political economy, pro-growth planning in cities had by now become “a basic feature” of urban politics more generally, where it has since remained:

Although intellectual disagreements—paradigmatic, methodological, and ideological—persist a consensus among scholars has evolved regarding the basic feature of central city politics. Capturing the thrust of these studies in urban political economy, Elkin (1995) summarizes that “any enduring pattern in city politics . . . will revolve around an alliance of city politicians and an array of businessmen [sic] concerned with land use in the city” (p. 25). This alliance . . . will in turn come together around and be dedicated to a political agenda oriented toward intensifying the city’s land use via the pursuit of local economic growth. (Imbrescio, 1997: 4)

The results have been dramatic and controversial. As just mentioned, the first stage of the modern pro-growth effort to intensify urban land uses, roughly from 1949 to 1973, meant federally subsidized urban renewal. Most famously, Robert Moses “renewed” New York City through expressways, parkways, and large housing projects—often at staggering social costs for minority communities (and the loss of icons like the Brooklyn Dodgers, who reluctantly flew off to postwar Los Angeles in 1957). Moses-style urban renewal ostensibly fell into disrepute by the early 1970s, although the term *urban renewal*, albeit usually redefined to reflect smart growth theory, is still widely used in everyday planning practice (e.g., City of Missoula, 2005). 1
Since the 1970s, central cities have attempted fresh comebacks by attracting cultural bohemians, yuppies, and, in recent years, the “creative class” (Florida, 2001), though with less federal largesse than in previous decades. Pro-growth policies in cities today are often focused on convention centers, light-rail, sports stadiums, cultural attractions like museums, and downtown living complexes (Strom, 2002; Breen and Ribgy, 2004; Sanders, 2005). However, these projects are frequently legitimated by the smart growth canon of mixed-use infill, historic preservation, and adaptive reuse, ideas propounded originally by Jane Jacobs (1961) as a cultural and aesthetic alternative to Moses-style urban renewal.

The second major implication of the post–WWII dynamic was the realization that rapid suburbanization was now not only generating a physical crisis, particularly in regard to environmental damage, but also producing fiscal and quality-of-life issues. Though a certain measure of residential decentralization was likely inevitable given the privations of depression and war, suburban growth in the car-driving United States now seemed to mean only one choice: “haphazardly planned, low-density residential development interspersed with strip commercial and retail development linked by a vast street and highway system that over-emphasize[d] automobile use and de-emphasize[d] mass transit” (Braun, cited in Fishman and Gechter, 2004: 2).

Inevitably, a range of novel strategies to govern this type of sprawl in the suburbs started to evolve, a theme Kelly (1993) has explored. As discussed earlier, the introduction of comprehensive or master plans as well as implementation tools like zoning and subdivision regulations well before WWII had already created legal and administrative mechanisms to regulate more deliberately the functional character and, to a lesser extent, location of new development. But the muscular economic growth of the 1950s, in Kelly’s (1993) view, exposed major limitations in the U.S. planning system, especially in regard to the timing of development. Specifically, local planning systems possessed limited administrative and fiscal capacity to link private land developments in the new suburban landscapes—what Kenneth Jackson (1987) has called “the crabgrass frontier”—with the adequate provision of basic urban and social services, such as schools, storm drainage, and road capacity. Despite the regionalist tradition, municipal planning systems were also poorly integrated with the land use, transportation, and/or service plans of other authorities, such as state transportation departments and adjacent municipalities.

Nonetheless, as early as the mid-1950s, a few communities, such as Milford, Connecticut, and Clarkstown, New York, began to experiment
with new planning strategies, particularly as these strategies involved
the improved timing and servicing of new residential growth. But by the
early 1970s, growth-planning strategies began to focus more on outright
control than on management per se, especially in fast-changing munici-
palities in demographically dynamic states like California (Zorn et al.,
1986). Indeed, the paradigmatic case for what is now euphemistically
called “growth control” is probably still Petaluma, a community in the
wine-growing region roughly forty miles north of the San Francisco met-
ropolitan region.

As elsewhere in the United States, rapid suburbanization facilitated
by postwar highway building and the return to economic health after a
generation of delayed consumption put new pressures on smaller, once
rural, communities like Petaluma (Schwartz et al., 1984). Still an agri-
cultural trading center in the 1950s, its population soon increased from
14,000 to 25,000 over the course of the 1960s, roughly 8 percent per
year. This growth placed enormous stress on extant sewerage and water
systems and caused major overcrowding in schools. It also threatened the
town’s cultural identity. By 1972, Petaluma adopted a growth limitation
program, the major feature of which was a quota of 500 new housing
units per year from 1972 to 1977. Developers competed for local plan-
ing permission, and a citizen review board evaluated proposals based on
both fiscal and quality-of-design criteria. The amount of development
was cut by two-thirds, and local housing prices sky-rocketed, benefiting
home-owners already in the community but punishing those who wished
to move in, such as renters.

Though motivations for growth control strategies like these typically
range from the protection of community character to the maintenance
of public services and fiscal health—all worthy objectives in technical
isolation—Frieden (1979) rightly referred to this sort of local response as
little more than the “defense of privilege,” an infamous term in U.S. plan-
n ing studies that aptly illustrates the geopolitical concept of state territo-
riality that will be discussed in chapter 3 (cf. Logan and Zhou, 1989).

The effects of growth control on social equity soon brought commu-
nities into direct conflict with the wider visions of state legislatures and
state courts, suggesting how the politics of space frequently implicate the
politics of scale, a theme also discussed in chapter 3 and throughout this
book. Most importantly, courts in both California and New Jersey even-
tually held that local planning systems cannot deliver benefits only to
local residents if they adversely impact residents elsewhere (Zorn et al.,
1986). In New Jersey’s famous Mt Laurel I case, for example, the court
specifically held that a local community cannot generate “negative
regional impacts on the supply of lower-income housing” (Schwartz et al., 1984: 184).²

This equity concern suggested that communities had to manage rather than control growth, especially in metropolitan areas—city-regions—where the spatial and social externalities of local decisions are amplified enormously by the sheer propinquity of otherwise independent political authorities. In the end, Chinitz (1990) memorably argued that isolated efforts at growth control were quite simply “good for the city, bad for the nation”—and one might add, bad for the city-region, as Geddes, Howard, and Mumford all originally understood. This equity concern remains important today, an issue that is picked up again later in the discussion. For the moment, it is necessary only to highlight the parallel experience of communities that, again largely on their own, chose to focus more on managing the future geography rather than on managing the present demography of new residential and commercial growth.

One such community was Fort Collins, Colorado. Like Petaluma, Fort Collins started off as an agriculture trading center, but its rapid growth was ultimately determined more by the presence of Colorado State University. With the widening of higher educational opportunities in the 1960s, Fort Collins experienced massive new development pressure, doubling its population every ten years. This pressure continued to characterize the 1990s, as high-tech firms swarmed to the human capital assets of the university—a central feature of “post-Fordist” urbanization.

To address this growth, the city initiated in the early 1980s what Levy (2006: 236) has characterized as “‘growth management’ instead of ‘growth control’ in the sense that the effort is to shape growth not eliminate it.” Central to this strategy was that property developers now had to pay for specific infrastructure, as elsewhere; no less important, though, was the regional use of an urban growth area. Specifically, the new development area—a political space no less than a physical one—emerged out of intergovernmental agreements between the City of Fort Collins and Larimer County. The agreements specified a joint two-level planning process throughout what could now be conceptualized as shared territory, if for no other reason than it was conceived as a new regulatory space (Lefebvre, 1991). In fact, over the years, Fort Collins and Larimer County’s joint planning efforts have resulted in compatible development standards and strategies, further integrating the material geography—the actual spatial practices—of these two different entities. One local official has reported, “This strategy hasn’t effected the amount of growth . . . but how it looks is different than most places growing at this rate” (NACo, 2001: 18).
Without romanticizing this example, the Fort Collins experience nonetheless highlights, it might be argued, the historical promise of directly addressing the “interrelated fortunes of adjacent areas” (Hodge and Robinson, 2002: 6), that is to say, of taking a city-regional approach to urban growth management in settlement spaces that are, in fact, city-regions in an ecological and economic sense. But it also highlights one of the county’s most important geo-political realities. By the end of the twentieth century, the average metropolitan region in the United States had more than eighty general-purpose governments and even more special-purpose districts (e.g., school, fire, water, transportation). But is this sort of political fragmentation really a problem when it comes to urban growth management?

For some, the answer is not at all. Fragmentation is not bad; rather it is good. As I shall discuss in chapter 3, this conviction draws heavily on public choice theory for legitimacy. In particular, Charles Tiebout (1956), in one of the most influential theoretical contributions ever made to urban studies, posited that political fragmentation promotes economic competition for residents. Just as many specialized products generate competition in the marketplace, a lot of autonomous governments in a metropolitan region create similarly beneficial “quasi-market” conditions by promoting choice and competition. People should be able to live in whatever community delivers the specific basket of municipal services that most suits their lifestyle, choosing their community much like they would kitchen products (Dreier et al., 2001).

For others, though, political fragmentation is perhaps the major obstacle in the improved management of urban growth (Orfield 1997; Fulton and Calthorpe, 2001). Instead, more regional strategies are required, though precisely what these strategies should (or even can) involve is extensively debated (Swanstrom, 1999; Pastor et al., 2000).

From a historical perspective, the financial and social costs associated with suburbanization and central-city decline in the 1960s elevated fiscal and equity concerns, respectively; and policy arguments for improved regional governance surfaced (yet again) during the Great Society experiment of the 1960s (echoing the regional thinking of both the first Progressive Era and the New Deal). However, only a handful of localities fundamentally restructured their political and planning landscapes in the wake of these latest regionalist arguments. Most notably, as discussed briefly in chapter 1, Portland, Oregon, recovered some of the original cultural, institutional, and ecological recommendations that Lewis Mumford had originally made to city leaders back in 1936 (Bianco, 2001).
But the Portland paradigm did not emerge organically or solely from the grass roots; rather it was the deliberate institutional product of state-level politics. That is to say, the regional approach to urban growth management—which, as shall be discussed in chapter 3, is now one of the main goals of the smart growth paradigm—was not constructed internally by the region on its own. It was largely mandated from above by an increasingly concerned state legislature (building on, it would seem, the regional initiatives of an increasingly concerned federal government). For this reason, it is necessary to consider in more detail the growing importance of state legislatures in organizing so-called “local” urban growth management strategies, particularly where this involvement seeks to strengthen regional planning efforts among cities, counties, and suburbs.

**State-Level Involvement with Urban Growth Management**

The United States faced an odd paradox around 1970. Post–WWII growth was both “good” and “bad”—depending mainly on its location. Geography, then, not demography was the core issue. In the face of this paradox, state-legislative involvement in the spatial contradictions of local growth policies deepened substantially during the 1970s and 1980s, a development that represents one of the most important aspects in the overall restructuring of the twentieth-century state, or what Scott Bollens (1992: 455) once characterized as “the transference of growth policy authority from local to state government.” Following this insight, spatial matters of land use and environmental management, like legal matters of civil rights, were now increasingly (though selectively) subject to the politics of scale, wherein nonlocal actors might participate in the policy choices that otherwise “local” actors make about putatively “local” land use and environmental change.

In the early 1970s, Bosselman and Callies (1971) provided a politically charged, and much cited, metaphor for this deepening involvement of states in local land use and environmental affairs (such as Hawaii’s statewide zoning ordinance of 1961) as well as new regional-scale initiatives just then emerging in the country (including Nevada’s Tahoe Regional Planning Commission and Minnesota’s Twin Cities Municipal Council). For these two scholars, all this territorial rescaling constituted a “quiet revolution” in the land planning system:

The *ancien régime* being overthrown is the feudal system under which the entire pattern of land development has been controlled by thousands of
individual local governments, each seeking to maximize its tax base and minimize its social problems, and caring less about what happens to all the others. The tools of the revolution are new [state] laws taking a wide variety of forms but each sharing a common theme—the need to provide some degree of state or regional participation in the major decisions that affect the use of our increasingly limited supply of land. (p. 1)

Building on the pioneering research of De Grove (1984, 1992), Bollens (1992), Weitz (1999), and many others (Nelson et al., 1995), Anthony (2004: 379) suggests that local governments located in the country’s more revolutionary states are now either required or strongly encouraged to plan, and that plans are frequently subject to state and, in some cases, regional review. Moreover, local plans must often include mandatory elements; couple development approval with infrastructure provisioning; seek consistency with local, regional, and state plans; and finally include measures designed to protect valuable ecological assets. Notwithstanding these common themes, however, differences in approach also characterize each state’s land-use revolution.

Each of the states surveyed below has not passed a clear, easily identified Rubicon, dividing them in kind from other states in the country. Precisely what constitutes comprehensive state-level growth management reform and what does not is still debatable, though provisional typologies are available (Weitz, 1999). Moreover, several smaller states not discussed here—Rhode Island, Maine, and Delaware—are frequently cited as particularly progressive smart growth states. State-level planning reform is therefore better understood as a continuum because legislation is subject to varying levels of transformation.

Cobb (1999) observed a few years ago that most state laws in the United States were then inadequate to meet the contemporary challenges of urban growth. Half of all states in 1999, for example, were still using land-use planning legislation conceived largely in the 1920s; only about a quarter had by then pursued what he called “moderate to substantial” planning reforms. In consequence, people in fast-growing states like Washington, Oregon, New Jersey, and Florida, to name only a few states discussed below, now open their morning newspapers to find a steady diet of articles dealing with smart growth themes of various kinds, while, in contrast, these themes barely register in other areas of the country.

At the national scale, then, urban growth management is a geographically constituted phenomenon, though no comprehensive treatment of this “planscape” (J. Hall, 1983) has yet to appear in the literature. We can make some basic statements. Moderate reforms imply only that the
new planning laws have significant modernizations, but they do not overturn previous legislation in toto; whereas “substantial reform” completely transforms state planning legislation. With this in mind, the most modernized laws, according to Stewart Meck (1999), are generally found in states on the two coasts, where urbanization has been especially intense. However, even this point must be qualified. A number of non-coastal states, including slow-growing but still-sprawling places like Wisconsin and Iowa, have also seen significant new attempts to reform their planning legislation (Hamin, 2003). The broad range of reforms in key (but not all) states over time is outlined below, starting with Hawaii and ending with Wisconsin.

From Hawaii to Wisconsin

Again, the participation of higher-scale actors in ostensibly local land-development dynamics began in the Hawaiian Islands, where post–WWII growth in the tourist industry threatened limited agricultural assets, particularly pineapple and sugarcane production. “It all began in Hawaii,” Bosselman and Callies (1971: 5) originally noted, because it was the first state to establish a statewide land-use planning system. Central to Hawaii’s strategy, as embodied in the Land Use Law of 1961, was the creation of a Land Use Commission. The main charge of this commission was to divide the entire state of Hawaii into four zoning categories: urban, agricultural, rural, and conservation.

Lands located in “urban” zones could be developed or not developed according to local zoning and other regulations; these zones also included adequate reserves for future urban expansion—similar to urban growth areas adopted later in Oregon and Washington. However, after 1964, lands redesignated as “agriculture” and “rural” had to comply with development regulations and functional standards established by the Land Use Commission, which now handled requests for boundary changes and special permit applications. Finally, lands that fell within “conservation” zones of the state had to comply with regulations established by the State Department of Land and Natural Resources.

At the opposite end of the country, Vermont followed Hawaii’s remarkable new lead in land-use planning reforms, in part because it too was a small state experiencing new pressures from tourism (albeit due to the attractions of snowy ski slopes rather than tropical beaches). But, Vermont’s system emerged incrementally. In 1970, the legislature adopted the State Land Use and Development Control Law (Act 250), which established a statewide review process for projects that had a clear
regional rather than local impact (such as a major shopping mall). As Bollens (1992: 457) writes: “State regulatory oversight [in Vermont] is automatically triggered if development projects are of a certain size threshold or are within state designated critical areas.”

Act 250 was strengthened in 1973, when review criteria were extended to include soils, aesthetics, historic resources, public investments, energy conservation, and fiscal health. The state also created a trust fund for affordable housing and historic preservation in 1987. Finally, a new State Growth Management Act (Act 200) was passed in 1988. Prior to Act 200, Vermont’s system was designed principally to block development projects with potentially adverse effects (Miller, 2003). The new law supplemented the regional impact studies of the 1970s by requiring regional planning commissions and state agencies to adopt land-use plans consistent with statewide goals and policies. In addition, it required municipal plans to meet state standards, and it offered municipalities that adopted plans eligibility for special planning grants and the right to levy local impact fees.

Unlike Vermont and similar to Hawaii, the State of Oregon pursued a more assertive, “top-down” approach to planning reform when it passed SB100 in 1973 (also known as the Land Use Act). Instead of providing incentives to municipalities to develop comprehensive plans, as was the case in Vermont, SB100 established nineteen statewide goals and mandated that all municipalities prepare comprehensive plans that implement these statewide goals. These goals continue to carry the force of state law and relate to land use, resource management, economic development, and citizen participation (discussed further in chapters 4 and 6).

Largely, in response to heavy suburban growth in the Willamette Valley, where today 70 percent of Oregonians live on only 14 percent of the state’s land, the Oregon model also explicitly emphasized the urban containment of sprawl through the regional coordination of UGBs and zoning for exclusive farm use (figure 2.1). Institutionally, SB100 created a new Department of Land Conservation and Development. Its policymaking body today consists of commissioners appointed by the governor and confirmed by the senate. Amongst other responsibilities, these commissioners identify critical areas of statewide concern and establish land-use standards for state and local agencies (Abbott et al., 1994). More will be said of the Oregon model in chapter 6.

Florida also launched statewide planning and environmental reforms in the early 1970s. Focusing initially on threats to precarious water and environmental resources in the southern part of the state, Florida passed
three major pieces of legislation that directly affected local land-development dynamics: the Water Resources Act, the Comprehensive Planning Act, and the Land Conservation Act. The central focus of urban growth management activity, however, was only firmly established in 1975, with the passage of the State Comprehensive Planning Act. This act not only mandated, as in Oregon, that all local governments prepare, adopt, and implement comprehensive plans. It also required vertical, horizontal, and internal consistency among state, regional, and local plans, the public management principle for which Florida is best known (Feiock 2004).

In 1985, after ten years of practical experience exposed the vagueness of local goals, the state passed the Local Government Comprehensive Planning Act, which further required that the state formally review local plans to determine if they actually were consistent with other plans, as previously stipulated. It also required that proposed developments be evaluated based on their concurrency with extant infrastructure, the second main principle for which Florida is also well known. As in Vermont, moreover, Florida’s system now allowed the state to review “Developments

Figure 2.1  Fixing the urban-rural edge in Oregon.
of Regional Impact.” All this state legislation directed at historically local land-use decisions hardly represents a rollback of the regulatory state, although it does represent a significant rescaling of power (figure 2.2).

By the 1980s, then, the original quiet revolution in Hawaii, Vermont, Oregon, and Florida had promulgated a cluster of new planning principles, albeit unevenly across the country. In aggregate, these principles included the following: functional comprehensiveness in local planning; internal, vertical, and horizontal consistency within and across plans, especially in urban areas made up of many governments; concurrency between new developments and extant or promised infrastructure; spatial compactness; citizen participation; and, no less important, regional thinking (albeit in many different forms). These principles informed state-level reforms to local planning systems in the 1980s, such as those legislated in New Jersey and Georgia.

New Jersey passed its State Planning Act in 1985. As in Oregon (but unlike Vermont and Florida), New Jersey’s strategy emerged largely from a single piece of legislation. While this legislation reflected the national concern with sprawl and more compact development, its most notable

Figure 2.2  Major “urban growth management” legislation in Florida, 1930–2000.
feature was the “cross-acceptance” process set up by the State Planning Commission in the late 1980s.

Cross-acceptance is a multiscaled process of comparing statewide planning policies between government levels with the overall strategic purpose of attaining “consistency” between local, regional, and state plans as part of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (or more simply, “State Plan”). Through cross-acceptance, the abiding hope is that the main plan-makers operating at various territorial scales partner with one another to create a more viable State Plan—that “true partnerships will be formed through a ‘bottom-up’ approach to planning” (Monmouth County, 2004: 1-2). To accomplish this, various plans “must be coordinated regionally with each ‘local vision’ of growth” while, at the same time, the broader development community is taken into full consideration during the entire process (ibid.).

In the first phase of this process, the State Planning Commission designated the Office of State Planning (OSP) to distribute a draft State Development and Redevelopment Plan to all municipalities and counties. The first such plan was available in 1988. Municipalities compared this plan with their own local plans. Counties then compiled these comparisons into formal reports for inclusion in the counties’ cross-acceptance process with the state (Anglin, 1992). The process concluded with Statements of Agreements and Disagreements by each entity involved and the State Planning Commission. The commission incorporated agreements into the Draft Final State Plan. Despite the complexity, New Jersey successfully entered its “third round” of cross-acceptance in 2004.

While the goal of New Jersey’s strategy is to integrate local plans with one another and with state goals, cross-acceptance does not require local plans (as in Oregon and Florida, for example); nor does it allow the state government to intervene directly into local development dynamics (as in Vermont and Florida, with review developments of regional impact). Instead, the state government seeks “voluntary acceptance” from local authorities of state goals albeit through an institutionally ordered and incentivized process of interjurisdictional negotiation.

Today, these state goals designate areas for future growth, limited growth, and no growth. In 1997, at about the same time that the “second round” of cross-acceptance was launched, a program for brownfield redevelopment was established by the OSP. In 1999, a new Smart Growth Planning Grant program was established, appropriating 3 million dollars per year to counties and municipalities to assist local efforts to incorporate State Plan and smart growth principles in local planning and development regulation. In addition, the OSP was renamed the Office of
Smart Growth in 2002, reflecting its revived mission to promote well-planned, well-managed growth that adds new homes and creates new jobs, while preserving open space, farmland, and environmental resources (New Jersey Office of Smart Growth, 1996–2007).

For its part, the Georgia Planning Act (GPA) of 1989 reflects strong home-rule traditions. However, it also represents major reform because it recognizes the importance of regional coordination between communities (as well as between state and federal actors) and because it offers financial incentives for communities to engage in planning for the management of growth. As in other states, Georgia’s model includes statewide development goals. These goals relate to the preservation of natural resources, economic development, land-use issues, community facilities, and housing dynamics. Unlike Oregon and Florida, Georgia does not mandate local comprehensive planning. However, cities and counties that choose not to plan lose qualified local government status, making them ineligible for major grants and programs managed by the state, such as Community Development Blocks Grants, historic preservation funds, water and sewerage loans, employment incentives, and recreation monies.

Initially, local comprehensive plans included six planning elements that addressed three themes: inventory and assessment; needs and goals; and implementation strategies. In 2005, these themes were revised to emphasize even greater citizen participation in plan-making. With an eye on policy integration across scale, moreover, all local plans are submitted to Regional Development Centers (RDCs), who oversee consistency between local plans within their jurisdiction; encourage development cooperation between communities, state, and even federal actors; and prepare region-wide plans. In addition, RDCs monitor local government activities that might have adverse impacts of what the State Department of Community Development designates as Regionally Important Resources and Developments of Regional Impact. Here is yet another example of a renewed regional planning imagination at work.

Georgia passed major planning reform before the State of Washington, which only did so in the early 1990s. But Washington’s still-evolving system is also an important model to consider. As in Florida, the environmental movement brewing in the late 1960s impacted Washington, in general, and the heavily urbanized Puget Sound region, in particular (the bioregion surrounding the Seattle-Tacoma-Bremerton CMSA).

In the early 1970s, the state adopted the Shoreline Management Act (SMA) and the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). The SMA established “comprehensive, state-supervised, regionally-responsive, environmentally-based planning and regulatory requirements for the use
and development of most of the state’s water and adjacent shorelines” (Settle and Gavigan, 1993: 875). The SEPA imposed a new regime of environmental review on public and private development activities. Following Bollens (1992), these were significant state incursions into local governance and private development prerogatives. But these initiatives were additive not transformative: They operated mainly as overlays on the largely untouched local land-use regulatory system. The state had notably failed to adopt a state-supervised land-use regulatory and investment system, though it came very close to doing so at the time.

Prior to the Growth Management Act (GMA), as Settle and Gavigan (1993) have observed, local land-use planning was optional. In fact, if they so chose, local governments could operate under the state’s “oldest and most permissive Planning Commissions Act rather than the more demanding Optional Municipal code for cities or the Planning Enabling Act for counties” (p. 876). Crude and extremely lenient, the Planning Commissions Act placed few state constraints on local governments in that, as Settle and Gavigan further observe, “a formal comprehensive plan to guide local public facility development and regulatory action was neither required nor a prerequisite to zoning authority” (ibid.). In consequence, the relationship between planning and implementation remained underdeveloped.

Washington’s GMA, passed formally in 1990 and strengthened in 1991, finally changed this state of affairs and is sometimes touted today as one of the most comprehensive and ambitious spatial planning statutes in the country. Though described as “bottom-up” rather than as “top-down” by many observers (e.g., Gale, 1992), the GMA nonetheless blends state with local control and provides for stringent state oversight of county and municipal development activities. At the same time, the GMA represents the “politics of compromise, embracing property rights and economic development while mandating efforts to curb sprawl and protect the environment” (Washington Research Council, 2001: 1). Accordingly, only fast-growing counties (and their cities) are legally required to prepare comprehensive plans. Within this specific demographic context, however, local comprehensive plans must include state-mandated elements and are required to be consistent with other plans (Keene 2001). Moreover, as in the State of Florida, these plans must address concurrency between future growth scenarios and extant or anticipated infrastructure.

Inspired by Oregon’s experiences, Washington’s system also deploys the regionally coordinated use of UGBs to contain sprawl and “push back” development into or near already built-up, adequately serviced,
areas. According to Settle and Gavigan (1993), this spatial policy objective of facilitating “compact development” represented the most controversial aspect of the GMA during its initial discussion. Urban growth areas are today jointly administered by counties and cities through interlocal service agreements. These agreements, and all local comprehensive plans in the state, in turn are guided philosophically by thirteen statewide goals, including the synoptic desire to curb sprawl. Finally, Washington’s model includes Growth Management Hearing Boards, which provide policy clarification and adjudicate grievances with GMA provisions and implementation. More will be said of the Washington system in chapter 7.

Maryland also developed a new growth management system in stages. After the state’s twenty-three counties vigorously rejected a set of radical reforms proposed by a gubernatorial commission in the early 1990s, including a British-like provision that the state be given final approval authority over local plans, the legislature adopted the Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Act in 1992. This act required local governments to restructure their comprehensive plans around eight visions or policy principles, such as “development shall be concentrated in suitable ways” and “sensitive areas shall be protected.” Though dismissed as a “nothing burger” by advocates of the more radical approach, Frece (2005: 107) notes that this legislation provided the crucial foundation upon which “bigger, broader, and stronger legislation would be built five years later.”

That legislation, passed in 1997 under the gubernatorial leadership of Paris Glendening, a former county official, has arguably done the most to institutionalize the conceptual paradigm and theoretical discourse of state-directed smart growth. In Maryland, smart growth was based originally on five legislative and budget initiatives: Priority Funding Areas; Brownfields; Live Near Your Work; Job Creation Tax Credits; and Rural Legacy. While the Republican governor succeeding Glendening weakened these original programs in the early 2000s, more recent legislative amendments to smart growth laws made in 2006 under a Democratic administration have again strengthened the original Glendening system.

A detailed discussion of all these programs is not undertaken here; but the central policy idea was—and remains—to use state financial resources as incentives to alter local development behavior rather than to take a more self-conscious regulatory approach. As in other states, moreover, the overriding spatial aspiration is more compact and efficiently serviced urban development. Priority Funding Areas, for instance,
specifically restrict where the state can spend money that is typically associated with supporting growth projects.

Frece (2005: 109) explains the policy transformation in Maryland that these new planning initiatives have helped to occasion. “Before the Smart Growth law was enacted,” he writes, “the state government in Maryland made no distinction about where a development project was located before deciding whether to provide financial assistance.” While local requests for state funds had to meet certain eligibility requirements, the absence of an overall geographical imagination for the state meant that actual funding disbursements frequently led to irrational and counterproductive outcomes. Frece cites the story sometimes told by Governor Glendening of an expensive highway developed near an economically depressed city in western Maryland that, in the end, “simply accelerated the death of the city’s downtown district, which in turn spawned its own downward spiral of unemployment and abandonment” (ibid.).

The new smart growth legislation took effect in late 1998, whereupon a range of state programs relating to housing assistance, job creation, brownfields, historic preservation, business expansion, parks and highway improvements, and the location of state offices were impacted by the overarching geographical concept of “priority areas” for state funding and support.

Maryland’s rebranding of growth management into smart growth was more than semantics or clever marketing, although this explains part of its remarkable diffusion beyond the borders of the state (a theme taken up later in the book). While Oregon and Florida adopted systems in the 1970s driven more by the “stick” of state regulatory power, Maryland’s use of financial “carrots” signaled a strategic shift away from both the perception and substance of “top-down” policy cascading powerfully into local government offices from state legislatures. In isolation, this shift does strongly reflect the ideological impact of neoliberalism, where incentive-based approaches are often substituted for Oregon-like strategies of “top-gown” authority. More will be said of the Maryland model in chapter 8, particularly where this involves the limits of this impact.

State planning reforms, therefore, do not remain static; they evolve, reflecting not only local institutions and political conditions but also the external impact of new policies, governance ideologies, and strategic trends. In the mid-1990s, for example, “top-down” Florida launched a Sustainable Communities Demonstration Project, which included major cities like Orlando; it also instituted a Local Government Certification
program. Again, the latter program arguably reflects the neoliberal critique of “top-down,” bureaucratic oversight and centralized power that had regained traction after Ronald Reagan. Specifically, the certification program now sought to relax state controls in select jurisdictions. According to the Florida Department of Community Affairs, that is, local communities who had adequately demonstrated to state-level authorities a strong commitment and capacity to implement exemplary planning practices, including effective plan enforcement through technical planning expertise, would require less state and regional oversight of the comprehensive plan amendment process.

However, this was not a wholesale retreat from the 1970s—and thus the state. Attesting to the full importance of smart growth ideals, “certification” was concomitantly dependent upon the local government’s efforts: (1) to manage transportation and land uses “that support public transit and promote opportunities for pedestrian and non-motorized transportation”; (2) to use design principles that “foster individual community identity, create a sense of place, and promote pedestrian-oriented safe neighborhoods and town centers”; (3) to facilitate “clustered, mixed-use development that incorporates greenspace and residential development within walking distance of commercial development”; and (4) to encourage urban infill at “appropriate densities and intensities and separate urban and rural uses and discourage urban sprawl” (Florida Department of Community Affairs, 2006). As this book will point out repeatedly, then, here was yet another case of multiple, often intertwined, rationalities working together, if sometimes uneasily and incoherently, to shape specific places across a complex array of state scales. While neoliberalism was growing, it was not wholly displacing other developmental rationalities, in particular those associated with sustainability values.

Finally, in 1999, Wisconsin passed Wisconsin Law no. 9, which is more popularly known as the Smart Growth Law. Arguably less complex, and certainly less substantial, than Maryland’s interlocking pieces of state legislation in the mid-1990s, Wisconsin’s approach relies principally on the (re)development of local comprehensive plans as well as on the use of these plans to guide land-use decisions by January 1, 2010. Specifically, “the legislation provides a framework for developing comprehensive plans, a grant program that provides communities an incentive to begin planning, and a connection to other planning related actions to provide overall consistency with the plan developed by the local community” (Division of Intergovernmental Relations, 2003: 1).
Heavy emphasis is also placed on institutionalizing better procedures to foster citizen participation at each stage in the smart growth planning process.

As in many other states, Wisconsin’s legislation provides a new uniform framework for local planning activities across the state by specifying required policy elements, such as economic development, housing, transportation, and land use. One of the most interesting of these elements, though, is titled “intergovernmental cooperation.” While it does not proscribe a specific method, this element provides an opportunity for [a] community to coordinate with other communities and governmental units to promote consistency between plans. By 2010, decisions and actions of each community must be based on an adopted plan. If their plans are going in different directions, neighboring communities will experience problems. The Intergovernmental Cooperation Element is an opportunity to get everyone pulling in the same direction. (Wisconsin Department of Administration, 2003: 3)

“Pulling together” means that communities theoretically analyze relationships between their own government and both adjacent and other single-purpose governments with overlapping jurisdictions, such as school districts as well as regional and state authorities who undertake land-development activities. This includes a review of intergovernmental service agreements, the identification of extant or potential conflicts with other public actors, and a description of what processes might help resolve any land-use or development conflicts. Goals, objectives, policies, maps, and programs for joint planning are also encouraged (Division of Intergovernmental Relations, 2003: 4).

So, while Wisconsin’s legislation does not require the use of particular regulatory tools (such as Washington State’s regional requirement that urban counties develop urban growth areas with their cities), the emphasis on comprehensive planning and intergovernmental cooperation has created a mechanism to facilitate, at least in theory, more regional thinking across the state. The 1999 law also established overall goals to guide local spatial planning. Unlike in Oregon, local governments are not required to meet these goals; but those who meet them receive funding priority, an incentive-based approach that reflects the experience of New Jersey and especially Maryland. Though nearly repealed by Republicans in 2005, discussed later in the book, Wisconsin remained committed to a version of smart growth in 2007. More will be said of the Wisconsin model in chapter 9.
Conclusions

A special culture of planning—where political communities attempt to consciously shape urban form and function—has emerged steadily in the United States over the long twentieth century. In one sense, urban growth management has been part of this culture from the very beginning, when Daniel Burnham and other earlier visionaries tried to put the “skin” back on raw industrialized spaces like Chicago through single, all-encompassing, statements of the good city. Lacking early powers to control land-development dynamics, urban planning has in many ways strengthened its presence in American society, even as planning traditions remain less developed than in, for example, Britain, Germany, or Holland (Hall, 1988; Newman and Thornley, 1996). But the rapid suburbanization of American society since WWII has constantly challenged the efficacy of this evolving presence, at times pushing it to the breaking point. That in turn has brought in the wider powers of state legislatures, especially since the 1970s, who have built a series of diverse urban growth management regimes across the country.

Over the past decade or so, smart growth strategies have steadily restructured land use and planning systems in states like Maryland and Wisconsin, where the paradigm has captured remarkable legislative support. Smart growth has also “fed back” into the older models in states like Florida and New Jersey—as well as Oregon and Vermont, to name only a few—whose urban growth management systems were put in place long before this new paradigm gained attention and adherents. Landis (2006: 411) usefully summarizes this more recent historical and, it might be added, geo-political transition within urban growth management approaches when he writes that

Smart growth, with its softer regional approach to containing exurban sprawl, promoting infill development, and encouraging higher densities, is in. Growth management, with fragmented city-by-city approach and reputation for blunt regulation, is out. In reality, of course, smart growth is simply the newest adaptation of growth management (which is itself an adaptation of growth control), albeit with a greater emphasis on regional coordination and promoting housing and transportation choice.

The regional experiences of Portland and, to a lesser extent, Fort Collins suggest that urban growth management was not always as “fragmented” as Landis propounds. But the “city-by-city” observation he makes helps us to recover the too-often-uncoordinated pro-growth and
anti-growth strategies of earlier eras. It helps us, that is, to recover and begin to piece together a possible new geography of “softer regionalism” that, while always an occluded political tradition with U.S. planning and spatial governance, is still part and parcel of the usable past, one that links the City Beautiful Movement with Mumford and even Fort Collins. Containing sprawl is now one of the seminal goals of the new paradigm, drawing heavily on the discourse of growth-control. But it has joined up more directly with the parallel tradition of aggressive land-use intensification in core cities, or what we euphemistically refer to as pro-growth “infill development.”

Smart growth, therefore, represents the latest phase in the evolving history of urban growth management in the United States. But this chapter has argued that smart growth might also be interpreted as a new geographical proposition—a new possible space for people to build and to inhabit, wherein the “softer” region (or city-region) might allow people to reconstruct and make better use of the older experiences of both pro-growth and anti-growth histories. It is, however, no ordinary space, a Euclidean plane upon which simple ideas are projected; rather, it is produced through multiple, often-conflicting rationalities. In part, this new space seems to involve, following Landis, a turn away from the big hammers of “blunt regulation” toward the little (marketized) tools of “soft incentives.” And this specific development may well reflect the geographical return of older liberal values in the latest guise of neoliberalism. But as chapter 3 will now discuss at length, the new emphasis on regulatory lightness—on what I shall call, following Margo Huxley (2006), one important kind of “spatial rationality”—should not be taken to define the totality of this paradigm. Indeed, strong hints of this cautionary note have already been made in this chapter. These hints are made more explicit in what follows.

The smart growth paradigm, which now requires more detailed theorization, calls for very specific kinds of geographical solutions, wherein greater urban density, fixed urban edges, transit-oriented developments, protected forests and farms, mixed-uses, and more ecologically sustainable neighborhoods, amongst other material and functional features, might emerge alongside of and indeed from an engaged, respected, and enlightened citizenry who begin to see the city-region as a new kind of potential community.

All this invariably generates both enthusiasm and controversy because it draws on a diverse range of sources. Smart growth is, in this sense, a new kind of geopolitical project, one that seeks to use but also remake the past in order to provide Americans with a new kind of usable future.
Invariably, it embodies the contradictions and tensions of this past, such as the paradoxical concern with simultaneously facilitating and stopping growth, as well as the frictions of scale as new levels of state power intervene in what had long been the unregulated social terrain of the liberal landowner in search of economic profit and cultural freedom—or what Jefferson called the pursuit of happiness. Let us, therefore, now turn to a more theoretical interrogation of these ideas, drawing out and extending the broad historical themes developed here.
I can't tell if the SmartCode is a radical, green, left-wing document or a developer-friendly, market based right-wing one.

Jose Sanchez

Introduction

Geographers describe, explain, lament, and call for spatial arrangements associated with a wide range of empirical phenomena on the surface of the earth. One such phenomenon, urban planning, is itself recursively deployed by local, regional, and central levels of government to shape spatial arrangements within metropolitan areas, particularly as this effort involves prospects for and problems with economic and demographic growth. Planning for growth is therefore both space making and place-contingent. Uneven, scaled, and contested, it is not only a geographical instrument of the state but also an empirical object for geographical analysis in its own right. It therefore makes perfect sense, with David Perry (1995: 145), “[to] think about planning spatially.”

As chapter 2 outlined, one very important kind of planning, the smart growth paradigm, has recently captured the legislative attention of key groups in the United States now concerned directly with (sub)urban development, including planners, developers, farmers, politicians, and environmentalists. But as Saul Alinsky (1971) once observed: Change means movement and movement means friction. The inevitability of friction thus begs the obvious: How might we theorize the politics associated with acceptance of and resistance to state-organized goals focused
on reorganizing the material and institutional geography of U.S. city-regions into so-called smart growth forms?1

Drawing on post-structural theory in critical geography and urban studies (e.g., Tajbakhsh, 2001; Amin and Graham, 1997; Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 1984, 1994, 2005; Amin and Thrift, 2002; Latour, 1993; Huxley, 2006), this chapter argues for thinking about urban planning movements like smart growth as exercises in state territoriality—as geopolitics—driven by a range of often contradictory “spatial rationalities” (Huxley, 2006) that in turn produce diverse landscapes; these include but are not limited to those associated with neoliberalism. After an opening discussion on the territorial nature of urban planning, the chapter offers a detailed elaboration of the U.S. smart growth paradigm, especially as this paradigm implicates the related discourses of New Urbanism, New Regionalism, and sustainable development.

The chapter then synthesizes this material into a simple analytical tool. This tool maps the variegated spatial rationalities and key political tensions that crosscut the U.S. smart growth paradigm as a multiscaled, state-directed program of consciously directed urban change—a conceptual commitment that, it is specifically argued, allows us to see how smart growth is simultaneously a “radical, green, left-wing” as well as a “developer-friendly, market based right-wing” paradigm. While this may confuse or disappoint those who desire to essentialize urban space, it is consistent with recent efforts to “repopulate cities, only too often stripped base by the rush to produce theoretical order” (Amin and Thrift, 2002: 4). Such theoretical hybridity helps us to chart the impact of a diverse range of political sentiments and tensions, depending contingently on the context in specific places. To start the discussion, let us consider a concrete vignette that emerged in the wake left by Hurricane Katrina, an event that telescopes important territorial conversations about future development choices on the Gulf Coast into the local political spaces of post-disaster planning.

**Urban Planning as State Territoriality**

What does it mean to say that urban planning is a form of state territoriality? Consider the following. After Hurricane Katrina receded from the lowlands of the Mississippi Gulf Coast in the early autumn of 2005, state and local leaders invited well-known advocates of New Urbanism, sustainability, and smart growth to help sketch out fresh visions for the renewal of their physically and socially devastated communities. Central to this task was the use of the SmartCode, a clever tool that combines the
regulatory traditions of urban planning, the material culture of urban design, and the marketing savvy of corporate promotion. Defined by its authors (Placemakers, 2007, no page number) as “a blueprint for places where true community, in all its complexity, can prosper”

the complete SmartCode & Manual, featuring SmartCode v8.0 text, in its entirety, [is] on the right side of each spread, matched with incisive annotation on each facing page. The code is preceded by a commentary on form-based codes, sprawl and its alternatives, the Transect, and the SmartCode elements, structure, implementation responsibility, calibration and legal issues. The appendices include sample regulating plans, sample enabling legislation, an ordinance, case studies and resources. A must-have for efficient local calibration.

Noting that the SmartCode’s principles are remarkably “radical” but also “simple and easy to apply,” something akin to user-friendly software, Lewis (2006: 103-104) aptly relates the tool’s early political reception:

It took six days . . . to come up with a rough set of recommendations for the entire Mississippi Gulf Coast region—six exhausting and exhilarating days spent hashing out everything from highway relocations to affordable housing [ . . . ] The forum presented its 11 plans to the 11 communities of the Gulf Coast, and many of the smaller, wealthier towns, like Ocean Springs and Passim Christian, were enthusiastic about adopting them; New Urbanism, after all, reconstructed the kind of life they’d been living all along. But Biloxi is bigger and more diverse [ . . . ] As the months wore on, almost everyone found something to object to in the plan.

A local politician pinpointed the source of mounting unease in Biloxi:

The [proposals] took account of a lot of great planners and their ideas, but not very much from the people. At the town meetings, they pulled out all these plans and said, “Isn’t that nice?” and “What do you think about that?” But the time to ask these questions is on the front end, before you draw up the plans. The working people of Biloxi—the shrimp fishermen, the bus drivers, the men and women who clean the casinos—weren’t consulted, and there was no way to know what the plan might have looked like if they had.

This vignette about the SmartCode-in-Mississippi touches upon several themes long familiar to students of planning theory and practice. We see observable tensions, for example, between the contented rich and the discontented poor; between planning as democratic process—helping actors articulate and bring about what they want—and planning as elite
doctrine, or advocating “a good city when we see one” (Talen and Ellis, 2003); between the (non-)uses of lay and expert knowledge and competencies (Friedman, 1973); between power and rationality (Forester, 1989; Innes, 1995; Flyvberg, 1998); between class, race, and place (Goldsmith, 1999); between the abstract legibility of the spatial imagination and the concrete illegibility of the actually lived city (Lefebvre, 1991); and between progress-as-nostalgia (recovering what was lost) and nostalgia-as-progress (building New Urbanist space).

Crosscutting this vignette, however, is the fundamental territoriality of urban planning as both normative theory and social practice, a political theme explored in other contexts by authors such as Steinberg (1994), Yiftachel (1998, 2000), Huxley (1999, 2006), Brenner (1997), and Jonas and Pincetl (2006). By territoriality I mean, following Kevin Cox (2002) and others, “[any] attempt to affect, influence, or control actions and interactions (or people, things and relationships) by asserting and attempting to enforce control over a geographic area” (cited in Sack, 1983: 55). In turn, areas, or territories, are “spaces which people defend by excluding some activities and by including those which will enhance more precisely what it is in the territory that they wish to defend” (Cox, 2002: 3). The core relationship between territoriality and territory is a principal problem in urban political geography, especially as this relationship involves state-market dynamics and social conflict in and about space—all central issues in urban planning.²

Urban planning can therefore be interpreted as a kind of urban geopolitics, wherein the political control of space (or territory) is a central part of the state’s overall social project. Conventionally understood, of course, urban planning is an attempt to develop a collective plan “that links past, present, and future into a willed history” (Neuman, 1998: 214)—a generic, widely, if always incompletely practiced activity of collective decision-making that can be defined less evocatively but more precisely as “a set of procedures for finding out and assuring appropriate future action” (Davidoff and Reiner, 1962: 103). As Earnest Alexander (1986: 43) further elaborates from an analytical and more instrumental perspective, (ideal) urban planning involves “the deliberate social or organizational activity of developing an optimal strategy of future action to achieve a desired set of goals, for solving novel problems in complex contexts, and attended by the power and intention to commit resources and to act as necessary to implement the chosen strategy.”

In the abstract pursuit of instrumental rationality, that is to say as a mechanism to relate collectively preferred ends with the most efficient means, urban planning is also a de facto program of normative guidance
(a “framing” process) that helps actors to discriminate between the alternative consequences of a range of possible actions each designed to meet the same specified (value-neutral) goals, or ends. So “good planning,” as Banfield (1973 [1959]: 142) once suspiciously put it, “is the search for unintended consequences which might follow from the attainment of [specifically desired ends].”

So technically conceived, of course, planning-in-reality almost never actually occurs. Whatever it might be, planning practice is not an apolitical algorithm—an analytical tool for “efficient local calibration” that automatically solves problems in a finite period of time (e.g., twenty years). A complex, messy, emotional system with many moving parts embedded deeply in the internally conflicted state apparatus, planning broadly understood—whether for site, neighborhood, city, or city-region—always involves the public regulation of privately owned land in pursuit of often bitterly contested goals that specify the preferred physical nature and social function of a discretely defined place (where goals and place are sometimes “discovered” through planning). This core purpose, which itself breaks down into hundreds of interventions and techniques, is further supplemented by the investment of public funds to support otherwise isolated private projects and to help ensure, again conventionally, the smooth provision of services and goods, such as sewerage lines, roads, and playgrounds, which private land markets cannot easily provide.

It is in this latter sense especially that urban planning is usefully understood as an exercise in a highly contested state territoriality. Indeed, planning may well be one of the most important technologies through which local, regional, and central states recursively try to influence “the content of an area” on a daily basis, certainly with respect to a society’s material geometry and social functions. Zoning, subdivision regulations, UGBs, enterprise zones, conservation easements, transit investments, green belts, comprehensive plans, floor-area ratios, light-rail investments, public bicycle paths—all these state-directed spatial practices (or planning tools) seek to shape built, natural, and social objects and object-relations in and across particular places. At times, these practices are inspired by synoptic theories of the good city; at other times, and perhaps most of the time, planning is simply about “getting to yes” (Sanyal, 2000). This in turn invites us to explore the motivations, ambitions, assumed truths, and taken-for-granted justifications—or what I shall now call with Margo Huxley (2006) the “spatial rationalities”—that drive the territorial ambitions of urban planning systems. Naturally, we have many choices in doing so. These choices offer different answers to the question: What is urban planning actually for?
One possible way forward is to adopt welfare economics as an organizing framework. This framework, which seems especially popular in American urban studies, derives its ontology and epistemology from a liberal reading of society and social change. According to welfare economics, “governments should intervene in private markets only where there are serious market failures” (Swanstrom, 2001: 481). This includes land markets, which experience market failures in two main areas: the inadequate provision of public goods (such as a clean and safe environment) and the diffusion of spatial externalities or spillover effects (such as incompatible local land uses). It is possible to consider the various territorialities of the smart growth paradigm in these essentially liberal terms, wherein political questions derive their logic from economic analyses of market failures and (in)appropriate state oversight of these failures.

This necessarily involves, however, a very strong critique of the smart growth paradigm. For the liberal theories of political economy that inform the welfare economics framework are deeply suspicious of purposeful interventions by state authorities, particularly where these involve neo-utopian aspirations such as those associated with smart growth (Pennington, 2002). Instead, liberals hold that any societal progress that we do happen to experience is based mainly on what Milton Friedman (1962) called “voluntary cooperative exchange,” that is to say on the temporal and spatial expansion of private markets. In so far as “planning,” spatial or otherwise, is part and parcel of the state apparatus, it exists only to help individuals who are mostly interested in pursuing mutually beneficial voluntary cooperative exchanges in private markets to discharge their responsibilities, achieve their “several goals,” and protect economic freedom.

While economic freedom is an important end in itself, Friedman argues that it is also a necessary (though not sufficient) condition for political freedom. For no society in history, in his view, has been marked by a large measure of political freedom without also relying on “something like a free market to organize its economy” (p. 16). For Friedrich Hayek, whom Freidman draws on repeatedly, the overbearing state limits the “catalytic possibilities” that markets possess to organize “spontaneous order” in cities and other spaces (Smith, 2000: 11). Urban planning is, in the liberal schema, dangerously coercive; zoning, subdivision regulations, urban growth boundaries, and so on potentially reduce economic freedom and should be limited as much as possible to managing “neighborhood effects” (e.g., negative externalities) and to providing services and goods not easily provided through private voluntary exchange (e.g.,
local parks). In so far as smart growth expands this “minimalist” role for
the state, it produces inefficiencies, which then generate wider political
problems for society. “If the goals of collaborative planning are to be
achieved, then,” the liberal critic of urban planning, Mark Pennington
(2002: 187) argues, “far from extending the range of state activities,
there should be a reduction in the role of the social democratic planning
and the extension of private markets.”

Furthermore, from Friedman’s perspective, urban planning should be
institutionally and administratively decentralized, if for no other reason
than decentralized governmental entities, in his view, allow people to
move out of territories whose contents and regulations they do not like
or support, which ultimately acts as a major check on collectivist threats
to individual liberty. Here he is drawing on public choice theory, which,
as mentioned in chapter 2, argues that political fragmentation is efficient,
and therefore justified (Frisken and Norris, 2001). Notwithstanding its
parsimonious logic and quantitative (if sometimes analytically “thin”
rather than “thick”) epistemology, major weaknesses of the welfare eco-
nomics approach include its methodological overemphasis on economic
individuals rather than social groups and its general inattention to the
actually existing politics of space, which often involve (irrational) cul-
tural values in addition to (rational) economic interests. That said, as I
shall discuss below, market rationalities and libertarian ideals have
indeed insinuated themselves into smart growth theory and practice in
metropolitan America. In this empirical sense, liberalism as both politi-
cal ideology and social practice does require our theoretical attention
(though not necessary from a liberal perspective).

A second stream of state, spatial, and urban theory that deploys
Marxist structuralism is also available in charting the territorialities of
urban planning. Following this more radical approach, underlying capita-
talist economic forces determine the urban empirical world “in the last
instance” (Smith, 1984). The political geographer, Kevin Cox (2002),
for example, explores the territorialities of the human experience—
whether associated with urban planning or other manifestations of
collective interest politics and agency—via a broader interrogation of
capitalism, social re-production, and class conflict, drawing principally
on Marx for analytical inspiration and theoretical coherence.

For those inspired by Marx, capitalist society is, contra the liberals,
not an aggregation of atomized individuals pursuing their “several
goals” in open markets but constant social and spatial conflict between
opposing, organized classes who do not engage in “voluntary coopera-
tive exchange” but in economic relations of social exploitation. The
regulation of metropolitan space, especially in terms of growth dynamics, invariably reflects (and supports) these broader socioeconomic relationships.

Specifically, the main territorial motivations of urban planning for Cox and many others writing in this tradition (cf. Dear and Scott, 1981) is to confect and stabilize, to borrow now from Morrill’s (1999: 4) “more mainstream” pen, “a spatial patterning that [minimizes] overt conflict between capital and households, and between different groups, and [that maintains] aggregate property values.” Because planning seeks to organize a “spatial fix” for the urbanization and restructuring of capital (Harvey, 1985), planning professionals “are directly facilitative of private capital and [therefore] are increasingly restricted to creating the conditions which attract private-sector investment and facilitate profit maximization” (McGuirk, 1993: 287). Seen this way, smart growth might be interpreted as simply the newest “spatial fix,” particularly as this paradigm directly reflects the rise of neoliberal rationalities and policy agendas.

Unlike the parsimonious and quantitative approach of the liberals, as Kian Tajbakhsh (2001) has argued, the Marxist framework takes conflict and social antagonism as normal in the making of history and the production of geography (cf. Katznelson, 1981). Rather than a sign that something is wrong, that the “default” state of self-regulating markets is temporarily imbalanced, political conflict within and about space suggests that society is in geohistorical motion, that classes are engaged, and that political disruption is part and parcel of the overall constitution of urban society. At the same time, the Marxist approach arguably deals better with issues of production than with problems of consumption (though consumption issues are often analyzed). More problematically, it is not always clear that class identity—that is, class location in the capitalist economy—drives all (or even most) forms of urban and regional politics, including those surrounding the consolidation and reorganization of space (Davis, 1991).

Without necessarily jettisoning the various strengths of the Marxist critique, particularly as these involve the notion of dialectics (simply put: that multiple social relationships define spatial things), these strengths and weaknesses suggest the need to turn to a third and final theoretical tradition in urban, spatial, and planning studies: post-structuralism. Here “post” does not necessarily mean “after,” a theoretical orientation that rejects and displaces all other insights or commitments; instead, “‘Post’ is just as likely to mean a development of that is [nonetheless] significantly different from the original” (Allmendiner, 2002: 3).
In this sense, post-structuralists, drawing frequently if not exclusively on the work of Foucault, interrogate the territorialities of urban planning through analyses of normalization, social control, and notions of biopower that translate certain kinds of rationalities—taken-for-granted “truths,” reasoned justifications, assumed shared values, and/or unquestioned world views and mentalities—into certain kinds of instrumental or state action (Yiftachel, 1998, 2000; Flyvbjerg, 1998). However, post-structuralists also (sometimes) chart the enabling (or empowerment) properties of both planning and space.

One example of this type of scholarship is Margo Huxley’s (2006) recent study of spatial rationalities in urban planning during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For Huxley, spatial rationalities generate “diagrams of truth” (like plans) that allow societies to confect and stabilize built environments in order to regulate and direct social behaviors—a process Lemke (2001: 201) sees in the neoliberal era, for instance, as “leading or controlling individuals [in space] without at the same time being responsible for them.” Huxley, though, extends this idea to include the historical planning problem of spatial organization, that is to say, of governing through the planning of space (cf. Robinson, 1996).

What is particularly important to emphasize for the present analysis is that Huxley discusses a range of spatial rationalities in her study. A “dispositional spatial rationality,” for example, “aims at drawing boundaries and producing order that will foster correct comportments” (p. 774). The “‘dispositional problem’ of space and environment,” for her, “is the threat of chaos, disorder and the ‘the world turned upside down’: spaces of debauchery, drunkenness, idleness that produce poverty, disease and death.” The broader motivation here is, quite simply, fear, which generates specific landscapes of control.

But other forces are also at work. Thus Huxley interrogates (less darkly) a “vitalist spatial rationality” seen in the theories of, for example, Patrick Geddes, who again explored the practical possibilities of guiding human biological, social, and spiritual development through regional planning. Seen historically, vitalist spatial rationalities have focused “not so much at restoring a lost state or order . . . but at giving progressive direction to dynamic, open-ended, bio-social, intellectual spiritual evolutionary processes” (p. 782). So urban planning is not necessarily coercive/oppressive or wholly instrumental of capital; it might well be radically empowering. It might also be concomitantly coercive/oppressive and empowering, producing a range of contending spaces in single places, in part because it is crosscut by multiple spatial rationalities pulsing through society as a whole. Space, then, is politically open.
Expanding the origins and conception of power, post-structural approaches do not necessarily abandon structural dynamics, such as class conflict, but they do seek to add to these conflicts, opening up the possibility of reading the geopolitical tensions of planning and urban growth management within a more diverse, multidimensional theoretical framework. Tajbakhsh (2001: xiv) usefully puts the case this way: “it is necessary to account for the aggregations of power in the state and the economy while the shifting mosaic of the everyday worlds in the city equally [require] the notion of hybridity.”

That is to say, when strangers gather, which is what happens in urban environments, different kind of sociophysical spaces can be produced and stabilized, in part using formal planning systems (Tajbakhsh, 2001). On the one hand, metropolitan space can (and often does) shatter into a thousand little geographies of retreat: secure enclaves; homogenous zones; walled compounds; segregated uses; class, ethnic, and race divides of all kinds. On the other hand, different groups of metropolitan people can sometimes overcome their diversity, forging common identities to produce geographies of transcendence and unity: place-allegiances; open and free public spaces; mixed-income neighborhoods; and equitable transit systems, for example. For Tajbakhsh, the “promise of the city” lies ultimately in its theoretical capacity to produce spaces of engagement, emancipatory spaces that allow diverse people, as Richard Sennett has argued, to grow out of their adolescent desire for a purified identity (Lees, 2004).

Urban planning, then, is not a single form of state territoriality, a lockstep mechanism with which uniformly motivated states “affect, influence, or control actions and interactions (or people, things and relationships) by asserting and attempting to enforce control over a geographic area” (op. cit.). It is a social arena through which a range of contending spatial rationalities crosscut and move, including not only those that seek to control and contain (in the “dispositional” sense) but also those that seek to transform and redirect (in a “vitalist” sense).

This way of thinking, where specific places are the contested product of multiple spatial rationalities at various scales, is now applied to the recent legislative emergence of the smart growth paradigm for urban growth management. For the above discussion might well apply to any kind of planning analysis. Our concern now is to narrow these ideas, linking them more directly to the emergence of the smart growth paradigm’s geographical effort to coordinate pro- and anti-growth histories, an effort that has also benefited from the reemergence of urban design and political regionalism as well as the new ascendance of sustainable development.
The U.S. Smart Growth Paradigm

The smart growth paradigm emerged fully in North America between the mid- and late 1990s, though once again it draws on a much older history of urban growth management theory and practice.

Focused mainly on the location and constitution of development, redevelopment and conservation in major metropolitan areas, that is to say on both urban growth control and urban growth management, smart growth specifically embraces (and conceptually integrates) the urban design discourse of New Urbanism, renewed calls for a new political regionalism, and broader discussions of sustainable development. This eclectic, often uneasy, synthesis of various theoretical schools (and histories) is illustrated in figure 3.1, which selectively adopts but extends and reinterprets Anthony Down’s (2001, 2005) view that, for all its empirical complexity in actual practice, the U.S. smart growth paradigm is for many (though not all) advocates built around four key geographical aspirations.

Figure 3.1 integrates the historical analysis already presented in chapter 2. For this reason, a detailed discussion of the growth-control and pro-growth traditions that inform the paradigm is not repeated here. Suffice to note only that the first principle is to preserve large amounts of open space and protect the environmental quality of the bioregion. This principle is partly a consequence of growth control in and around the new suburbia, although “fringe land” may be released for development nearby in order to gain the political support of local real-estate interests (Downs, 2001). Typically, this principle involves localized

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1. Preserving large amounts of open space and protecting the quality of the environment.
   [GROWTH CONTROL—DISCUSSED IN CHAPTER 2]
2. Redeveloping inner-core areas and developing infill sites.
   [PRO-GROWTH—DISCUSSED IN CHAPTER 2]
3. Removing barriers to urban design innovation in cities and new suburban areas.
   [NEW URBANIST DESIGN AND FORM FLEXIBILITY]
4. Creating a greater sense of community and a greater recognition of regional interdependence and solidarity.
   [NEW REGIONALISM]

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Figure 3.1  The U.S. smart growth paradigm: An interpretation.

Source: Adapted and extended from Downs (2001, 2005).
conservation policies on the periphery of metropolitan areas in order to reduce certain kinds of sprawl effects, of which more is discussed later in the book. Likewise the second principle, which will also be interrogated in subsequent chapters, is to redevelop inner-core, already serviced, areas and to encourage infill sites, which (again) relates to older efforts to revive central-city environments, including the urban renewal programs also discussed at length in chapter 2.

As if managing both pro- and anti-growth goals were not enough, a third principle of the paradigm focuses on removing barriers to urban design innovation in cities and new suburban areas, a principle that reflects, it is argued here, both the impact of neoliberalism as well as the more recent design-oriented critique of New Urbanism, at least where this critique has intersected strongly with calls for greater flexibility and regulatory choice. In addition, a fourth and final principle of the smart growth paradigm is to create a greater recognition of regional interdependence and participatory solidarity, something liberal theorists like Friedman, as just discussed, typically oppose. All of this, moreover, is an attempt to put a spatial face on sustainable development, another largely neo-utopian ideal that, once again, does not sit that easily in the liberal theory of social change.

Already, then, we see in broad outline the fundamentally heterogeneous and even contradictory nature of the paradigm, where multiple rationalities seem to be at work. Before developing this basic argument further, though, it is necessary to consider each of the paradigm’s “allies” in turn. To this end, this section of the chapter discusses in further detail New Urbanism, New Regionalism, and sustainable development. That smart growth is an effort to embrace and concretize all these parallel schools suggests just how ambitious and potentially contradictory its fundamental territorial ambitions really are.

**New Urbanism**

Pushing planning back into traditions of design that all but evaporated in the 1970s and 1980s, New Urbanism applies what its strongest advocates consider time-tested lessons about “place-making” from past experiences to present metropolitan conditions (Talen and Ellis, 2003). Often backward-glancing in conservative-cultural terms, it is also radically contemporary in liberal-economic terms. As one observer notes: “New urbanism is completely consistent with liberalism—but it is also completely consistent with conservatism” (Jahnes, 2004). Indeed, it is
this ideological and theoretical hybridity that makes it an easy ally of the smart growth paradigm as a whole. More practically, as Fishman and Gechter (2004: 3) usefully state, “While its proponents consider it to be a distinguishable planning philosophy, in practice, New Urbanism is arguably the most comprehensive expression of smart growth principles.”

In strictly design terms, everything important in New Urbanism follows from the generative supposition that most activities should be within a few minutes walk from home or work (Talen, 2005). The key focus is the neighborhood, district or corridor as the fundamental “building block” of urban space. The Congress of the New Urbanism (CNU) (2001: 1-2), the main body that has championed these ideas since 1989, puts it this way: “The neighborhood, the district, and the corridor are the essential elements of development and redevelopment in the metropolis. They form identifiable areas that encourage citizens to take responsibility for their maintenance and evolution.” I therefore now elaborate upon the CNU’s “principles” and “benefits” before linking them to other researchers’ ideas.

Compressing daily life into a neighborhood or corridor requires a greater mix of land uses within the same space, such as shops, offices, apartments, and homes (which include more income types and therefore social classes). To encourage further walking between all these uses, individual buildings are placed closer to streets that are, in turn, lined with trees and greenery. Buildings include design features such as porches and big windows. Parking lots are hidden from pedestrians wherever possible, while residential garages are returned to alleys, where they once were, at least in certain parts of cities. Furthermore, the neighborhood’s street system is integrated and grid-like rather than hierarchical and dendritic—a movement pattern, which, it is posited, disperses traffic across space and makes walking more pleasurable (ibid.).

In addition, according to the CNU, neighborhoods have discernable centers and edges that distinguish places from other neighborhoods, giving these neighborhoods a distinctive character. Public spaces, such as parks and commons, define a civic center, while quality architecture and architectural standards nurture visual coherence in all other areas. Because there is greater variety of uses, income, and classes, moreover, neighborhoods are economically and socially vibrant. All this makes it possible to finance alternative transportation systems, providing residents and visitors alternatives to the automobile and therefore greater choices in how they move around urban space (ibid.).
Taken together, the new design template promises a series of interconnected and mutually reinforcing benefits that accrue to residents, businesses, developers, and governments. Residents experience higher, more stable property values and lower congestion and driving times. They are more likely to engage in healthy lifestyles because they live in closer proximity to retail and services, bike trails, parks, and nature. Finally, the heavy emphasis on public space and civic art provides more opportunities for residents to get to know others, which potentially results in stronger civic relationships. Place-based businesses also benefit from increased sales due to more foot traffic and people spending less on cars and gas. Their profits are also higher because they spend less on advertising and their experience of economies of scale in marketing due to close proximity and cooperation with other local businesses (ibid.).

For their part, developers theoretically enjoy more income potential from higher density mixed-use projects because there is more leasable square footage, more sales per square footage, and higher property values and selling prices. Finally, local governments theoretically spend less per capita on infrastructure and utilities than typical suburban developments due to the more compact, high-density nature of projects; they simultaneously strengthen tax bases due to more buildings packed into a tighter area, which improves services and therefore makes local neighborhoods more attractive (ibid.).

Philip Berke (2002: 29) believes that New Urbanism “takes on the transformative power of physical design just as plans of Burnham, Howard, Olmstead, and others did more than one hundred years ago.” Talen and Ellis (2003) take this a step further. Positioning themselves in the “radical center,” between what they see as a modernist order that Jane Jacobs (1962) condemned nearly half a century ago and a postmodern “disorder” in the present, Talen and Ellis want to elevate the role of design: “We believe that a theory of good urban form should coexist at the same level with other planning theories and animate planning practice more than it does at present. Good urban form is drawn into the larger picture, that is, the main theoretical infrastructure of planning” (p. 39).

Because of its strong design orientation, New Urbanism “scales down” to individual urban and suburban blocks and to single buildings, where there is considerable overlap with the literature on green architecture. Interestingly, though, the Charter of the Congress for the New Urbanism (2001) also highlights the importance of redesigning entire metropolitan regions. When discussed at the neighborhood scale, then, New
Urbanism is often referred to simply as neotraditional development. But when projected onto the wider terrain of the U.S. city-region, Steuteville (2002) explicitly argues that New Urbanist principles are an integral part of smart growth theory. Put another way, they specify smart growth theory in design terms.

However, as the SmartCode vignette presented earlier showed, central to the New Urbanist critique is that current planning regulations, such as Euclidean zoning and subdivisions codes, often do more harm than good and should therefore be radically restructured to allow for greater spatial and functional flexibility, an essentially liberal idea adopted wholesale by many smart growth advocates. As Danielson et al. (1999: 516) point out: “Smart growth proponents argue that regulatory barriers to development should be lowered within designated growth areas to offset the loss of buildable land on preserved open spaces. Developers often appear receptive to the idea of trading the right to build outside growth or service areas for a more deregulated environment inside the line.”

However, this is not unalloyed liberalism; rather it is a hybrid ideology, reflecting a range of spatial rationalities about how particular political economies produce “good space.” Following this reading, sprawl per se is not the “natural” expression of “free” markets, but the product of how the state and other actors actively shape what is culturally valued, technologically possible, and economically demanded. In particular, where barriers involve standard development codes and land-use regulation, sprawl is actually designed in, as Jonathan Levine (2006 2–3) has recently argued in convincing fashion, because America is intentionally “zoned out”:

Empirical research suggests that rather than mitigate the market’s sprawling tendencies, the ubiquitous interventions of municipal land-use regulations actually exacerbate them. Current regulatory approaches are certainly not the sole cause of urban sprawl [. . . ] But the empirical evidence shows that the “American way of zoning” truly does make suburbs of US metropolitan areas more spread out than they would otherwise be. If this is the case, land-development markets are more capable of producing compact development than is currently observed.

So, while this emphasis on the deliberate occlusion of land markets does not imply a simple march back to the liberalism of Milton Friedman, smart growth does reflect the influence of liberal theory. That
said, it is linked to parallel calls for concepts such as “designated growth areas,” calls that in turn originate with older ideas for the regional coordination of growth policy. This requires us to explore now the latest revival of political regionalism—or New Regionalism in the U.S. metropolitan context. Having done this, we can then link the smart growth paradigm to broader debates about sustainable development.

**New Regionalism**

As discussed in chapter 2, land-use planning in the U.S. context works within legal parameters established piecemeal by the state over the past century or so. Regulatory power over private land development is typically decentralized, with little interference or even guidance from state or federal (i.e., “higher”) political authorities. Though more constrained by environmental regulations than in the past, local governments are generally allowed to adopt development goals and implementation strategies of their own choosing (or even whether to engage in planning). This has long concerned advocates of stronger regionalism, including those who argue for new state legislation.

New Regionalists note that extreme decentralization of land-use authority mattered far less in previous periods of American history, when human settlement patterns were more rural and small-town than urban and metropolitan. But today the typical metropolitan region in the United States, where 80 percent of Americans live (Alshuler et al., 1999), has a multitude of general-purpose governments and special-purposes districts. This has created a massive disjuncture between governance structures (and local political identities) and actual daily lives (see Basolo, 2003). As Fulton and Calthorpe (2001: 18) argue, “Strolling in our neighborhood or visiting our local shopping center, we still tend to think of ourselves as inhabitants of Gopher Prairie. But the patterns of our daily existence belie a different reality. Most of us commute from one metropolitan town to another for work, for shopping, and for many other daily activities.”

Given these new realities, advocates of New Regionalism question—contra the public choice theories of Tiebout and others—the benefits of governmental fragmentation, where every jurisdiction is autonomous in regard to decisions about territorial development. While local autonomy is an important ideological component of American political culture, New Regionalists “search for ways to make the governmental systems of city-regions conform to the territorial reach of population settlement
and economic activity” (Frisken and Norris, 2001: 467). Precisely what conformance means, and what forms it takes, is nonetheless a matter of profound academic debate and political experimentation.

As indicated originally in chapter 2, such debate and experimentation is not new, especially in planning studies. Aside from the garden city dreams of Ebenezer Howard, for example, explicit arguments for regionalism are found in the work of Patrick Geddes (1968 [1915]), a major proponent of Huxley’s “vitalist spatial rationalities.” Geddes believed that bioregions demarcated by watersheds formed the most suitable “ecological niche” for consciously shaped (cultural) evolution. As also discussed in chapter 2, Lewis Mumford (1934, 1938, 1954, 1961) developed this thinking over several decades, hypothesizing relationships between bioregions, technology, and Geddes’ notion of “civics”—or rolling citizen involvement in place research and planning policy formulation.

Though positively charged with all sorts of possibilities for state, society, and environment, the conservative dénouement of Roosevelt’s New Deal (Conkin, 1959) and the subsequent consolidation of a corporate space-economy after World War II buried Mumford’s beautiful if dangerous call for cultural renewal in a “republic of regions.” Instead, the massive financial and social costs associated with rapid suburbanization and central-city decline in the 1960s elevated fiscal and equity rather than cultural arguments, respectively, when regionalism resurfaced during the Johnson administration.

After disappearing again in the Reagan years, arguments for political regionalism strengthened in the 1990s, in part because of the attention garnered by smart growth but also because of the emphasis placed on competitiveness in a new global economy (Swanstrom, 2001). Here the argument was and remains that fragmentation harms a region’s competitiveness because, in a global economy, regions compete against other regions. Part of this claim is associated with new work in economic geography, which sees metropolitan economies as the “spatial platforms” of globalization (Scott, 2001). Just as firms seek greater efficiency in the management of resources, actors who share city-regional economies must “better market [their] area for investment and reduce wasteful competition, allow economies of scale by pooling resources for more cost-effective spending, help [their] region to mobilize its strengths and address microeconomic divisions that can weaken its chances of success, and find a profitable niche in the international economy” (McCarthy, 2003: 141).
Given this competitiveness discourse, political regionalism per se can slip quickly into corporate-based boosterism rather than civic-driven participation. As one Philadelphia businesswoman bluntly put it: “Regionalism is not about inner-city guilt or helping the poor. It is about being able to compete in the world” (quoted in Hodos, 2002: 372.) Accordingly, it is not just the presence of rescaled institutions and regional identities that matters, but the constitution and policy objectives of these institutions and identities, a point made by Pastor et al. (2000) in their analysis of “regions that work.”

Notwithstanding these debates, the focus on regional interdependence is absolutely crucial to the smart growth paradigm’s evolution beyond the simple “growth control” interventions of the 1960s and 1970s. Controlling growth is part of the paradigm, particularly where this involves protecting open space. But growth control—stopping it cold in particular places (the first principle)—cannot be conceived outside a regional strategy, which also involves encouraging growth in other places (the second principle). Thus, Carruthers (2002) argues that, where smart growth is concerned, scale clearly matters, especially within multijurisdictional city-regions that share labor markets, ecological assets, and transportation systems (cf. Wheeler, 2002).

In fact, the absence of regional strategies for urban growth management may actually do more harm than good. Ned Levine (1999: 2047) compellingly demonstrates this point in his study of “local” growth policies in California. He shows that locally designed (but regionally uncoordinated) programs “significantly displaced new construction, particularly rental housing” to adjacent communities who either did not adopt such measures or had weaker policies in place. Paradoxically, then, “successful” local control might simply “[exacerbate] the expansion of the metropolitan areas into the interiors of the state”—facilitating rather than limiting sprawl by adopting policies that “impact low-income households and minorities particularly” (ibid.; cf. Bruegmann, 2000). For these reasons, the smart growth paradigm stipulates the crucial theoretical and practical importance of political and administrative regionalism in the implementation of urban growth management policies.

Taken together, these four smart growth principles, supplemented and drawn out by New Urbanism and New Regionalism, put a spatial and institutional face on the much broader and more diffused discourse of sustainable development. Ultimately, then, the Big Promise of the smart growth paradigm of urban growth management—the Big Promise of compactness, conservation, mixed use, transit-support infrastructure,
regional planning, and so on—is the possibility of a more sustainable form of development. What, though, is sustainable development?

**Smart Growth: Spatializing Sustainable Development**

Though antecedents date back centuries in intellectual thought, the actual concept of sustainable development, which is also called “green accumulation,” is of recent vintage. It first appeared in international policy circles in the early 1970s but only gained general currency with the publication of the United Nation’s now famous Brundtland Report in 1987 (WCED, 1987). Written in the nuclear shadow of the Chernobyl nuclear catastrophe and (then) fresh reports of major thinning in the ozone layer, the Brundtland Report reflected not only deepening concern with severe ecological deterioration on a planetary scale but also economic underdevelopment and poverty.

Today, the empirical evidence for the profoundly disturbing hypothesis of rapid ecological change is contested but progressively convincing to wider numbers of people (Weart, 2003). In the face of global warming, for instance, the habitat range of certain butterfly species in Britain is moving several miles northward per decade. Speedy habitat changes are similar in the United States: Shrubs are flowering on average eight days earlier in Boston than they were a hundred years ago; frogs in western New York are mating ten days earlier (Kolbert, 2006). These widespread empirical changes are making it harder for powerful actors such as U.S. Senator James Inhofe (R-Ok), a former real-estate developer, repeatedly to call human-induced global warming “the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people” (Inhofe, 2005).

Sustainable development is nonetheless developmental, making its theoretical relationship to smart growth discourses possible. At odds with earlier, far more radical, calls to halt economic growth (Club of Rome, 1972), the Brundtland Report emphasized the crucial role of fundamental economic progress in poorer nations in alleviating ecological problems. Here ecological health and social equity were predicated more on the eradication of economic misery. In short, sustainable development in the post–Brundtland era questioned the accumulation basis of capitalist development even as it affirmed the Enlightenment belief in societal progress through the application of scientific reasoning and political reform (cf. Lash, 1991).

Despite these continuities with the Enlightenment, sustainable development is, for its strongest proponents, a new kind of accumulation dynamic because it requires a “transformation” rather than a “reform” of
both human-to-nature and people-to-people relationships at various ecological and governmental scales (Reese, 1999). With respect to human-to-nature relationships, sustainable development places the capital accumulation process squarely into an ecological setting, seeing cities not only as economic entities but also as assemblies of organisms with definable “metabolisms” (Giradet, 1999).

From such a perspective, the urban economy is theorized as a dependent subsystem that like everything else draws on nature for sustenance. Environmental degradation occurs when natural resources are consumed faster than they are replaced. In contrast, sustainable urban development occurs, at least in theory, when economic activity uses natural resources only to the point where they can be replenished. Berke (2002: 31) refers to this state of affairs as system reproduction—“the replacement or maintenance of current levels of the quality of built and natural systems, as well as the health and vitality of social and economic systems.” Rifkin (1989) ultimately argues for a “Solar Age” predicated on the use of renewable energy and ultimately the end of petroleum-based urban economies (though not necessarily economic growth).

The utopian challenge of obtaining “system reproduction” in a Solar Age by transforming “people-to-people relationships on the local and global scale” was evident at the UN Conference of Environment and Development at Rio de Janeiro in 1992, known today as the world’s first “Earth Summit,” and at similar conferences since then (such as Johannesburg in 2002). The Rio Conference exposed deep divisions between rich and poor countries over how to balance economic development with ecological conservation and social equity. The rift between the United States, the world’s largest economy, and everyone else grew wider when the George W. Bush administration rejected the precariously negotiated climate change agreements at Kyoto (1997) and Bonn (2001)—opening the exit door to other rich countries such as Australia (which then walked through). The Kyoto and Bonn agreements addressed the practical problem of how much societies around the world, given their size and level of economic activity, could reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the coming decades.

Still, much was accomplished at Rio. It was the largest environmental conference ever held to that point in time and it institutionalized the challenge of sustainability as a global governance and diplomatic issue, placing it alongside of traditional political concerns such as human rights and international security. More concretely, the conference produced five key policy documents, including the most relevant one here: Agenda 21. Though sometimes criticized as overly expansive, logically
incoherent, and ultimately quixotic. Agenda 21 emphasized local solutions to global problems—called Local Agenda 21—and thus the pivotal role of urban governments in fulfilling global sustainability objectives.

Countries such as the United Kingdom have tapped directly into Agenda 21. This makes it possible to trace how far global sustainability principles have “cascaded down” into local planning systems as Local Agenda 21 commitments and indeed as new geographical patterns (Murdoch and Abrams, 2002). In their recent study of planning for sustainable development in the United Kingdom, for example, Owens and Cowell (2002) cite Counsell’s (1998) work, which found much weaker implementation of Britain sustainable development goals in economically depressed Wales and the north of England than in other regions.

Large, federated, and more institutionally fragmented than the United Kingdom, the United States suffers from what Kruger and Agyemen (2005) call “sustainability schizophrenia.” On the one hand, security concerns in the wake of 9/11 have displaced the focus on livable communities during the Clinton administration, especially as pushed by Al Gore. On the other hand, many local governments have forged ahead, often creatively, notwithstanding the lack of national policy guidance or financial support. In consequence, Kruger and Agyemen argue that “actually existing sustainability” in the country is more “vigorous” than is commonly supposed—and that looking for global language in the policy documents of American communities leads us to miss relevant activity with the potential to contribute to a qualitatively different kind of urban development in the coming decades.

Certainly a number of interurban coalitions at various institutional scales have formed around urban sustainability goals. For example, mayors representing Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, Salt Lake City, and other cities launched the U.S. Mayor’s Climate Protection Agreement in March 2005, a movement that expanded to over 400 U.S. municipalities within two years. The first of its kind, this agreement calls for urban-scale policies to meet or exceed Kyoto Protocol targets for reducing global warming (City of Seattle, 2004).

Naturally, urban planning systems are only one part of the broader effort to build sustainable communities (Hawken, 1993: 210). Yet land use and urban form underpin important policy arenas of global sustainability such as water and sewerage, energy efficiency and recycling, and community economic development and transportation (Owens and Cowell, 2002). Thus Roseland (1998: 125) believes that “Land use permeates virtually every aspect of sustainable communities.”
Whether or not sustainable urban development, however defined and debated, is an inevitable and beneficial effect of (1) reducing suburban sprawl and protecting open space, (2) encouraging urban infill and the reurbanization of already settled areas, (3) improving design through greater regulatory flexibility and spatial mixing, and (4) generating a political sense of community at the regional scale—that is to say, an effect of implementing the smart growth paradigm—is a large and to some sense badly underresearched question (Dierwechter, 2003; Moore, 2007). What seems clear enough is that recent efforts to implant this paradigm in real places have generated a range of territorial outcomes. This raises our final question: How might we explore and map these variegated territorial outcomes?

The Territorialities of the Smart Growth Paradigm

In the head quote that began this chapter, Jose Sanchez, a journalist working in a fast-growing region of California, struggles to distinguish the nature of the SmartCode, the tool discussed earlier in the context of planning after Hurricane Katrina. Is it a “radical, green, left-wing document or a “developer-friendly, market based right-wing” one? The answer, I suggest here, is both. This seemingly paradoxical answer is easier to accept when we, with David Perry (1995) and other critical urban theorists, “think of planning spatially.” Or as Ed Soja (1989, 2000), drawing on Lefebvre (1991) has repeatedly argued, when we get away from “either/or” accounts of the urban condition to embrace a “both/also” imagination of the production and transformation of space.

For many years, Soja (1989) and other critical geographers of urban society have argued passionately for the importance of space in the constitution of social relations, in general, and the “multiplex” nature of cities, in particular (Amin and Graham, 1997; cf. Massey, 1984; Gregory and Urry, 1985; Lefebvre, 1991; Amin and Thrift, 2002). An important metathesis here is that, while social relationships are obviously stretched out across space, multiple spatialities within particular places constitute what can be accomplished at any given time. Space matters, as Doreen Massey (2005) posits, not only because it is a mirror of society but also because it is a generative resource for society. It is precisely for these reasons that space is, like all other social and natural resources, so often bitterly contested and struggled over.

In consequence, as Christopher Jencks notes, “virtually all theories about the city are true, especially contradictory ones. The city works
both as a mediaeval village with the equivalent of 13th century inhabitants pottering about, and a global network of 24 hour traders” (quoted in Amin and Graham, 1997: 417). Amin and Graham have developed this way of thinking broadly and synthetically about urban dynamics, arguing that

the “city” now needs to be considered as a set of spaces where diverse ranges of relational webs coalesce, interconnect and fragment. The contemporary city is a variegated and multiplex entity—a juxtaposition of contradictions and diversities, the theatre of life itself.

The city is not a unitary or homogeneous entity and perhaps it never has been. It is both Engels’ [ . . . ] site of “barbarous indifference, hard egotism on the one hand, and nameless misery on the other” and Lewis Mumford’s [ . . . ] “collection of primary groups and purposive associations [ . . . ] an aesthetic symbol of collective unity” that fosters “personal disintegration” and “reintegration” through wider participation in a concrete and visible collective whole. (p. 418)

This way of thinking about urban space—as the “juxtaposition of contradictions and diversities”—aligns with the earlier analysis of post-structural accounts of urban planning that highlight the theoretical role played by multiple, contending spatial rationalities and territorial tensions. This post-structural analysis is now applied directly in figure 3.2 to the smart growth paradigm just discussed. Specifically, figure 3.2 holds that the smart growth paradigm, like all urban planning efforts, is an attempt by specific communities of actors to balance a series of specific tensions that characterize urban society as a whole.

The central tension, particularly acute in the United States, is between state authority and individual autonomy. Just how “present” should the state be in the lives of individual people? Just how much power should collectives have over individuals—and their neighborhoods, homes, money, and even bodies? This broader tension, it should be said, cuts right across the traditional “left-right” spectrum of American politics. The cultural left, who oppose the involvement of the state in cultural issues such as a woman’s right to have an abortion or an individual’s sexual orientation and behavior, resist state authority no less than the economic right, who, with Milton Friedman, oppose the involvement of the state in matters of taxation, regulation, and redistribution.

Here, though, similarities end because the motivating rationalities (and societal domains) are different. For the cultural left, no rationality
or self-evident truth seems more important these days than “diversity,” or multiculturalism and social tolerance. In urban and planning studies, this broader rationality of greater tolerance for (and now celebration of) cultural diversity can be traced back to the devastating critique of modernist zoning and comprehensive planning made originally by Jane Jacobs (1961), who thought state-based urban planning killed the generative potential of New York. Instead, the more “diverse” we allow city life to become, the more likely we are to produce what I wish to call, inspired by the work of Tajbakhsh, spaces of engagement.

For the economic right, in contrast, the taken-for-granted truth or justification for social and state agency is “freedom.” Following the discussion developed earlier, that is, the sole purpose of the planning system is to promote individual freedom, not diminish it, which means keeping the state as local and small as possible (and out of the business, as I shall discuss in chapter 9, of “social engineering”). Again, the rationalities on both sides of the political spectrum are woven deeply into the historical fabric of American culture and economy and thus invariably pull the narrower arena of the smart growth paradigm into different spatial direc-

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**Figure 3.2** The multiple rationalities and spaces of smart growth.
tions, where landscapes of engagement vie with landscapes of retreat, sometimes even in the same program.

Contending with and interspersed between these two types of landscapes (or spaces) are two other kinds of spaces, driven by two other kinds of rationalities. Following the rationality that champions the importance of “tradition,” which Americans, as in other societies, typically associate with the cultural right, figure 3.2 holds that the smart growth paradigm is now being pressured to construct “nostalgic” landscapes. These landscapes reflect a wider concern in American society with hypermodernity and rapid social change that are similar to Huxley’s analysis of dispositional rationalities. These are landscapes of loss and control, where “authentic community” is frozen into front porches and walkable streets and, for some critics, sealed off from the frenetic disorder that bubbles up in city life and urban society (Sennett, 1971).

Finally, figure 3.2 returns to the economic axis, where on the economic (and more authoritarian rather libertarian) left the leading rationality or self-evident truth is “justice.” When pulled in this direction, the smart growth paradigm seeks to forge spaces that help urban society overcome the urge to retreat into homogenous enclaves and zones of individual privilege. That is to say, the mobilization of this rationality leads communities to produce spaces of unity. These are spaces that act to transcend, even if only for a moment, the broader class, race, and ethnic fault lines that otherwise deeply fracture metropolitan society in the United States as a whole. These are spaces that do not celebrate diversity per se but commonality, the way a trade union typically focuses on common economic position and thus a politics of “solidarity” in a union hall, factory floor, or street.

In planning studies, these spaces are conjured up and intellectually sustained through a modern rationality of justice that nonetheless finds older expression in Huxley’s analysis of “vitalism” in the work of Geddes and—I would hasten to add—Mumford’s sense of urban recomposition. Here, especially, we might emphasize a regional spatial identity that overcomes and unifies other social differences, in particular those that divide urban and suburban voters. Rather than celebrate the diversity of the city and suburbs, then, the paradigm’s emphasis might be on a common regional challenge in a globalized world.

Accordingly, as we investigate the empirical expression of the smart growth paradigm—through what we might think of as the spatial dialectics of state, economy, and culture—we are likely to see a range of landscapes that essentially fall at different places along the smart growth axes and thus generate diverse territorial politics (some emphasizing tradition;
others justice; still others diversity and retreat). For example, Portland, Oregon’s metropolitan light-rail system, discussed in chapter 6, might be located in the upper left-hand quadrant of figure 3.2 while El Dorado Hills, a private, master-planned so-called “New Urbanist” community located just outside of Sacramento, might fall in the lower right-hand quadrant. The former project pushes society into a political discussion of social justice, pitting those who champion these issues against those who do not, whereas the latter project of retreat is more geared to discourses of “freedom” even as it picks up some of the “nostalgia” we associate with New Urbanism.

This last insight suggests that we not necessarily map a single place, project, or policy as falling within one quadrant or another. While the romanticism of New Urbanism might well reflect a strong rationality of nostalgia, the more recent efforts to link its theories of design to inner-city public housing developed in the HOPE VI initiative also betray a concern with diversity. Moreover, actually existing HOPE VI projects combine the authority of the federal and local state with the more neoliberal rationalities that emphasize the importance of “market-rate housing.” Similarly, “smart growth” tools such as TDRs (the transfer of development rights) frequently mobilize the seemingly incompatible rationalities of the economic right, who clearly value market-based freedom, even as they require a good deal of state authority to successfully manage and implement, a theme that will be picked up again in chapter 5.3

**Conclusions**

Planning theory that follows the normative tradition of prescribing action for preferred futures always seeks to generate controlled socionatural change. In recent years, the smart growth paradigm has captured a significant piece of the urban growth management agenda in the United States. It is often said that smart growth can now mean most anything, especially where it intersects with sustainability concerns and discourses of regionalism. That is both true and misleading. It is true because, when conceived as a type of state territoriality, the paradigm is shaped by a wide set of very diverse, often contending spatial rationalities, crossing over and through the whole of American society. However, it is misleading because it tends to evacuate the paradigm of the very specific projects that characterize its empirical life as a real-world planning movement.

The smart growth paradigm is, in fact, a territorial program of the state that seeks specific material and institutional outcomes. Once again these outcomes are: to contain sprawl and protect open space; to reur-
banize built-up areas; to promote regulatory flexibility in order to generate improved physical design and spatial mix; and to facilitate a much greater sense of regional identity and citizen participation. These outcomes draw on a long history of growth management practices, as discussed in chapter 2, as well as discussions in New Urbanism, New Regionalism, and sustainable development, as elaborated here.

That said, this chapter has also emphasized the essential hybridity of this paradigm, meaning that we are likely to observe sometimes odd, seemingly incompatible landscapes, relating different spatial rationalities and territorial logics not only within the same metropolitan region but also possibly even in the same project. Accordingly, rather than speak of a single source of support or discontent with contemporary urban growth management—an all-comprising explanation—we are likely to unearth a geopolitically complex mosaic of economic interests, cultural values, individual fears, and collective dreams.

In this sense, we should not imagine the geopolitics of contemporary urban growth management promises and practices as a game between two opposed teams: on one side, The Advocates, who support the paradigm in toto, and, on the other side, The Discontents, the agents who loathe everything about it. Instead, we should imagine the geopolitics of these promises and practices as a never-ending contest operating at multiple scales over the new metropolitan spaces that the deliberate management of urban growth is in the business of producing.

Seen this way, some of those who are most discontented with contemporary urban growth management experiences in the city-regions discussed later in this book are, in fact, planners themselves, who either believe that the paradigm is too close to those who seek “retreat” or “nostalgia”—all the while claiming both are “smart”—or who think that a proper balance has not really been achieved. So in the end we do need to theorize the “multiplex” territorialities (and tensions) of the smart growth paradigm as a set of open, always reversible set of spaces where “diverse ranges of relational webs coalesce, interconnect and fragment,” to again deploy the geographical imagination of Amin and Graham (op. cit.).

Part of this political effort, this deliberate exercise in state territoriality, is agency directed at trying to stabilize urban space through discursive representations of a future that improve the present (i.e., planning). These representations, these “potential landscapes [which both] trap and illuminate what people are told they should dream about” (Wilson and Wouters, op. cit.), begin with spatial goals, the subject to which we now turn.
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PART II

Goals and Tools

If history and theory provide political communities at various scales with the raw material and institutional wherewithal with which to conceive general solutions for new kinds of urban problems, goals and tools specify more precisely how these solutions and problems might relate to one another over a given period of time in a given place. This part of the book turns away from matters of planning history and general theory to consider these goals and tools in greater detail, drawing on actual practices from communities all across the United States, including but not limited to the city-regions of special interest in Part III.

Two chapters follow. Chapter 4, “Spatial Promises,” provides an overview of how the smart growth paradigm discussed at length in chapter 3 has actually influenced goal setting in contemporary urban growth management agendas. Analytical attention is paid especially to goals that relate to the four main territorial ambitions of this paradigm, namely sprawl reduction and open space preservation, urban infill and revitalization, improved regulatory/design flexibility, and regionalism and participation. While no effort is made to survey the totality of such goals across the United States, the discussion more narrowly shows the impacts of these ambitions on contemporary governance, providing us with a more concrete sense of how actual communities interpret the overall paradigm in practicable policy terms.

Chapter 5, “Spatial Practices,” then turns to a detailed interrogation of some (but not all) of the most important tools and techniques that communities typically deploy in their efforts to implement these broad paradigmatic goals. These include well-known regulatory tools already mentioned, such as comprehensive plans and UGBs, as well as more institutional approaches like interlocal service agreements and hybrid techniques like transfer of development rights, amongst other key practices. In keeping with the overall geopolitical themes of this book, moreover,
this discussion considers these tools and techniques in their contextualized place, an approach that seeks to highlight how even the simplest planning tools invariably reflect of the wider politics of space, scale, and society.
CHAPTER 4

Spatial Promises: Smart Goals for “Improved” Urban Growth Management

A goal properly set is halfway reached.

Abraham Lincoln

Introduction

Planning goals communicate socionatural environments that stakeholders believe ought to exist both now and in the future, often driven by the realization of what has been too quickly lost (or indeed what might be usefully gained) under the paradoxical conditions of advanced, postindustrial capitalism. In the context of urban growth management, spatial planning goals (spatial promises) articulate not only what communities wish to transform, but also what they wish to conserve. Moreover, they often stipulate the manner in which transformation and conservation might occur, especially as policy relates to the citizenry.

Whether or not Abraham Lincoln was right, planning goals for specific communities are easier to set than to attain (although goals are, in truth, not always easy to set). Nonetheless, it is argued here, these goals constitute important empirical expressions of the types of normative principles communities ostensibly pursue over long periods of time. Specifically, planning goals form the “representations of space” that, for Lefebvre (1991), constitute crucial “moments” in the ongoing social production of urban space, especially as these moments of spatial representation communicate the territorial intentions of the multiscaled state as wider social forces and rationalities move unevenly and fitfully through its financial, technical, legal, and regulatory machinery. This chapter
shows that the smart growth paradigm just outlined has substantially pervaded the spatial promises of contemporary urban growth management all across the United States, but especially in the states discussed in chapter 2 that have undertaken major planning and land-use reforms.

Consider, for instance, this opening excerpt from the Miami-Dade County, Florida Comprehensive Development Master Plan (CDMP):

The CDMP expresses the County’s objectives and policies addressing where and how it intends development or conservation of land and natural resources will occur during the next ten to twenty years, and the delivery of County services to accomplish the Plan’s objectives. It provides for “sustainable development”—allowing for land capacity to meet projected needs, preservation of wetlands and agricultural areas and protection of (drinkable) water well fields. (Miami-Dade County, 2003, no page number)

This reference to “sustainable development” as a desired effect of both “development” and “conservation” is a good example of substantial rhetorical commitment to the smart growth paradigm presented in chapter 3. To what extent, though, is such commitment widespread in contemporary urban growth management programs across the country, and especially in those states and city-regions of interest in this book? What does such commitment mean in detailed policy terms and how is it contextualized? Drawing largely on public documents produced and administered at various scales of governance, including state, metropolitan, and local governments, this chapter surveys main goals of key urban growth management programs in the United States. In particular, the focus of the discussion is on how various public institutions articulate policy goals around the four overarching geographical principles of the smart growth paradigm.

**Open Space Preservation and Environmental Goals**

While postwar American suburbs may or may not have been populated with what Joni Mitchell critiqued in her 1970 song “Big Yellow Taxi” as swinging hot spots, the vast new fields of parking lots and pink houses she also loathed did in fact generate a strong anti-growth and environmental protection politics in many communities—a theme already discussed in chapter 2. Unsurprisingly, state legislatures began to pick up and absorb these new political pressures emanating mainly from a growing and more powerful suburbia, but—in some states, at least—they also linked these new pressures to more comprehensive,
higher-scale land-management programs that began to tie together anti-
growth impulses with pro-growth necessities.

As part of its statewide land-planning system, for example, since the
early 1970s the State of Oregon has called for all communities in all
counties to preserve and maintain agricultural lands. This broad goal is
linked in turn to other open space preservation and environmental
quality goals. Oregon mandates that communities protect natural
resources; conserve scenic and historic areas and open spaces; and main-
tain and improve the quality of the air, water, and land resources of the
state. While these goals have strong amenity motivations, they also
relate to concerns about the natural basis for economic opportunity—a
central theme in sustainability discourses. Thus, Oregon calls for com-
munities:

to conserve forest lands by maintaining the forest land base and to protect
the state’s forest economy by making possible economically efficient forest
practices that assure the continuous growing and harvesting of forest tree
species as the leading use on forest land consistent with sound manage-
ment of soil, air, water, and fish and wildlife resources and to provide for
recreational opportunities and agriculture. (Oregon Department of
Conservation and Development, 1973)

These statewide goals are reflected in Oregon’s substate planning enti-
ties, including Portland Metro—the country’s only directly elected
regional government for a major metropolitan area. As part of its Regional
Framework Plan, Metro has committed to a series of “fundamentals,”
which are essentially long-term goals (Metro, 2005). Fundamental 3 is
“to protect and restore the natural environment including fish and
wildlife habitat, streams and wetlands, surface and ground water quality,
and air quality.” The land-use element in the Regional Framework Plan
offers further elucidation. Amongst other regional duties, Metro is
responsible for establishing and administering the area’s urban growth
boundary. As part of this charge, open space preservation and environ-
mental quality are pursued in part by a strong policy commitment to a
clear transition between urban and rural land.

The complex interlinking of planning goals across multiple adminis-
trative scales in the state of Oregon is also found in the comprehensive
plans of the Portland region’s many suburban municipalities, whose
goals regarding future growth reflect the broader system. In its updated
2004 plan, for example, the City of Oregon City (2004: 1), located on
the southern edge of Portland, notes that
Oregon City’s Comprehensive Plan and implementation ordinances must comply with applicable Statewide Planning Goals adopted by the Land Conservation and Development Commission as the result of a 1973 state law. The plan must also comply with the relevant portions of Metro’s 1998 Urban Growth Management Functional Plan.

“Compliance” includes at least rhetorical harmonization of goals, including those relating to open space and environmental preservation. The City’s Community Development Department interprets statewide and metropolitan mandates in various ways:

Goal 3 [of the Land Use Act of 1973] states that only land that lies outside Urban Growth Boundaries can be classified as agricultural. Oregon City, which lies wholly within an Urban Growth Boundary, therefore contains no agricultural land according to this definition. However, Oregon City supports preserving designated farm lands in rural areas outside its city limits by encouraging compact growth within the city. (City of Oregon City, 2004: 23)

Similarly,

Under Goal 4 [of the Land Use Act of 1973], land is considered forest land if it was acknowledged as such when the goal was adopted. Oregon City has not identified any forest lands within its city limits and has therefore not adopted any goals or policies related to commercial forestry. However, Oregon City recognizes the importance of preserving trees in the urban environment and has adopted goals and policies pertaining to tree preservation. (ibid., 24)

Oregon City’s “compact growth” strategy does not mean that this particular suburban municipality is disinterested in open space preservation within its boundaries, especially where such preservation intersects with environmental protection. The city seeks to “establish an open space system that conserves fish and wildlife habitat and provides recreational opportunities, scenic vistas, access to nature and other community benefits” (ibid., 39). These goals for the improved management of growth, moreover, are considered part and parcel of the City’s local search for the broader spatialization of sustainable development, as the following excerpt suggests:

The City Commission agrees with citizens who believe it is incumbent on the City of Oregon City to use its land, water, and air resources in a
sustainable manner, which means meeting the city’s social, environmental and economic needs in a way that benefits all citizens but does not undermine the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This is the essence of sustainable development. (ibid., 2)

Just north of Oregon, the State of Washington also reflects growing rhetorical concern with meeting the broader challenges of sustainable development through new forms of urban growth management. Indeed the state’s Department of Trade, Community, and Economic Development, which provides growth management services to counties and cities, links global sustainable development concerns directly to the national smart growth approach to urban growth management:

Growth management planning, community design, green building practices and environmental mitigation all play a role in maintaining the quality of life while accommodating growth through sustainable development strategies. (State of Washington Department of Trade, Community, and Economic Development, 2007)

These ideas have grown directly out of the state legislature’s overall political commitment to “Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development” (Washington State Legislature, 2002b). Other key statewide goals, conceived with Oregon’s experience in mind, include a long-term effort to:

- Retain open space, enhance recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks and recreation facilities; and to
- Protect the environment and enhance the state’s high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water (ibid.).

While these goals apply to all urban regions of the state, they are obviously most acute in the Seattle-Tacoma city-region of the Central Puget Sound. According to the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC, 2006), a metropolitan planning organization that coordinates regional transportation investments, conducts land use and infrastructure research, and provides technical assistance to local governments, the Seattle-Tacoma region is now expecting a million and a half more people by 2040—the rough equivalent of another Portland, Oregon. Washington’s Growth Management Act requires the PSRC to certify transportation policies within local comprehensive plans, ensuring consistency between
county and local transportation investment and region-wide goals. But the principle mechanism to protect open space and reduce sprawl is through the use of UGBs, which are actually negotiated at the level of counties between counties and their municipalities.

King County, which includes the City of Seattle and about thirty other municipalities, began to plan comprehensively for future growth in the early 1960s—well ahead of most other counties in the state (including adjacent metropolitan counties). Under the requirements of the GMA, this now includes the further development of countywide policies and goals. In addition to establishing urban growth areas across the county, policies and goals in King County include efforts to protect “critical areas,” particularly those associated with salmon runs and other wildlife features. Consider, for example, the following:

FW-4: All jurisdictions shall protect and enhance the natural ecosystems through comprehensive plans and policies, and develop regulations that reflect natural constraints and protect sensitive features. Land use and development shall be regulated in a manner which respects fish and wildlife habitat in conjunction with natural features and functions, including air and water quality. Natural resources and the built environment shall be managed to protect, improve and sustain environmental quality while minimizing public and private costs. (King County Growth Management Policy Council, 2006: 10)

The State of Maryland is also committed to preserving open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas. In fact, its Smart Growth Act in 1997 required that “visions” were incorporated into County and Municipal Comprehensive (or General or Master) Plans and then implemented through consistent ordinances and local laws by July 1, 1997. Several of these “visions” relate directly to goals for open space preservation and environmental quality:

- Sensitive Areas [should be] protected.
- In rural areas, growth [should be] directed to existing population centers and resource areas [should be] protected.
- Stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and the land [should be] a universal ethic.
- Conservation of resources, including a reduction in resource consumption, [should be] practiced (http://www.mdp.state.md.us/planningact.htm).
Central to these statewide commitments is the mandatory inclusion of a “Sensitive Areas” element within the comprehensive plans of local jurisdictions. This element, which focuses especially on streams and buffers, floodplains, steep slopes, and critical habitats, is supposed to “contain goals, objectives, principles, and standards designed to protect these areas from the adverse effects of development” (ibid.).

Farmland preservation is also a key component of Maryland’s smart growth anti-sprawl agenda focused on preserving open spaces. Located north of the City of Baltimore, for example, Baltimore County’s Master Plan 2010 highlights this goal as part of its overall growth management vision:

In order to maintain agriculture in the county, productive farmland must be retained in large contiguous blocks to maintain a “critical mass” which is required by most commercial agricultural operations. To accomplish this goal, the county must maintain and strengthen multiple mechanisms that preserve farmland and foster agriculture. (Baltimore County, 2000: 221)

**Compact Urban Form and Infill Development Goals**

Of course, preserving open space (including farmland) while protecting the quality of the bioregional environment does not fully constitute a smart approach to urban growth management. No less important to the new paradigm are goals that reflect a collective desire to induce more compact urban forms and to encourage infill developments wherever and whenever possible. This too reflects older historical efforts in the United States, originally seen most clearly in central cities, to positively attract new growth, rather than to deflect it or altogether shut it down; however, the new efforts are linked explicitly to a broader political agenda associated with slowly transforming the spatial foundations of the American economy.

The State of Maryland, in addition to protecting sensitive areas from development, requires all state, county, and municipal governments to ensure that development is concentrated in suitable areas. The actual mechanisms or tools to implement this broad goal—in particular, the extensive use of Priority Funding Areas—are discussed in detail in chapter 8. For the moment, it is enough to emphasize how common this goal now is across the country, especially in states that have passed urban growth management reform.
Wisconsin Act no. 9, for example, calls not only for the “protection of natural areas, including wetlands, wildlife habitats, lakes, woodlands, open spaces and groundwater resources,” but also for the promotion of the redevelopment of lands with existing infrastructure and public services and the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing residential, commercial and industrial structures. (Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, 2003)

The City of Madison (2006: intro-4) provides further interpretation of this new statewide vision, calling for the steady implementation of the following long-term land-use goal in its recently updated comprehensive plan:

[The city must] balance redevelopment and infill development with the preservation of the unique character of Madison's existing neighborhoods, focusing on such issues as requiring that the size and scale of new development enhances and is compatible with the established and planned neighborhood character and density.

The nearby Village of McFarland, which expects to grow by more than 50 percent in the next two decades, similarly focuses on compactness and infill, despite its small-town origins. The comprehensive plan specifically seeks to redevelop vacant or underutilized lands, particularly for economic development purposes. Other goals include (1) transforming land uses through redevelopment projects to maximize the Village’s nonresidential tax base and enhance community appearance; (2) requiring quality design and appearance; and (3) promoting downtown revitalization and redevelopment, including a mixture of residential, commercial, and institutional uses. These goals are more specific expressions of the Village’s overall commitment to “Follow a ‘Smart Growth’ strategy that preserves and enhances the natural resources surrounding the Village” (Village of McFarland, 2006: 39).

Yet the Village of McFarland, for all its recent attempts to interrogate smart growth possibilities, is less committed to the overall paradigm than other communities in the Madison city-region. A recent empirical study (DURP-UW, 2003) analyzed local smart growth goals—and environmental conditions—to “score” municipal compliance with the smart growth paradigm. Like other small villages, McFarland scored lower on compactness, diverse mix, open space, housing mix, and transit choice than larger, more diverse communities, such as Madison and Monona.
This does not diminish the importance of goal-setting; but it does suggest we not interpret the presence of a few smart growth goals as evidence of anything more than a political desire to contemplate a different kind of future, in this case a more compact and contiguous one.

Even progressive communities frequently identified with the smart growth paradigm in both the popular and academic literature, such as Gresham in Oregon, are works in progress—communities with long-term goals whose actual urban growth management practices invariably lag behind normative theory. Gresham is tied to Portland through a regional commuter line and has succeeded in building new transit-oriented developments. At the same time, its recent efforts to deepen urban sustainability reflect the limits of the overall paradigm, even at the rhetorical level of long-term goal-setting.

One example of this is found in Gresham’s otherwise noteworthy “Green Building Checklist” (City of Gresham, 2006). Though designed to assist developers and contractors in identifying and implementing more sustainable site design, the checklist boils down to “optional practices not required by City code” (City of Gresham, 2006: 1). Yet, as several authors have argued (e.g., Ben-Joseph, 2006), it is “codes”—and the barriers they impose—that prevent denser, more mixed, built-environmental results in metropolitan America. This suggests that, in addition to containing sprawl and re-urbanizing core areas, new efforts to remove and/or reform barriers to urban design innovation also need examination.

Removing Barriers to Urban Design Innovation

Pendall et al. (2006) surveyed the fifty largest metropolitan areas and found a wide variety of regulatory land-use regimes—a veritable geopolitics of growth planning. While some of these regimes remain “restrictive,” others are described more positively as “innovative.” Many innovative regimes draw political inspiration and administrative guidance from reformed state planning legislation. As part of Wisconsin Act no. 9, for example, the State of Wisconsin now requires that local comprehensive plans include an element containing recommendations that encourage streamlined review of development applications within areas designated for growth; encourage the use of flexible development regulations to promote innovative and cost-saving site design while protecting the environment; and use innovative techniques to foster economic development in areas
designated for growth. Related Models and Guidelines include Regulatory Streamlining and Achieving Environmentally Sensitive Design through Flexible and Innovative Regulations. (Wisconsin Department of Administration, 2003)

This new emphasis on “flexible development regulations” is interpreted in various ways within Wisconsin’s local comprehensive plans—though sometimes in a suggestive rather than prescriptive manner. Consider, for instance, this revealing excerpt from the policy vision of the Village of McFarland:

The Village could encourage infill development on vacant or under-used lots within the built-up area . . . as a means to promote affordable housing. This Plan identifies some of these vacant or underutilized parcels inside the Village limits as “Smart Growth” areas . . . As a next step, the Village may develop a more detailed inventory of potential vacant and underutilized sites, and distribute this inventory to home builders and other housing providers. In addition, the Village could adopt more flexible regulations to allow development of irregular or substandard infill lots, allow mixed uses for infill developments to enhance the economic feasibility; and even assist in the acquisition, clearance, and consolidation of infill lots into larger, more easily developed sites. (Village of McFarland, 2006: 94)

Like other central cities, the City of Baltimore suffered from dramatic population loss and concentrated poverty after 1950. In the last decade or so, however, the City has attempted to reserve these trends, in part through new planning visions consistent with Maryland’s overall smart growth paradigm. As part of a comprehensive plan updated in 2006, the City articulated new goals under the broad, interrelated rubrics of “LIVE, EARN, PLAY, LEARN.” Under the “LIVE” rubric, the City is committed to pursuing three major goals:

• Goal 1: Build Human and Social Capital by Strengthening Neighborhoods
• Goal 2: Elevate the Design and Quality of the City’s Built Environment.
• Goal 3: Improve Transportation Access and Choice for City Residents.

To meet Goal 2, the plan further identifies more measurable objectives, including a “new” desire “to Streamline and Strengthen the
Development Process.” This in turn involves modernization of the zoning codes “to meet current needs” as well as three entirely new initiatives:

- NEW Improve efficiency of One-Stop Shop permitting center;
- NEW Increase number of zoning code enforcers;
- NEW Create a task force on interagency coordination for web-based, real time access to development projects. (City of Baltimore, 2006d, p. LIVE-73)

A generative value throughout is flexibility, as the following excerpt demonstrates: “Flexibility should be the key factor to consider when revising the zoning code. To assist the development process, general building design and streetscape/landscape guidelines need to be adopted for the City as a whole. Design standards for residential and mixed-use areas should produce more consistent development patterns than those that have been developed to date. These patterns should reflect and respect historic patterns in Baltimore while providing flexibility for contemporary development and design solutions” (p. LIVE-81, emphasis added).

While zoning reform is part and parcel of this effort, so too is speeding up “regulatory time” in order to keep pace with the “time-is-money” pressures of private land markets, an administrative rationale reflecting neoliberal rationalities that also supposedly strengthens efficiency:

In order to improve the efficiency and accuracy of permits issued through the One-Stop Shop permitting center, the City will automate the referrals process for agency approval so that it’s mandatory and not permission-based. This will require increased coordination among City agencies and more accurate databases for allowed development in different parts of the City. (p. LIVE-82)

For its part, the State of Washington requires local comprehensive plans to provide for innovative land-use management techniques that champion improved flexibility and innovation in urban and regional design. In addition, new legislation mandates cities and counties to limit application review time as well as the number of hearings and appeals. The Municipal Research and Services Center (1997) notes that “These changes [in Washington] should reduce the risk of lengthy project review that can occur, when neighborhood opposition to next door development arises.” The MSRC further observes that many communities in Washington are revising land-use controls to provide “increased
flexibility” for development, especially where development conditions are difficult, a goal “which should facilitate the development of passed-over infill sites” (ibid.).

One such community is Tacoma. Recent amendments to its land-use regulatory code, for instance, provide new provisions for single-family residential development. The goal of these residential reforms is “to provide flexibility in meeting the height and bulk regulations of the R-1, R-2, R-2SRD, MR-SRD, R-3, R-4, R-4-L and R-5 Districts, and other districts in which residential uses are permitted.”1 Such flexibility, it is ultimately hoped “[will] promote residential infill development within the City . . . consistent with the mandate of the State Growth Management Act and the City’s comprehensive plan, [will] encourage growth within urban areas, and [will] minimize sprawl” (City of Tacoma, 2005/2006: 26). These are small, often incremental changes, seemingly below the radar of both theory and legislation. Yet they speak to an everyday world of agency—the coalface of planning practice—where ideas meet the ground.

Participation, Community, and Regionalism Goals

The roots of urban planning lie in strong theories of urban and regional design, and the smart growth paradigm has arguably recovered at least some of these early tendencies within the planning tradition. But as discussed in chapter 3, analyses of planning policy have related as much to the process and institutional setting of decision-making as to the actual product of planning.

An important part of this discussion is the question of rationality. Authors such as Taylor (1999) suggest that, in general, the role of planning professionals over the past half century has shifted from providing spatial expertise to facilitating collective decision-making, while the process of planning for future environments has ostensibly become more democratic as citizens have become more engaged in both policy formulation and implementation strategies. In the United States, the turn to citizen participation is often traced to notions of advocacy, populist or equity planning (Davidoff, 1965; Clavel, 1986). More recent discussions call for the importance of a communicative rationality, where technical forms of knowledge are critiqued, amended, renegotiated, and revised via broader stakeholder involvement (Healey, 1998).

Most states directly address the strategic goal of citizen involvement in planning processes associated with urban growth management, which is central to building a stronger sense of community ownership through
planning. In providing guidance to local and regional governments, for example, Oregon places emphasis on the local development of a citizen involvement program that insures the opportunity for citizens to be involved in all phases of the planning process. In fact, the absence of such a program is a violation of state law. Neighboring Washington has similarly stated that a major goal of urban growth management is to encourage citizen participation. But what is interesting here is that, in urban Washington at least, the goal of citizen participation is linked directly to regional coordination of spatial policy.

This linkage between participation and regionalism as goals is seen in other states too, albeit in different forms and for different reasons. Wisconsin stipulates broad state goals that structure local planning policies, as seems the legislative preference in the Pacific Northwest (and in other states like Maryland and New Jersey). Wisconsin Act no. 9, the planning statute that mandates the development of local comprehensive plans by 2010, requires public participation at every stage of the comprehensive planning process, including adoption of written procedures, broad notice provisions, the opportunity to review and comment on draft plans, and a required public hearing prior to plan adoption (Wisconsin Department of Administration, 2003). More interesting, however, is the State's effort to occasion coordination and cooperation among nearby units of government.

As discussed in chapter 2, Wisconsin requires local comprehensive plans to include an “intergovernmental cooperation element.” While the state does not require local governments to undertake specific intergovernmental activities, it does encourage jurisdictions to forge new arrangements to better communicate visions and coordinate plans, policies, and programs and that also to help these jurisdictions resolve issues of mutual interest. Such “arrangements” might vary from simply communicating and sharing information to formal intergovernmental agreements and sharing resources like equipment, buildings, staff, and revenue, and even the consolidation of services, jurisdictions, and/or even transferring territory. This goal relates to coordination problems associated with the extreme politico-administrative fragmentation within the state. (Though it has less than 20 percent the population of California, for example, Wisconsin has twice as many police departments.)

The City of Madison explicitly addresses major problems in regional coordination with the other fifty-nine jurisdictions in Dane County (as well as Dane County) even as it sets out to alleviate these problems. From the City’s perspective, one source of regional conflict is the steady
deconcentration of residential and employment growth outside Madison and thus mounting congestion associated with cross-commuting—a regional reality that seems to demand much stronger regional thinking. Another major problem is that, as detailed in the City’s comprehensive plan:

In some cases, urban development proposals in towns adjacent to the City are rejected in areas where the full range of urban services cannot be provided and where development is premature and unplanned. Application of the City’s extraterritorial plat review jurisdiction continues to be a source of conflict with neighboring towns.²

In light of these types of problems and many others, the City of Madison (2006) outlined a series of appropriate goals and more measurable and concrete objectives, including the following:

Goal: Foster effective communication and a good working relationship between the City of Madison and all units of government. Objective 4: Identify the tools, methods, or organizational structures that will be used to ensure that there is effective communication with all units of government.

Other states do not specifically identify “citizen participation” as a statewide growth management goal, although it certainly informs policy strategies at less state-strategic levels. For example, the Office of Smart Growth in New Jersey lists eight major planning goals for the management of urban growth. None focus on citizen participation as explicitly as Oregon or Washington. Instead, New Jersey focuses on “Sound and Integrated Planning and Implementation Statewide.” This involves the use of the State Plan and the Plan Endorsement process [“cross-acceptance”] as a guide to achieve comprehensive, coordinated, long-term planning based on capacity analysis and citizen participation; and to integrate planning with investment, program and regulatory land-use decisions at all levels of government and the private sector, in an efficient, effective and equitable manner; [to] ensure that all development, redevelopment, revitalization or conservation efforts support State Planning Goals and are consistent with the Statewide Policies and State Plan Policy Map of the State Plan. (New Jersey Office of Smart Growth, 1996–2007)

The importance of cooperation is also indicated by the interesting fact that the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs actually includes
a “Regionalization and Special Services Unit” that focuses explicitly on this crucial aspect of planning practice.

As also briefly discussed in chapter 2, Maryland has organized its growth strategy around seven organizing “visions.” Similar to New Jersey, none of these visions touch directly on the broad goal of “participation” per se. Nor does Florida isolate the importance of citizen participation as a major statewide planning goal. Like Maryland and New Jersey, Florida directs local planning agencies and local governmental units “to adopt procedures designed to provide effective public participation in the comprehensive planning process and to provide real property owners with notice of all official actions which will regulate the use of their property” (Pasco County, 2005: 1–9). But it also requires, as in Wisconsin, the development of comprehensive plans that include “intergovernmental coordination” as a stand-alone planning element.

Returning to the Miami-Dade County Comprehensive Development Master Plan (CDMP), which seeks to build on the steady “metropolitanization of [service] responsibilities” in that region over the past several decades, we find examples of how this statewide goal in Florida is articulated at the city-regional level. A central goal in Miami-Dade County is “to use intergovernmental coordination as a major means of ensuring consistency among local, county and regional government plans and policies and of implementing Miami-Dade County’s comprehensive development master plan.” This goal involves both “informal coordination,” such as the greater utilization of intergovernmental planning workshops, and more intensive efforts “to reconfigure local comprehensive plans . . . to better reflect County/city division of local and areawide comprehensive planning, development regulation and services provision responsibilities” (Miami-Dade County, 2003: VIII: 1-8).

State involvement in local planning policy has also led to a strong institutional focus on regional coordination. The 1993 Environmental and Land Management Study Law revisions to the 1985 Growth Management Act, for example, represent a more recent statewide effort to strengthen intergovernmental coordination between local jurisdictions. For its part, the State of Washington’s efforts to link citizen participation to regional coordination has led to the strengthening of regulatory powers in urban counties. Wisconsin Act no. 9, the relatively new smart growth statute that mandates local comprehensive plans by 2010, encourages stronger coordination and cooperation among nearby units of government. While Wisconsin does not require local governments to undertake specific activities, it does try to incentivize “arrangement[s] by which officials of two or more jurisdictions communicate visions and
coordinate plans, policies, and programs to address and resolve issues of mutual interest” (Taylor County, 2007: 7–1).

Finally, Florida requires, as in Wisconsin, the development of local comprehensive plans that include intergovernmental coordination as a stand-alone planning element. A central goal in Miami-Dade County (2003), for example, is to use intergovernmental coordination as a means of ensuring “consistency” between the plans and policies of local, county, and regional government. This goal involves both informal coordination, such as the utilization of intergovernmental planning workshops, as well as more intensive and formal efforts to reconfigure local comprehensive plans so that they better reflect the various divisions of local and areawide comprehensive planning, development regulations, and services provision responsibilities.

Conclusions

The post-structural theorist of science and technology, Bruno Latour (1987), argues that new realities—including new geographies—emerge in part through the development of “strong rhetoric.” Words, ideas, discourses, rationalities, theories, ways of thinking—what Foucault repeatedly referred to as diagrams of truth and Lefebvre called representations of space—are slowly absorbed, passed along, strategically quoted, and ultimately inscribed in durable documents (like comprehensive plans) that, in turn, circulate and organize how problems are mapped and approached—“a narrowing from many competing versions [of the world] to a single stabilized reality” (Dugdale, 1999: 113). Words, ideas, discourses, rationalities, theories, ways of thinking—all these can also be ignored, unused, or entirely jettisoned, leaving us with the notion that “reality” is simultaneously reversible, malleable, something that can be reimagined.

Planning analysts and scholars often speak of the importance of ideas mainly in terms of material or built-environmental results—do things get built or not and do they perform as expected and desired? How do we turn the “paper plan,” the observation usually goes, “into reality”? However, such questions cannot emerge without the initial construction of “strong rhetoric” that allows them to be imagined in the first place. Paper plans and their spatial promises do not precede reality; they help to occasion—to produce—reality. As Huxley (2006) would argue, spatial rationalities underpin the smart growth paradigm itself, and these rationalities either influence goal formulation or they do not. These rationalities—protecting traditions, promoting liberty, facilitating diversity, and demanding justice—work just under the philosophical surface
of the overall paradigm to give intellectual shape to the concrete planning goals and overall spatial promises practical people set out to achieve.

The empirical survey of planning goals presented here—of the future worlds various communities would like to build over time—is admittedly partial, rather than comprehensive. It does not provide, in particular, a quantitative analysis of how many municipalities are pursuing how many specific goals and objectives, an impossible task given the scarcity of appropriate datasets. Nonetheless, the survey does communicate the growing (albeit uneven and perhaps contradictory) influence of the smart growth paradigm in restructuring existing landscapes of urban growth management programs. Sprawl reduction, urban regeneration, regulatory reform, and participatory regionalism are rhetorical commitments that, at least in some communities, now have the latent capacity to mature beyond conceptual promises.

But how are these hopes literally translated into the world—and to what effects? How are goals part of a broader process of state territoriality wherein “actors (including collectives) struggle to impose versions of reality on others” (Law, 1986: 6)? How does smart growth continue to move from the promising world of normative statements to the practiced world of prescriptive intervention—and what sort of politics does this generate? Answers to these questions now require us to turn to the ordinary tools and techniques of the paradigm in action.
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A doctor can bury his mistakes,  
but an architect can only advise his clients to plant vines.  

Frank Lloyd Wright

**Introduction**

A sharp scalpel does not save a dying patient. That difficult task requires an institutional ensemble of variables, a “functional swarming” of efficient ambulances, clean hospitals, good administration, access to new medical research, and well-trained and slightly cocky surgeons—to name only a few. Yet no discussion of patients, dying or otherwise, is possible without detailed attention to the tools and techniques of contemporary medical practice. Concurrency provisions, UGBs, critical areas ordinances, density bonuses, exactions, form-based zoning, and so on—these are the tools and techniques of today’s smart growth practices, the policy instruments which, to push the metaphor a bit further, a number of polities increasingly deploy (to try) to save what many observers see as unhealthy, even dying, metropolitan environments. For planners are, as Lefebvre (1991) critically observes, any given society’s “doctors of space” (McCann, 2001).

What critical scalpels do these doctors try to wield? Whereas chapter 4 focused on the overall goals of contemporary urban growth management programs, that is, on what should be done to reconstitute the geography of U.S. city-regions, this chapter focuses on the most commonly deployed (though certainly not all) tools and techniques associated with these programs, that is, on how it is done. Specifically, the chapter describes a host
of regulatory and nonregulatory growth management tools and techniques; explains how they are used in practice, in what combinations, and under what circumstances; and most importantly, reports on what we have begun to learn so far about their empirical life as instruments of a contested state territoriality. The chapter thus not only links back to issues and themes previously developed, especially as discussed in chapter 3, but also anticipates the case studies developed in Part III.

Tools and Techniques

This section considers a range of tools and techniques commonly deployed by local and regional governments to manage and shape growth in metropolitan environments. The discussion does not attempt to cover all available tools and techniques but focuses instead on illustrating the geopolitical nature and effects of some of the more important urban growth management instruments.

Mandatory Comprehensive Plans as Collective Visions

Hardly any planning tool is more deployed yet more reviled in both theory and practice than the comprehensive plan—one of the main instruments of state territoriality through which spatial rationalities of various kinds take on concrete administrative, discursive, and material form. Also known as master or general plans, “comp plans” in the United States are not so much tools per se as broad normative policy proclamations that serve as large, complex meta-tools (or tools-for-organizing-tools). Few, if any, communities attempt to manage growth deliberately without them and, therefore, many urban growth management states mandate or encourage their local development and implementation.

Though different in content and style from place to place, particularly in terms of quality, ambition, and relevance, contemporary comprehensive plans typically have three characteristics (Kent, 1964). First, they deal with the totality of relevant issues that influence urban development dynamics, including land use, but also problems of historic preservation, natural resource conservation, transportation choices, urban design, housing problems, infrastructure investments, and economic development strategies. Each of these issues typically forms a distinct chapter—or “element,” in planning language—within an overall comprehensive planning document. Second, comprehensive plans are spatially comprehensive in terms of the physical area—the territory—they try to control and shape, including not simply a political jurisdiction (such as
a municipality) but also, in certain cases, extraterritorial areas located in unincorporated regions that are directly influenced by this general-purpose jurisdiction. Third, comprehensive plans deal with directing change over long periods of time, typically twenty years, although even longer periods of time are also possible (Kelly and Becker, 2000).

As already discussed in chapter 4, comprehensive plans establish goals and objectives for the long-term conservation and transformation of political communities at various scales. But they also base these long-term goals and objectives on a detailed study of past and current conditions even as they project them forward to immediate actions and policy strategies. For example, a broad desire to more efficiently service new residential developments—a common planning goal—may lead a community to (try to) reduce average costs of service per household below regional averages by, in turn, promoting the use of cluster, or other kinds of land-use zoning.

The often “dreamy” quality of comp plans—which typically embody a vast range of ideal futures—has invited repeated criticism from practitioners, particularly from those who work daily at the technical coalface with developers one project at a time in highly contingent, place-specific circumstances (Weitz and Waldnor, 2002), but also from those who see them as insufficiently political (Davidoff, 1965). Here the chief complaint is that bulky plans are too often “dead on arrival” (Burnby, 2003), essentially outdated and illegitimate by the time communities finally adopt them as formal policy devices. “Comprehensive, technocratic, scientific, and still somehow magically reformist,” Freestone (2000: 3) pithily observes, these devices may well send communities on hopelessly quixotic quests for “urban salvation through all-encompassing city and metropolitan blueprints.” However, Burby (2003) believes comprehensive plans are weak in large part because they “lack publics.” In contrast, with greater stakeholder involvement, he argues, “comprehensive plans are stronger, and proposals made in plans are more likely to be implemented” (p. 34).

In so far as comprehensive plans are political documents, they are also geographical affairs: Their contents reflect not only extra-local political and economic forces (especially state legislation) but also place-contingent constellations of local dynamics, actors, institutions, and problems—such as the local importance of urban sustainability coalitions (Portney, 2004). In their work on sprawl-reduction planning policies (SRPPs) in Florida comp plans, for example, Brody et al. (2006) find a clear statistical and spatial pattern of SRPPs across the study area and show that specific socioeconomic and demographic characteristics influence the
adoption of SRPPs in comprehensive plans. Put another way, they find that local comprehensive plans in Florida generate a distinctive geopolitical landscape. While some counties mandate the use of density bonuses, a tool also discussed below, some counties do not, suggesting the presence of multiple (and varied) spatial rationalities (and environments) across both this and other regions in the United States.

Concurrency Provisions and Development Impact Fees

Another major tool is concurrency that is typically paid for through the allied use of development impact fees, an overall planning approach pioneered in California and Florida but also now deployed in Washington State and many other places (Ben-Zadock, 2005). In simple terms, concurrency refers to a mandatory requirement that “development is not to proceed unless infrastructure capacity and specific urban services are in place to service the new development” (Chapin, 2007: 506). Concurrency links comprehensive planning with capital improvement programs (which are budgets for public physical and social investments) and broader debates about the sources of municipal finance and tax equity. Also known as adequate public facilities ordinances (APFOs), concurrency provisions address infrastructure needs under conditions of rapid growth, especially as these relate not only to road capacity but also to issues such as sewerage lines, water mains, storm water management, and other public services that necessarily attend residential and commercial development (Kaiser et al., 1988).

The Florida experience, where concurrency ideas are well researched, is decidedly mixed. Hobbled by insufficient funding from the state (Ben-Zadok and Gale, 2001), concurrency in Florida has proved effective in some policy areas, but not in others. As Chapin (2007: 508) notes: “In terms of infrastructure, whereas concurrency has brought better storm water practices and more park facilities to local jurisdictions, road congestion remains a major problem, and potable water shortages and solid waste management have become near-term problems.” While insufficient state funding is always the bête noire of concurrency enthusiasts, the functionally (and spatially) uneven performance of concurrency provisions is also related to the geopolitical nature of development impact fees in themselves—to “who bears the burden” of payments and, no less important, to where these payers are located in space and time (Huffman et al., 1988).

Development impact fees, which are also sometimes called exactions, are financial charges paid by land developers, often applied at the time a
new building permit is issued by a planning department. These charges are levied by public authorities to fund the indirect (off-site) costs of new private-sector developments, such as water and sewer systems, roads, schools, libraries, and parks and recreation facilities. Their use in the United States has grown exponentially since the late 1970s, partly because of the tax revolt that started in California but also because of the decreasing amount of federal funding for urban development projects in both cities and suburbs (which peeked around 1978).

Lacking both sufficient property taxes and federal dollars, development impact fees have dramatically localized the concurrency politics of adequately servicing sprawl versus compactness. As Libby and Cameron (2004: 1) observe:

Each community must decide whether the cost of new infrastructure is charged directly to the new residents by using impact fees, or shared among all new and current residents through higher taxes. This is a sensitive issue, because current residents can refuse to raise the taxes needed for new facilities serving new residents, lowering the average level of service for all. Or, if the costs are charged to new users, current residents can enjoy any increase in average service benefits from the construction of new facilities without paying for them.

Different kinds of communities invariably make different kind of choices, although explicitly geographical scholarship of politico-administrative variations is thin (cf. Lake and Hansen, 2000). There is, as Richard Feiock (2004: 364) puts it, “tremendous variation” in local responses to state-level concurrency provisions within Florida, but no real explanation for this variation. Part of this (unmapped) spatial variation—this unevenness in state territoriality—might be plausibly interrogated in class terms, with high-income, well-educated residents who own homes more likely to shift fresh costs to newer, generally less affluent, and less politically powerful arrivals, especially first-time homeowners and renters (Downs, 2003).

But Feiock also argues for the explanatory importance of place-specific institutions, such as council-manager forms of government, in charting the empirical terrain of these types of tools. Moreover, development impact fees do not necessarily materialize in toto overnight, but often emerge piecemeal, service by service, initiative by initiative, over time—only gradually changing the administrative landscape. One early pioneer, Broward County, Florida, for instance, adopted a parks fee in 1977 but school and road fees only in 1979, addressing public facility
deficiencies sequentially rather than comprehensively and linking them to other funding tools such as general obligation bonds used for other types of capital improvements (Auerhamn, 1988).

**Urban and Regional Growth Boundaries**

Concurrency provisions funded through development impact fees are typically designed to lead to greater spatial compactness—a major principle of the smart growth paradigm presented in chapter 3. But their inherently geographical nature is less obvious than one finds in another major tool that Carl Abbott (2007) calls the only “iconic” planning product America really has: UGBs. In theory, UGBs are “lines in space” beyond which, with very few exceptions, only rural or rural-friendly development is allowed. The UGBs do not freeze all forms of development beyond these lines, but they attempt to connect urban-oriented land development to extant urban fabric (Carlson and Dierwechter, 2007).

The core purpose of UGBs is to focus on new urban growth in compact communities and centers in a manner that uses land more efficiently, makes it easier to supply adequate parks and recreation areas, facilitates pedestrian- and transit-orientation, and helps communities to conserve natural resources (Puget Sound Regional Council, 1995). When applied in metropolitan environments, that is to say, when deployed as city-regional rather than as municipal strategies, they are designed to shape and slowly reconstitute metropolitan physical form as a whole, principally by funneling new growth into the boundary areas, where urban level services already exist or can be more efficiently developed through the use of concurrency provisions.

Portland’s metropolitan use of UGBs is well known in both planning and urban studies (Knaap, 1985; Lang and Hornburg, 1997; Abbot, 2007; Johnson, 2007). But UGBs have also been used city-regionally in Washington State, whose legislature mandated their implementation even as it committed to infrastructure concurrency, affordable housing, and other major growth goals. Sprawl reduction per se has worked (Robinson et al., 2005). In their study of UGBs in Pierce County, for example, Carlson and Dierwechter (2007: 216) geo-coded residential building permits following the passage of growth management legislation and found “a dramatic decrease of building outside the UGB and a steady increase inside the UGB.” These law-induced spatial changes are significant, especially given the vesting rules in Washington. Vested land located beyond the UGBs eventually worked through the new permitting system imposed in the 1990s, tapering off in the latter 1990s.
However, these results say little about the environmental and economic qualities of the redistributed growth, including its local spatial syntax, in situ ecological effects, links to transit investments and other forms of infrastructure, and overall affordability to both private consumers and public service providers—all issues that relate to what some call the “right-sizing” of UGBs (Manning, 2003). Liberal critics of UGBs have repeatedly argued that their success in reducing sprawl distorts “natural” market forces by creating an artificial supply of land, which ultimately drives up housing prices (Staley et al., 1997). In consequence, UGBs are (for these critics) helping to produce illiberal landscapes of bureaucratic exclusion and social elitism—gated regions. Other researchers see no such effects (Pendall, 1999). Still others view the actual and theoretical performance of UGBs in far more subtle terms, relating them to innovation around the management of land inventories (Gnaap and Hopkins, 2001).

Regardless, there is no better example of state territoriality than “a line in the land” (Staley, 1997). In order to actually draw such a line, new forms of state space are necessarily built along the way—and new territorial politics emerge. In Washington, as discussed in chapter 7, this state-building dynamic includes both technical-scientific and deliberative-political processes. In brief, a state department in Olympia, the Office of Financial Management, initially projects twenty-year demographic trends for all urban counties. These quantitative projections, these “discursive formation[s] in which arguments cohere in ways that make them ultimately almost unquestionable,” as Murdoch and Abrams (2002: 13–14) put it, “cascade down” as “calculative spaces” into local government offices—allocated spatially and quantitatively through a discursive-political process of interlocal negotiations coordinated through county administrations. In part, these negotiations reflect the technical amount of buildable land in each jurisdiction, although what is and is not “buildable” is subject to disagreements about the definition of density.

This means technical projections are also intensely political. In early 2005, one suburban municipality complained that “[Pierce County] violated Washington’s Growth Management Act by ‘usurping’ local governments’ authority to determine how they want to grow” (Corvin 2005: B1). At issue was a policy that a countywide shortage of buildable land must exist before local municipalities can add more land to their UGBs. Pierce County’s intent was to force cities to increase population density in already serviced spaces in order to avoid sprawling land-use patterns—which “takes away our individuality as a city,” according to the local
mayor (ibid.). The UGBs are therefore also about the geopolitics of sovereignty, about what authority rules what territory under what conditions toward what spatial end.

**Interlocal and Joint-Planning Agreements**

Sovereignty issues also permeate other tools, such as interlocal and joint-planning agreements, albeit with the expectation that political conflicts can be managed rationally. Interlocal agreements (ILAs) are contracts between two or more local units of government (cities, suburbs, counties, special districts) regarding the provision of explicit public services, including not only urban planning services but also fire, police, waste, and emergency services to name only a few.

As contracts between municipal corporations, ILAs enumerate the duties, roles, and responsibilities of the various actors and also provide payment details. Like firms, local government corporations in the United States increasingly “outsource” tasks to private companies that they used to conduct in-house or not conduct at all, including urban planning, land-design and engineering work. One the one hand, then, the growth of ILAs provides evidence of a deepening neoliberalization (privatization, “technicalization,” and de-democratization) within the local and regional state. On the other hand, according to Ross and Levine (2006: 409), ILAs are also examples of cooperative arrangements that permit “regional governance even in the absence of regional government.”

A good example of an ILA oriented toward the provision of planning and growth management services is the one that formed the PSRC in the Seattle-Tacoma region of Washington State in the late 1990s. Drawing its legislative powers from the Interlocal Cooperation Act of 1967 but authorized by the legislative bodies of each of its constituent members (including cities, suburbs, counties, port authorities, and the DOT), the mission of the PSRC for the past decade has been to preserve and enhance the quality of life in the central Puget Sound area.

In so doing, it shall prepare, adopt, and maintain goals, policy, and standards for regional transportation and regional growth management in the central Puget Sound area, in accordance with federal and state law and based on local comprehensive plans of jurisdictions within the region. The agency shall ensure implementation in the region of the provisions of state and federal law which pertain to regional transportation planning and regional growth management. (PSRC, 1998: 1)
Joint-power agreements offer a slightly more developed form of ILAs in that two or more local governments “formerly agree to work together in the provision of a service” (Ross and Levine, 2006: 414). These are also common in the provision of planning and growth management services, and are therefore called joint-planning agreements.

A useful example of a joint-planning agreement is the one that governed land-management activities between the City of Orlando and Orange County, Florida, from 1994 to 2005. According to the Director of Planning in Orlando, the joint-planning agreement allowed the City and County to agree on minimal standards for annexation and also limited the County’s right to challenge annexation that met these standards. In addition, it allowed planners “to ‘pre-plan’ land... and assign initial zoning... immediately following annexation, [which] allowed the City to quickly respond to appropriate development proposals while providing certainty and flexibility to the development community” (Gerhartz, 2005, no page number). On the other hand, the joint-planning agreement “did not properly address the issue of enclaves, which... led to inefficiencies in the delivery of service and achieving a rational and compact municipal boundary” (ibid.). Here geographies of retreat—of enclavization—slip through the paradigm’s other rationalities, even within the same initiative.

In trying to facilitate both flexibility and compactness, ILAs and joint-planning agreements therefore generate an “easy regionalism”—a “light” rather than “heavy” form of cooperative activity across jurisdictions whose dramatic proliferation in recent years arguably represents a new form of state territoriality. According to Thurmaier and Wood (2002: 586), for example, the widespread use of ILAs (and similar tools) constitutes a growing challenge to traditional, hierarchical modes of public-service delivery. For the empirical diffusion of ILAs (and other forms of regional cooperation) means that jurisdictional borders and sovereignty are declining in importance, and there is a corresponding decline in the capacity of jurisdictions to manage some public policy issues (Frederickson, 1999: 586). This has led to a new form of state power, wherein, as O’Toole (1997: 46) observes, a growing demand for effective governmental action in the face of collective-actions problems is married awkwardly to a liberal ideology of American government. This awkward marriage encourages “complex, networked mechanisms for service delivery and management—extending the reach of governmental programs while loosening the immediate managerial grip” (O’Toole, cited in Thurmaier and Wood, 2002: 586, emphasis added).
Transfer/Purchase of Development Rights

Almost all the tools discussed so far involve the public regulation of private land. Yet land per se is a complex thing. Obviously part of the earth’s ecosystem, land is also a multidimensional commodity that in capitalist economies provides individual owners with “a bundle of rights,” including rights of possession, control, enjoyment, exclusion, and disposition (Gaddy and Hart, 2000). Land-development rights involve investments and improvements that change the character (and impacts) of a given parcel of property. Development rights can be “pealed” away (and sold) from the overall legal bundle even as possession, control, enjoyment, and exclusion all remain in place. Specifically, the right to develop land more intensively can be transferred off-site to someone else.

Transfer of development rights (TDRs), then, refers to a tool that shifts future development potential from one piece of property to another (Pruetz et al., 2002). The TDRs are mostly used to protect agricultural lands, forestlands, and open space. The main idea is to designate in space and hook up over time “sending” (market supplying) and “receiving” (market demanding) areas.

One of the most heralded applications of this tool is in Montgomery County, Maryland, which launched a TDR program in 1980 as part of its efforts to preserve open space and farmland in response to its “Wedges and Corridors” plan. “Sending” areas in Montgomery County are known as Rural Density Transfer Zones. These Zones contain one dwelling unit per 25 acres. However, dwellings can be transferred to the County’s “receiving areas” at the higher density of one dwelling unit per 5 acres. Once a TDR has been transferred from a sending area, it is no longer available. However, density bonuses—are also granted in the receiving areas if developers incorporate moderately priced homes. Of the 317,000 acres of total land in the county, 93,000 acres have been designated as the Rural Density Transfer Zone, which is land to be potentially preserved. To date, more than 50,000 acres have been preserved through TDRs.

The TDRs are often discussed as “market-oriented” rather than as “regulatory” tools because, amongst other things, farmers sell TDRs to developers in a market-like manner. But the market-language per se is misleading. For the amount of governance these “markets” actually require to work well may be more labor intensive than classic planning tools like subdivision regulations. As Bredin (2000: 1–2) writes, TDRs require
Clear designation of the sending and receiving areas, preferably on the zoning map. Consistency between the location of sending and receiving areas and the policies of the local comprehensive plan, including the future land-use plan map. Recording of the development rights as a conservation easement, which will inform future owners of the restrictions and make them enforceable by civil action. Uniform standards for what constitutes a development right, preferably based on quantifiable measures like density, area, floor area ratio, and height. Sufficient pre-planning in the receiving area, including provisions for adequate public facilities. Sufficient allowable density in the receiving area to help ensure development is economically viable. If the receiving area is zoned to allow development at market capacity without the TDRs, there will be little demand for the TDRs and their market value will be diminished. A final, basic question that enabling statutes will not directly resolve is whether TDR programs should be mandatory or voluntary.

Is it worth all this work? Jurisdictions who think it is are attracted by the promise that TDRs ostensibly suppress sprawl but do not require large public outlays. This contrasts with the purchase of development rights (PDRs). Under PDR schemes, landowners sell their development rights to a public agency or a conservation organization; an easement is then placed on the land. In short, farmers are paid not to sell their land for future, more intensive development. Suffolk County, New York, for instance, was one of the first local governments to employ PDRs in order to protect farmland from the pressures of urban development. In the small town of Dunn, Wisconsin, 15 percent of the municipal budget in the mid-1990s focused on financing PDRs, a policy intended to “displace” the intense pressure for new “commuter housing” then emanating from Madison, just twenty miles away (Jacobson, 1999).

**Density Bonuses and Inclusionary Housing Provisions**

Comprehensive plans, concurrency provisions, joint-planning agreements, and TDRs all frequently invoke the parallel benefits of using density bonuses, particularly as a technique to produce more affordable housing, which is the main focus here. Density bonuses allow developers to build more units than would normally be allowed in a particular zoning district in exchange for providing something else. In this sense, density bonuses are considered a type of incentive zoning, a broader concept that might also involve adjustments to height or bulk restrictions or other modifications to the normal requirements outlined in the zoning
ordinance of a community. Density is typically controlled by specifying Floor Area Ratios (FARs), which calculate the ratio between the overall size of a parcel of property and the amount of floor space constructed on that property. Incentive zoning allows developers to increase the floor-area ratio (i.e., to receive a density “bonus”). When density bonuses are used to target broader affordable housing goals, moreover, they are part of inclusionary housing strategies (which involves a “bigger box” of tools and techniques).

In California, inclusionary housing programs that deploy density bonus incentives are often written into the zoning code or the housing element of the comprehensive plan so that obtaining building permits is made contingent upon providing more affordable housing (Calavita and Grimes, 1998). These are compromised attempts to forge more just and diverse spaces. “Voluntary objectives are usually based on goals specified in the housing element of the General Plan,” Calavita and Grimes (1998: 151) write, “and are set forth in a public policy that typically requires developers to negotiate with public officials, but without specifically requiring them to provide affordable housing.”

Mandatory policies are also attempted, though it is far from clear how effective these policies are given the geopolitics of housing and poverty issues in the United States. For density bonuses are sometimes tied up with wider legislative efforts at the state level to implement “regional fair-share” housing strategies in local communities, particularly in suburban areas (or edge cities) whose service economies are starting to generate entry-level jobs populated by moderate- and low-income individuals who cannot afford to live in these communities (Mech et al., 2003).

One recent example is the State of Illinois, which passed a law in 2003 titled the Illinois Affordable Housing Planning and Appeals Act. This act mandates local planning for improved low-income housing opportunities in communities where less than 10 percent of the housing stock is considered affordable—an important example of progressive housing politics. Specifically, the act requires municipalities to identify and adopt incentives to attract affordable housing development.

In his recent study of thirty-six suburban municipalities around Chicago, Hoch (2007: 93) reports that, while most local officials believe the new state mandate is helping to change the policy focus to affordability issues, most also believe it imposes an “unfair burden” on them and furthermore makes “little economic sense” for their communities. “This illustrates that a gap exists,” he concludes, “between the beliefs of the state legislators who approved the mandate and those of the munici-
pal officials expected to make the local plans for affordable housing” (ibid.). Again, we observe the politics of scale and space—and culture.

For beliefs are important cultural variables in the local production of urban space, crosscutting politico-economic forces. For example, part of the affordable housing discourse in Naperville, one of metropolitan Chicago’s fastest-growing “edge cites,” includes the following discourse:

What “Affordable Housing” Is NOT (When educated and well-intentioned people are discussing the issue):

1. NOT high-rise, people “warehouses” for the severely impoverished (a la Cabrini Green and other Chicago Housing Authority structures doomed to failure)
2. NOT a hand out
3. NOT anti-growth
4. NOT anti-development
5. NOT an eyesore
6. NOT, according to numerous studies, a drag on the pace, or price, of sales of neighboring homes (DuPage United, 2007, no page number).

Such discourses reveal a great deal. Downs (2003, no page number) has usefully summarized the general suburban challenge of improved housing affordability this way:

Even in the one state that has adopted a statewide affordable housing policy—New Jersey—resistance to affordability in suburbs has been fierce. And when such units were built there, occupants have been mostly white households already residing in the suburbs. This is also true in Massachusetts. So there has been very little movement of any households out of central cities into suburban affordable housing—one of the basic purposes of locating affordable housing in the suburbs.

While opening up the suburbs to greater housing choice is certainly a key urban growth management challenge—as well as a major spatial project of the economic Left in the United States of America—so too is linking housing affordability to urban infill and the general re-urbanization of central cities (Pierce County, 2006). After decades of decay, Hackworth (2002: 485) has documented a general “revalorization” of central-city environments over the past several years (though sprawl continues as well). Much of this revalorization is through “infill,” an important smart growth principle. As Steinacker (2003: 493) explains, “infill development offers the possibility to address several public problems.” These include reducing

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suburban sprawl and preserving open space; improving the tax base of cities; neighborhood revitalization; and improved housing affordability and thus social equity (cf. Wright et al., 2004).

However, “affordable infill”—a technique that links urban redevelopment dynamics with adequate affordable housing through density bonuses and other tools—is difficult for at least three reasons (Steinacker, 2003; cf. Staley et al., 2001). First, it does not stem the middle-class exit from the city, which is the main cause of suburban sprawl; second, it does not appreciably contribute to the urban tax base (which is a primary factor in funding poor school districts); and third, “because infill areas are by definition more are less undesirable sites, often suffering from brownfield or other environmental problems, selecting them as sites for affordable housing may trigger a different set of equity issues [such as] [charges] for ‘dumping poor or minority residents and exacerbating environmental injustice’” (ibid.: 495). For political economy and cultural issues also shape the urban condition—and planning for growth is embedded deeply in this condition.

**Special Tax/Financing Tools**

As the discussion of density bonuses shows, planning is not simply about regulation; it is also about public investment strategies directed at improving the overall quality of spatial development in a particular area. While a UGB, for instance, has financial implications, it is not a financial tool. It raises no money in itself but simply regulates the private sector’s development choices. In contrast, special tax and financing tools are designed explicitly to raise new public revenues at various scales of governance so that communities might not only protect and conserve open space through PDRs, for example, but also pursue other important goals, such as historic preservation or indeed the provision of affordable housing.

One of the best examples of this tool is found in the Community Preservation Act (CPA), passed by the Massachusetts legislature in 2000. While the CPA is frequently touted by its advocates as smart growth, it is actually less about planning than it is about implementation (Hamin et al., 2006). In essence, the CPA is a matching-grants program. It allows municipalities to institute property tax surcharges by up to 3 percent in order to fund specific open space preservation, affordable housing, and/or historic preservation projects. Ultimately it is projects that drive the tool. The CPA does not mandate the local use of this tool, but instead emphasizes “flexibility”—another major smart growth prin-
principle. Specifically, each community in the state may vote on whether to adopt the CPA through ballet referendum. A state trust fund financed through new fees on the Registry of Deeds provides “matching funds” to all communities who decide to pursue the CPA.

Hamin et al. (2006) point out that the CPA, while focused on project implementation, flexibility, and local action, does not address other criteria classically associated with urban growth management programs or indeed the recent smart growth paradigm. Specifically, the CPA does not require linkage to comprehensive planning; nor does it require the equitable distribution of the benefits and burdens of growth, in large part because is does not promote a regional perspective on sustainability and growth issues. That said, Hamin et al. (2006: 56) highlight the positive aspects of the CPA experience to date:

The CPA was designed to help communities fund the initiatives so often written into plans without means for implementation. To the extent that planning is a process that directly contributes to local community quality of life through providing for public goods not otherwise normally obtainable through the private market, this is planning in its most active sense. Unlike most state-level smart growth or growth management legislation, the focus on the CPA is on implementation through local funding.

Most interesting, though, is the uneven territoriality of the CPA as a new political relationship between the state and diverse, culturally distinctive communities in a region of the United States with an extremely strong tradition of “townhall democracy” and local control, dating back to the colonial period of the seventeenth century. Such territoriality hinges on the synoptic goal of improved area-specific flexibility in the governance of space. “A key argument against state-led growth management legislation,” Hamin et al. (ibid.) note,

is that it is very difficult to fashion such legislation in ways that meet the needs of growing urban and suburban cities and towns as compared to stable or declining, often rural or inner-ring suburb and central city areas.

This suggests that Massachusetts is learning from history even as it draws upon its own cultural traditions. While true enough, “flexible” and “incentive-based” approaches that allow for considerable local discretion may not lead to the kind of dramatic land use and environmental change that the strongest advocates of the smart growth paradigm seek. Quoting the work of Weitz (1999) on Georgia, Hamin et al. also
note that “while the incentive-based approach [in Georgia] has increased its acceptance among municipalities, the flexibility of the program and its lack of requirements for municipalities to implement comprehensive plans [perhaps] makes this act ‘destined to have only marginal effects on land development patterns’” (p. 298). Too much of the paradigm is left out.

Most critically, the decentralized use of financial tools like surcharges might simply amplify uneven development, as rich municipalities can buy conservation easements and historic preservation but downplay more redistributive agendas that focus on projects like affordable housing; contrawise, poor jurisdictions may not be able to tax themselves adequately (if at all) to provide for much-needed affordable housing. The decentralized, democratic, town hall approach emphasizing “tradition” is thus easily captured by dominant classes who have already sorted themselves out in space—exaggerating rather than reducing problems of economic segregation and, where more land is preserved, facilitating rather than reducing fresh sprawl through leapfrog developments into neighboring jurisdictions—a geography of further retreat.

**Major Form-Based Code Reforms**

Tweaking zoning codes, through density bonuses or other tools, or even using major regulatory tools like UGBs, all represent “planning-oriented” approaches to urban growth management. The CPA is a financial tool. But as discussed in chapters 3 and 4, more urban design-led approaches, in particular those associated with New Urbanism, suggest a different method or technique, even as infill, affordability, and sprawl reduction are all the same goals.

This technique is to restructure the regulatory codes and rules that govern land development of a locale into what are now called form-based codes (Tracy, 2003; Burdette, 2004; Madden and Spikowski, 2006). While zoning focuses on the segregation of land-use types, permissible property uses, and the control of development intensity, form-based codes “address the relationship between building facades and the public realm, the form and mass of buildings in relation to one another, and the scale and types of streets and block” (Form-Based Codes Institute, 2007).

One recent example of this more radical, comprehensive, and design-oriented approach to meeting growth goals is found in Huntersville, North Carolina, located on Lake Norman just north of Charlotte. In November, 1996, the fast-growing town entirely discarded its old zoning
and subdivision ordinances, replacing them with a new ordinance based heavily on New Urbanist design:

The suburban sprawl model will [no longer be] the guiding principle of Huntersville’s growth. While this model does provide some short-term advantages, it produces many more long-term inefficiencies related to infrastructure maintenance, environmental degradation, and loss of community character. Huntersville’s adoption of traditional town planning principles is therefore grounded in economics as well as aesthetics. (City of Huntersville, 1996)

As Mitchell (2002: 29) has reported: “Out went the conventional standards, in use since before World War II. In came a one-of-a-kind, cul-de-sac-killing code that embraced the design-oriented principles of New Urbanism and Traditional Neighborhood Development.” In fact, Huntersville “swallowed these principles whole” because, as one local official put it, “We didn’t want to get run over by that sprawl everybody talks about” (ibid.). The town’s new development code today is therefore “performance-based,” meaning

All new developments must be built on a fine-grained network of low-speed pedestrian-oriented public streets that are configured into blocks and connected into adjacent properties. The result, over time, will be an interconnected street system that is safe and accessible to pedestrians and cyclists, as well as automobiles. However, having met the requirements for streets and other public spaces, the developer finds immense flexibility to meet market demands for housing type, housing density, and mixed uses. For example, the predominant in-town residential zoning district is not regulated by housing density or by minimum lot size. Density in this district is irrelevant. (City of Huntersville, 1995a)

Theoretically, at least, this performance-approach is allowing for greater housing mix in addition to other New Urbanist and Smart Growth goals:

As a matter of right, apartments or other forms of attached housing may constitute up to 30 percent of the housing units in a major subdivision. Apartments and attached homes are permitted by-right on individual infill lots. Each single family home, attached or detached, is allowed one accessory dwelling, unrestricted as to occupancy. At urban intersections and along major streets, commercial uses with second floor apartments are permitted by-right. If developers take advantage of the ordinance’s flexibility, housing should become more accessible to a broad spectrum people of various incomes and ages. Small-scale commercial uses providing opportunities
for shopping and employment will be located within easy walking distance of homes. This development form also reduces the likelihood that new housing will be formed into pockets of economic homogeneity. (ibid.)

But as Mao Tze-Tung once putatively quipped: Every solution generates problems. While the new ordinance has facilitated a well-connected street grid and pedestrian-oriented mixed-use shopping districts, the sheer totality of the new code as well as the breakneck speed of urban development in this metropolitan region of the state have simultaneously produced, at least for some observers, a landscape “awash in a sea of narrow, bungalow-lined streets interspersed with the odd row of townhouses”—in short, an aesthetic overdose of neotraditionalism. A real fake. “What we really need now,” one official lamented, “are some good old-fashioned cul-de-sac neighborhoods, just to break up the monotony” (Mitchell, 2002: 29).

Monotonous landscapes are often associated with traditional zoning (Newsom, 2007), but are not supposed to occur under form-based approaches. As Burdett (2004: 36) writes, form-based codes “do not attempt to control every possible aspect of a development, merely ‘what is considered important’” (Katz and Ferrell, 2003). Avi Freidmann (2002) calls this “flexibility by design.” Yet codes, whether form-based or not, constitute what Ben-Joseph (2006) has dubbed “the hidden language of place-making.” For Ben-Joseph, in recent years planning codes “have created a genetic bank that promotes cloning not mutation” (p. 188).

An alternative to both traditional zoning and form-based codes is the truly radical decision taken in 2002 by Habersham County, located outside Atlanta, Georgia. According to Ben-Joseph, the County “abolished all its land-use regulations, fired all its building inspectors, and eliminated its planning commission” (p. 187). Here classic liberalism directed against planning tools and techniques surfaced around the territorial politics of “property rights” in a state otherwise ostensibly committed to strong urban growth management tools. Ben-Joseph quotes one local County Commissioner, a champion of “regulatory rollback,” who stated simply: “we’re going to see if people truly need to be regulated” (ibid.). Here a discourse of local political freedom (temporarily) overwhelmed other rationalities of spatial governance.

**Wetland Protection Tools/Critical Areas Ordinances**

No one really knows how many “Habersham Countys” might be out there both now and in the future. The country is full of buried land-
mines only exposed by local skirmishes. But the Milton Friedman-inspired claim that property should be liberated from overbearing state regulations of all kinds carries over into other tools as well, including those that protect sensitive land from severe ecological deterioration brought about by rapid urban growth.

Indeed, the “regulatory rollback” in Georgia was in part occasioned by efforts to require buffer zones between streams and new construction—that is to say, the protection of critical areas and habitats. “Critical areas” are hazardous areas, such as floodplains and steep slopes, as well as ecologically sensitive areas, including wetlands and streams. Their protection from intensive urban development, especially when they fall within UGBs and other targeted growth areas, therefore includes overall safety issues in addition to conservation and sustainability concerns.

In Washington State, critical area ordinances (CAOs) are a mandatory component of all urban growth management strategies, yet another way in which this state is rescaling territorial governance. Under Washington’s Growth Management Act, according to the Washington Environmental Council (2004: 8), all local governments in urban or fast-growing counties are required “to classify and designate critical areas including fish and wildlife habitat and wetlands” and “to protect critical areas through development regulations (e.g., critical areas and zoning ordinances).” This requirement relates to the smart growth principle of protecting open space, especially where the quality of the bioregional environment is at stake. Not all development is prohibited in areas deemed “critical”; nor are areas protected in the same manner or designed to eliminate reasonable uses of private property (ibid.). However, CAOs in Washington do require “buffers” around streams and wetlands, which remove buildable land from the property inventories of the region’s dynamic economy.

Whether or not land is removed, how much of it is removed, and to what end, is supposed to turn on what the Washington state legislature originally called “best available science” in developing policies and development regulations to protect the functions and values of critical areas. But the rational science of this tool, which attempts to understand inter alia, problems of sedimentation, bacteria and nutrient removal, shoreline stabilization, temperature moderation, woody debris recruitment, and wildlife habitat (Vellidis, 2003), has invariably clashed with the practical politics of implementation, that is to say, with power—leading to what Thompson and Yocom (1993) call “uncertain ground.”

In particular, conflict over the use of CAOs in King County, the home of Seattle, has escalated in recent years to the point where a fully
fledged, if intermittently intense, secessionist movement to create an entirely new county has actually developed. In short, the CAO rekindled a “bitter ‘rural’ vs. ‘urban’ dispute” within King County in 2004, moving the territoriality of this tool well beyond older, familiar concerns with “property rights”. As Langston (2004: B1) evocatively reports on the conflict:

Volvo station wagons now park next to pickup trucks with bumper stickers advertising cowboydate.com. In a place that championed a movement to form a breakaway Cedar County a decade ago, new rules requiring rural landowners to leave up to two-third of their property untouched have uncorked a bitter well of frustration. The regulations known as King County’s “critical areas ordinance” have again galvanized rural residents who’ve lost battles over what they view as extreme micromanagement by urban politicians.

The Washington State Supreme Court has struck down efforts to reverse CAOs through citizen referendums, citing the supremacy of the 1990 Growth Management Act (even as a Circuit Court judge in Georgia has recently required Habersham County to enforce the rules it abandoned) (Ben-Joseph, 2006). Again, the geopolitics of scale shapes place and culture. So disaffected citizens in King County continue to link urban growth management with political and even cultural oppression. As one person fumed: “I am highly sick of [urban politicians] who think that rural [King County] is just a park for their whimsical use” (Cascade County Committee, 2005).

**Green-Building Programs**

Almost all of the tools discussed so far are associated at least indirectly with efforts to plan more effectively for urban sustainability. But policy efforts now also include even more tailored techniques that focus on the constitution of specific buildings, pushing regional planning and urban design into the more intimate and detailed terrain of architecture and ecological design (Hester, 2006). This is most evident in new efforts at various scales of governance to promote “green building” technologies and practices, particularly as part of new “climate change” policies now coming out of state legislatures and urban administrations (Portney, 2004; Peterson and Rose, 2006).

Green buildings in themselves do not substantially influence the overall geography of metropolitan form, which is what TDRs, density
bonuses, and UGBs try to do; nor do they substantially impact the broader design features of neighborhoods, districts, or corridors, the focus of form-base codes. Instead, they seek to change the material constitution and especially ecological performance of the built environment parcel by parcel (U.S. Green Building Council, 2002). According to the Office of the Federal Environmental Executive, green building “is the practice of 1) increasing the efficiency with which buildings and their sites use energy, water, and materials, and 2) reducing building impacts on human health and environment, through better siting, design, construction, maintenance, and removal—the complete building life cycle” (Cassidy, 2003: 4). As heating and cooling buildings represents a good deal of a city’s energy demands, progress in this area of growth management is no small matter.

Green rooftop technology has received special policy and research attention, with high-profile public buildings constructed in Chicago and many other cities. Used on a large scale in urban areas, green roof technologies might influence storm water management systems (which constitute a good share of concurrency budgets). Specifically, vegetated green roofs are thought to remove impervious surface areas that are linked directly to the degradation of stream ecosystems. Impervious surfaces reduce soil infiltration, increase the rate and volume of storm runoff, and transport anthropogenic pollutants (Carter and Rasmussen, 2006). In their recent statistical study of the hydrological behavior of green roofs in Georgia, Carter and Rasmussen (ibid.) conclude that they are an effective tool in improving storm water management systems, especially in areas characterized by compact development forms (which is what the smart growth paradigm is trying to do). Specifically, they argue that “retrofitting existing buildings with a green roof top can substantially reduce and even eliminate the storm water contribution from the existing structure” (p. 1272).

Progress in green roofs and other green-building technologies is being made, albeit unevenly and in ways that also invite geopolitical reflection. In addition to growing federal attention, a number of states and cities (though hardly all) have begun to experiment in this decade with various policy tools oriented toward leveraging more green buildings in urban environments, adding a “green layer” on to extant urban growth management initiatives. High profile governors, such as Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) of California and Bill Richardson (D) of New Mexico, have issued executive orders mandating LEED-certification (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) for new buildings that serve the public, though not for private developments. In brief, the LEED system was
developed in 1994 and now provides a widely accepted set of performance standards for evaluating the ecological sensitivity of construction projects.

Recent public efforts to promote LEED-certification, which reflect escalating concerns with global warming, have literally built on as well as extended earlier “one-off” demonstration projects that grew out of the OPEC energy crisis of the 1970s and the environmental movement of the 1960s (Carson, 1962). In addition, state legislatures in Oregon, Washington, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Arkansas, and Nevada have all recently passed green-building laws for the construction and maintenance of new public facilities, as well as incentives (if not yet substantial funds) to retrofit existing public facilities. In 2004, Kent Portney (2004) documented well-developed green-building programs in Scottsdale, San Francisco, Santa Monica, Bolder, and Seattle, to name only a few cities. More recently, May and Koski (2007) have claimed that dozens of U.S. municipalities have adopted green-building programs of various kinds. This number is likely to expand in the coming years as more and more metropolitan areas draft greenhouse gas reduction policies and craft climate action plans.

Both Santa Monica and Seattle, moreover, have linked green-building programs to broader affordable housing strategies and tools. Colorado Court, a 44-unit affordable housing complex built in 2001 in Santa Monica, was the first 100 percent energy-neutral affordable housing project in the United States; the complex includes a natural gas turbine that provides the building’s hot water needs and a solar panel that generates its energy demands (Pierce County, 2006). The City of Seattle has developed a program called “SeaGreen: Greening Seattle’s Affordable Housing,” which promotes energy conservation and green-building practices in projects that specifically target the provision of multifamily affordable housing. Are these not spaces of (social and ecological) justice?

Yes, but none of this liberates green-building practices from the wider politics of affordable housing discussed earlier. One of the most surprising insights to emerge from the new literature on the green-building experience to date is what May and Koski (2007) see as its noncontroversial nature. If it is not intensively controversial right now, it is likely to diffuse rapidly across the American policy and material landscapes in the coming years, even though it is still in the early stages of development in the United States. Thus certain social classes may resist the suburban expansion of affordable housing programs, but not necessarily the development of green architecture. In particular, the organized building
industry, while sometimes rejecting (or attempting to water down) various aspects of the smart growth paradigm for many years now, seems to have fully embraced green architecture, almost certainly because, as May and Koski (2007) conclude, it is increasingly profitable.

The greening of gubernatorial, state legislative, and urban politics in the United States reflects “the ways in which,” as While et al. (2004: 549) put the case more generally, “responsibility for a growing volume of international environmental commitments—and the resolution of potential conflicts with other priorities—is being passed down to the sub-national level of the state.” Following this analysis, green architecture (and other urban greening tools, such as the transit investments discussed below) is supposedly part of what they call the “urban sustainability fix,” a term adapted from Harvey’s (1982, 1989) famous and influential analysis of “entrepreneurial” territorialities organized by hegemonic classes. Central to this new “fix” is an attempt to mobilize neoliberal and eco-progressive rationalities, a seemingly contradictory agenda that invariably produces odd, yet theoretically legible, landscapes:

there is evidence that environmentalism—whether the internalization of negative externalities associated with urban growth or the promotion of positive urban environmental change—in it various forms foat exert a powerful [new] influence of urban politics, and this is not simply a matter of the demands placed on local state regulation by national government or pressures from upper and middle-class residents, significant as these are. . . Rather, it would appear that [neo-liberal] urban entrepreneurialism itself might depend on the active remaking or urban environments and ecologies. (While et al., 2004: 550)

**Mass-Transit and TOD**

An apparently good candidate of a U.S. city searching successfully for this “urban sustainability fix” is Salt Lake City, Utah, which in addition to a raft of policies promoting green architecture (and energy supply) also has one of the country’s newest and most efficient urban mass transit systems, the TRAXT light-rail. Under the mayoral leadership of Rocky Anderson, TRAXT ridership has exceeded projections by 30–40 percent. Moreover, urban voters have approved tax hikes to fund transit expansion and new lines are extending both the urban density and metropolitan reach of the system. The popularity of light-rail in Salt Lake City is mirrored in many other communities. According to one advocacy group, light-rail use is up substantially in San Jose, Minneapolis, Saint Louis, and Philadelphia, amongst other urban areas (Light Rail Now
Improved investment in mass transit systems, both inside and between cities and suburbs, particularly light-rail, is therefore a final tool always associated closely with the smart growth paradigm.

When linked directly to land-use planning, the mass transit approach is more narrowly discussed as transit-oriented development (or TOD). With bloodlines in the New Urbanist doctrine, TOD is defined in concrete practice, in this case by the City of Austin (2001), Texas, as a form of development that emphasizes alternative forms of transportation other than the automobile—such as walking, cycling, and mass transit—as part of its design. Transit-Oriented Development locates retail and office space around a transit stop. This activity center is located adjacent to a residential area with a variety of housing options such as apartments, townhouses, duplexes, and single family houses.

From the perspective of smart growth for sustainable development, both improved mass transit systems and more TODs are crucial geographical components of making compact, mixed, and diverse urban environments more livable—that is, more diverse and more just urban spaces. In fact, the undersupply of these tools may actually cause more congestion, slow commute times, and inflate energy demands—all reducing the quality of life and contributing to less rather than more sustainable patterns. Packing more housing units into less space (through, for example, aggressive UGBs) in itself will not necessarily lead to politically acceptable results if people do experience a parallel expansion in transit and other service choices. Indeed, Kenworthy (2006: 72) argues forcefully that what he calls “sustainable city development” depends on our ability to de-emphasize freeway and road construction “in favor of transit, walking and cycling infrastructure, with a special emphasis on rail [while] car and motorcycle use are minimized.”

The ideas Kenworthy is advancing are based on two major assumptions. First, transportation investments and policies influence travel patterns. Second, transportation investments and policies influence land-development patterns, which in turn influence travel patterns. Handy (2005) argues that these two assumptions generate a few simple, but still largely unsubstantiated, smart growth propositions, namely that investment in more highways generates more sprawl and more driving; that light-rail investments promote greater density; and that New Urbanist design (e.g., TOD) leads to less driving.

In her review of the empirical nexus between transportation and land use, Handy does not refute these propositions per se but neither does she
confirm them. Instead, she concludes that these propositions are incomplete:

rather than a simple linear relationship between transportation investments, land development patterns, and travel patterns, we face a system of endogenous relationships between transportation and land use: the influence of land use patterns on decisions about transportation investments, the impact of traffic on location decisions, and so on. In addition countless endogenous factors come into play [such as attitudes and sociodemographic characteristics]. (p. 163)

Recent research on the multiple impacts of TOD projects is equally nuanced. Hess and Almeida (2006), for example, studied the impacts of light-rail transit stations on residential property values in Buffalo, New York. Using hedonic pricing methods, which value environmental amenities that affect the price of residential properties, they conclude that on average, improved proximity to rail station increases average property values.

At the same time, they also note that in a city that is losing rather than gaining population, “The premiums homeowners will pay for station proximity is greater in high- than in low-income neighborhoods, despite the assumption that many low-income residents who cannot afford automobiles would pay a premium on housing to live near a light rail station” (p. 1059). This further suggests, of course, that the transit-land use nexus is mediated by dozens of “other factors”; these factors complicate relatively simple theoretical claims about the promised spatialities that emerge through smart growth investments. Still, mixing uses and improving density does seem to influence basic mode choices, even when controlling for nonurban form factors (Frank and Pivo, 1994).

Again such spatial complexity is important, especially when thinking about the geopolitics of transit- and TOD-investments. For While et al. (2004: 550), who champion the notion of an urban sustainability fix, “‘eco-investment’ in public transit [has] been significant not only in re-imagining cities, but [has] also been important in opening up actual urban spaces for new waves of investment and bringing back the middle classes to the city.” Mass public transit is, from this theoretical perspective, a new eco-space in the re-production of the neoliberal city that seeks to be hip, creative, wired, rich, and green.

But following Charles Jencks, this theory of transit investment, while perhaps true, may not provide a complete picture of the “multiplex”
nature of urban dynamics, particularly where this involves describing and explaining the variegated territorialities of the smart growth paradigm. After all, investments in mass transit systems are supposed to benefit poor people and minorities as much as anyone; likewise, cuts in mass transit are felt first by the poor and most disadvantaged groups in society (Haughton, 1999). Advocates of a more just urban society therefore often cite the extension of mass-transit systems (and TOD) as empirical evidence for what Pierre Clavel (1986) originally called “progressive cities.” The Nation, for instance, has identified Salt Lake City’s Rocky Anderson as one of the country’s most progressive mayors in large part because of his transit and urban environmental policies:

Angered by the Bush Administration’s refusal to sign on to the Kyoto Protocol, Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Anderson committed in 2002 to have city operations abide by the treaty’s greenhouse gas reduction goals. “In the face of the failure of national leadership in the United States on this issue, local and state governments throughout our nation have an especially important role to play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions to reverse the dangerous trend toward global warming,” Anderson says. The initial plan was to meet the goals by 2012, but Anderson’s moves to purchase wind power, convert the city fleet to alternative-fuel vehicles and dramatically increase recycling mean that the city could be in accord with the protocol by later this year. But he hasn’t trimmed his political sails. He speaks out against English-only legislation and for gay rights, he’s launched living-wage initiatives and he’s successfully campaigned for a transit sales tax increase to fund commuter- and light-rail transportation schemes that are making Salt Lake City greener. (Nichols, 2005)

Mass-transit investments and TODs are therefore, at least in theory, important smart growth tools in restructuring the form and function of metropolitan areas so that they increase justice and diversity (e.g., Chen, 2007). Whether or not they actually do is a complex empirical question, in part because, as Handy, Hess, and Almeida all note, it is hard to separate out smart growth investments from other societal factors that influence the nexus between transportation, land-use patterns, and travel behaviors. Moreover, such investments depend upon the skillful use of other tools, including UGBs, density bonuses, joint-planning agreements, inclusionary housing provisions, and so on. This suggests that we must consider the ways in which mass transit systems, in general, and TOD-schemes, in particular, are imagined and practiced in the empirical context of detailed, contingent, case studies from around the country.
Conclusions

Urban planning is an exercise in state territoriality, not simply in terms of the latest spatial goals it promises (compactness, diversity, regionalism, sustainability), but also with respect to the practical tools and techniques it deploys. Planning tools and techniques generate geopolitical landscapes of various kinds as they collide with (and seek to influence) broader structural forces within society, including demographic, economic, and cultural change. Specifically, new state spaces are forged and specific kinds of geopolitical conflicts are occasioned as borders are literally redrawn and new relationships between people and objects are cultivated. Marxist, liberal, and post-structural approaches to the territorialities of the smart growth paradigm in action all highlight different interpretations of this overall dynamic—different ways of mapping both acceptance and rejection of the smart growth paradigm as it travels from theory to practice.

The urban political geography of growth planning tools and techniques is thus profoundly variegated and, it is argued here, illustrative of multiple spatial rationalities working through multiple spatial scales and institutional axes. Comprehensive plans, for instance, reflect place-specific institutions even as they betray variations across space, both in terms of their ambitions and their relevance. Likewise, concurrency provisions and development impact fees, another set of techniques, similarly experience “tremendous variation” across territory even as they highlight class tensions about who pays for new infrastructure, tensions that have likely deepened in the past several decades as the federal government in the post–Fordist era has “scaled-down” infrastructure financing to state and local authorities.

Other geopolitical issues are highlighted by the use of UGBs, wetland protection, affordable housing provisions, and joint-planning agreements. For liberal theorists, in particular, UGBs produce exclusionary and elitist landscapes that, in turn, represent a collectivist threat to the sovereignty of local governments—a source of political tension within the state that occurs between levels of authority. Where planning involves tools like critical areas ordinances, moreover, this tension mutates into a broader cultural discourse, pitting the protection of urban versus rural identities within functionally integrated metropolitan regions.

Such tension is also seen in the legislative attempt to mandate affordable housing provisions, which are resisted not only by suburban jurisdictions but also sometimes by central cities, who seek “infill” that pays
into the tax base and does not threaten the spatial retention of the middle class. Joint-planning agreements offer an increasingly popular solution to the scale tensions between, for example, counties and cities and, at least potentially, represent a new form of state space, an “easy regionalism” that requires politically strong yet flexible institutional arrangements and nonhierarchical forms of governance. Increasingly, these new forms of governance include market-oriented tools, such as TDRs, which only work at a regional scale and therefore also require a good deal of public sector participation to manage properly.

This “state-market” tool suggests we not march too quickly to totalizing neoliberal explanations of smart growth space. For other tools and techniques associated with the smart growth paradigm, such as green-building provisions and new investments in urban and regional mass transit systems as well as transit-oriented development, arguably betray a growing, if still diffused and precarious concern in American society with social justice and equity issues—to say nothing of substantial state presence. While these latter developments might also be part of an “urban sustainability fix,” they are policies that benefit traditionally left concerns, such as environmental protection and social redistribution.

Indeed, conflict tells us space is open. Many political philosophies imagine a time and a place where conflict mostly evaporates. For Marxists, this has always been the society of tomorrow, after capitalism, when workers control the means of production; for liberals, it appears to be the society of yesterday, when the now overbearing state was smaller, when firms were less regulated, and when families and individuals more autonomous. For urban planners, the “doctors of space” who deal with managing the present, conflict might not go away entirely, but it might be diminished through, for example, form-based codes rather than traditional zoning. One hears the lament: “If only Euclidean zoning was radically reformed; if only we had better codes.” But even in real cases where form-based codes are “swallowed whole,” as in Huntington, NC, discontent arises over the sheer monotony of the new paradigm in practice.

For the organization of space always benefits someone. Changing it always benefits someone else. There is no apolitical spatial fix around which any polity at any scale can painlessly gather. As Aristotle wrote: The city is “built politics.” While the spatial status quo seems, for many observers, unsustainable, costly, unjust, and ugly, smart growth nonetheless creates new material, institutional, political, and cultural spaces as it seeks to move from theory to practice, even when we isolate our analysis to the implementation and implantation of one policy tool or technique. Smart growth is not simply a bit of infill here, a bit more open
space there, a lot of regional cooperation, a dash of flexibility. Smart growth is about sovereignty, diversity, tradition, identity, freedom, retreat, and justice. The next section of the book develops this major theme in greater detail, mapping out four stories that relate the promises and practices of urban growth management to the geopolitics of the contemporary city-regional condition.
PART III

Case Studies

One purpose of case studies is to provide detailed descriptions—or “thick stories” (Moore, 2007)—of the empirical world using a series of interrelated concepts and/or propositions about how that world might be understood, analyzed, conserved, or transformed. This usually involves the mobilization of a great deal of qualitative evidence, including but not limited to: interview data; media accounts; published research by academics, nonprofits, and governments; personal (“participant”) observations; and the interrogation of public documents, including formal reports but also meeting minutes, maps, office memoranda, and other materials associated with urban policy-making. Moreover, case study research often includes quantitative and statistical evidence, such as population trends or new housing starts, or land-use changes over time.

Using both quantitative and qualitative data gleaned from a variety of research methods, four case studies of urban growth management are now presented: Metropolitan Portland, Oregon; Seattle-Tacoma, Washington; Greater Baltimore, Maryland; and Madison-Dane County, Wisconsin. Their inclusion and narrative order are based on four main commitments. First, all of the case studies are located in states who legislatures have committed to substantial land use and planning reforms, with the improved management of growth in metropolitan regions one of the main reasons for these reforms. Second, three of the case studies are located in states along the two coasts, where, as discussed in chapter 2, state-induced urban growth management reforms have been especially intense. However, the inclusion of Dane-County Madison reflects the growing importance of recent policy shifts in non-coastal states.

Third, the case studies are presented in what is meant to be a rough historical order. Metropolitan Portland—which now forms the “model” case of urban growth management for many political communities around the country—has had the most time, over thirty-five years now,
to sort through and interpret the state’s planning, administrative, and growth mandates. While generally mapped as “successful,” the relative age of Portland’s effort provides geopolitical insights not readily obvious in more recent, less historically developed, examples. The State of Wisconsin, for instance, only passed major legislation in the 1999–2001 biannual session. While the City of Madison has long planned for urban growth and spatial change, this new smart growth regime now calls for greater “intergovernmental cooperation,” particularly with Dane County.

Historical order also matters because states learn from one another over time. For example, Washington looked long and hard at the spatial experiences of neighboring Oregon, ultimately adopting the strategic use of UGBs and overall state planning goals as part of its own model but rejecting other aspects, including a directly elected regional government. More recently, Wisconsin seems to have looked more to Maryland for inspiration, particularly as this has involved the use of incentives and visions rather than mandates and decrees. In fact, the Oregon model of urban growth management is sometimes discussed by skeptics as too radical for the conditions found in metropolitan regions of contemporary Wisconsin—a notable model, perhaps, but one that reflects a time, place, and politics no longer available.

The final reason for the inclusion of these four case studies is simply to demonstrate the diverse range of new territorialities, or what I am calling the new geopolitics of urban growth management, now emerging across the vastness of the United States. Other case studies in other important growth management states—Miami-Dade County, Florida, for example, or Metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia—would no doubt provide us with equally interesting and insightful stories. Moreover, case studies located in states without cognate legislative reforms, such as Austin, Texas, or Ashville, North Carolina, would also prove instructive, but for different reasons.

This does not diminish the stories that follow here. Naturally, these stories build on the ideas already developed in the previous chapters, but they draw especially on the theoretical framework elaborated in chapter 3. In particular, each chapter is structured around four main sections. After the introductions, each chapter discusses basic growth dynamics over time. The management strategies to deal with these trends are then analyzed. No attempt is made to discuss the totality of these “management” efforts. Instead, specific projects, policies, initiatives, and historical experiences are selectively highlighted in order to draw out broader themes of general interest, especially as these themes unearth some of the
new territorialities of the smart growth paradigm. These territorialities are then critically appraised—or mapped—before general conclusions are drawn. Largely because of proximity, chapter 7 on Seattle-Tacoma draws more on interview data than the other cases. However, all four cases draw on a variety of primary and secondary data sources, including interviews.

Like all urban environments in the United States, the environments discussed here share many similarities beyond the common policy effort to manage urban growth more skillfully. But they also constitute very different communities as well. For example, race figures everywhere, but it is much more important to highlight race in a place like Baltimore than in Madison or Portland. Metropolitan Portland and Seattle-Tacoma in turn share common ecologies and histories but depart in other key respects.

Like all geographical stories, those that now follow includes references to what used to be called the nomothetic (the general) and the ideographic (the specific). Thus, I document new spaces of retreat, nostalgia, engagement, and unity across all the case studies even as I call attention to the specificities and contingencies of each spatial story.
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CHAPTER 6

The Portland City-Region: Excavating the “Geopolitics of Success”

Accomplishments often bring their own problems.

Carl Abbott

Introduction

Oregon folklore has it that a simple coin flip between two East Coast pioneers kept Portland from being named Boston. While today placing a second Boston on the West Coast seems a particularly odd formulation, Portland is actually situated some seventy miles inland from the Pacific Ocean and, though located at the confluence of two major rivers and tied originally to the timber trade, this city of 560,000 is not really a port in the coastal sense of the term, certainly not like Boston, Seattle, Tacoma, or Baltimore. Portland is, however, classic in another sense. As first indicated in chapter 1, it is the one U.S. city—or more precisely city-region—usually identified with urban planning, in general, and what we now call the smart growth paradigm, in particular.

If Chicago is popularly described as the city that works, Portland is considered by many as the city-region that works because it plans—and more than that, because it implements its plans. While London, New York, and Tokyo form the favored triptych against which the globalization of cities is both measured and critiqued, Portland forms the paradigmatic case study in U.S. planning studies, the American Copenhagen with which so many others interpret their own adequacies and faults, including Portland’s neighbors in Seattle-Tacoma but elsewhere as well. For none other than Jane Jacobs herself, the U.S. planning profession’s most devastating and well-received critic, fancied Portland’s “ensemble” (quoted in Ozawa, 2003: 2-3). Portland, as Ozawa et al. (2003) put it, has an “edge.”
Whether or not the Portland city-region deserves this edgy reputation for managing its urban growth smartly—namely for reducing sprawl and protecting open space (Song and Kaap, 2004; Ozawa and Yeakley, 2003); for facilitating quality infill and livable compactness (Chapman and Lund, 2003; Bello and Adler, 2004; Wheeler, 2003); for providing regulatory flexibility at the right times in the right places (Lang and Hornburg, 1997); and for political regionalism and community (Abbott and Abbott, 1991; Seltzer, 2003)—depends to some extent on theoretical expectations and empirical interpretations.

Critics, including those broadly, if not blindly, sympathetic to spatial planning processes, sometimes note that much of Portland’s reputation hangs on its dynamic downtown and a few trendy (and overly white) neighborhoods; but that otherwise it is not much denser, mixed, just, pretty, or sustainable than any other large community in the United States—and that, even if is, the cost is unnecessarily expensive housing. For liberal/libertarian critics of Portland in particular, such as Leonard Gilmore (2006: B8) of the Reason Institute, Portland’s planners use a set of highly prescriptive policy tools—like urban growth boundaries... and high-density development built around light-rail transit systems—to design the city they envision. They try to “create” livable cities from the ground up and micromanage urban form through regulation. We’ve seen these tools at work... for more than three decades. But the results have been dismal and dramatic.

While critics and advocates agree that the results in Portland have often been “dramatic,” it is not at all clear that they have been “dismal.” Nor is it clear that the results have to do with planners per se. The classical liberal/libertarian critique of Portland appears to define planners as an all-powerful, ideologically monolithic, imposing class of profoundly well-resourced policy elites who (somehow) convince everyone else—developers, politicians, farmers, environmentalists, other state officials, and even the median voter—that “their” concepts require lockstep implementation ad infinitum. But to maintain a system of territorial governance for more than thirty years, a system that Leo (1998) once called the country’s first (and to date only) regional growth management regime, suggests, at the very least, wider political support and deeper cultural legitimacy than Gilmore’s ideological analysis implies.

At the same time, the cracks opened up by Measure 37, which was rejected only in Benton County, located well south of Portland, does suggest growing problems within this regional regime. This raises the
possibility that the geopolitics of growth management in Portland has as much to do with its apparent successes as with any litany of “great planning disasters,” to co-opt Peter Hall’s (1982) famous phrase. Building on early successes, that is, the city-region has restructured around the global economy, pulling away (and out) from an older space-economy. That said, while neoliberal rationalities for spatial organization have grown stronger in recent years, Portland nonetheless remains an exemplar of how multiple spatial rationalities have long defined, and continue to define, state-organized efforts to manage growth in metropolitan environments. This suggests that we not only recognize but also contextualize the “neoliberal turn” alongside of other spatial rationalities and growth management landscapes.

Growth Dynamics in the Portland City-Region

Between 1960 and 2006, the State of Oregon added a total of 719,000 people through a natural increase of the base population—an average of about 38,000 births versus 23,000 deaths per year. But Oregon, along with many other West Coast and Sun Belt states, gained a total of 1.9 million people over this same period of time, meaning that the state attracted 1.2 million more residents than it lost (a number that, as elsewhere, likely underestimates foreign immigrants to the area). Today, nearly four out of every five Oregonians lives in a metropolitan rather than rural county and a majority of the total metropolitan population of the state is packed into a single conurbation.

Dubbed “Portlandia” in the popular press (Maples, 2003), the Portland city-region constitutes a fast-growing and increasingly distinct territorial space within the overall state—a globalizing node putatively “obsessed more with what’s happening in rival cities like Austin or Seattle than in the rest of Oregon” (Maples, 2003: A1; cf. Scott, 2001a, b). Located within a larger urbanized region of more than 2.1 million people that actually stretches across five metropolitan counties and two U.S. states, the smaller Portland city-region of analytical interest here is made up of twenty-five municipalities located in only three counties (Clackamas, Washington, and Multnomah) within Oregon, making up a total planning population of roughly 1.1 million in 2006 (figure 6.1).

As table 6.1 shows, Portland is both the central city and far and away the largest local entity in the state. Unlike many central cities, the City of Portland has grown steadily in population, just over 1 percent per annum in recent years. Little of this steady growth has been due to annexation, meaning that Portland proper has been getting steadily
more compact. Put another way, without getting much larger physically, the City of Portland has essentially housed within its borders a “new town” of 5,500 people every single year, the 2006 population of real communities such as Sheridan, Winston, or Scappoose. This is “smart” in the paradigmatic if not necessarily political sense.
Yet Portland’s suburban areas have grown much faster in percentage terms (in part, though, precisely because of the relative economic health of Portland). Overall, the weighted average for growth in the city-region of twenty-five cities is 3.4 percent since 2000—over thrice higher than the rate for Portland by itself. Small suburban communities, such as Happy Valley, have actually grown more than 100 percent in the past six years; Sherwood, with a 2006 population of 16,115, has grown by more than a third over this period of time, while Fairview has expanded by more than a quarter (from roughly 7,500 people to 9,500, about 4.5 percent

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Portland</td>
<td>562,690</td>
<td>529,121</td>
<td>33,569</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gresham</td>
<td>97,745</td>
<td>90,205</td>
<td>7,540</td>
<td>8.4</td>
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<td>Hillsboro</td>
<td>84,445</td>
<td>70,186</td>
<td>14,259</td>
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<td>Beaverton</td>
<td>84,270</td>
<td>76,129</td>
<td>8,141</td>
<td>10.7</td>
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<td>Tigard</td>
<td>46,300</td>
<td>41,223</td>
<td>5,077</td>
<td>12.3</td>
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<td>Lake Oswego</td>
<td>36,350</td>
<td>35,278</td>
<td>1,072</td>
<td>3.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oregon City</td>
<td>29,540</td>
<td>25,754</td>
<td>3,786</td>
<td>14.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tualatin</td>
<td>25,650</td>
<td>22,791</td>
<td>2,859</td>
<td>12.5</td>
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<td>West Linn</td>
<td>24,180</td>
<td>22,261</td>
<td>1,919</td>
<td>8.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Milwaukie</td>
<td>20,835</td>
<td>20,490</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>1.7</td>
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<td>Forest Grove</td>
<td>20,380</td>
<td>17,708</td>
<td>2,672</td>
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<td>Wilsonville</td>
<td>16,885</td>
<td>13,991</td>
<td>2,894</td>
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<td>Sherwood</td>
<td>16,115</td>
<td>11,791</td>
<td>4,324</td>
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<td>15,110</td>
<td>13,777</td>
<td>1,333</td>
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<td>12,210</td>
<td>11,438</td>
<td>772</td>
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<td>Cornelius</td>
<td>10,785</td>
<td>9,652</td>
<td>1,133</td>
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<td>Damascus</td>
<td>9,670</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9,670</td>
<td>*</td>
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<td>9,585</td>
<td>7,561</td>
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<td>King City</td>
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<td>1,949</td>
<td>401</td>
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<td>Durham</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>1,382</td>
<td>18</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maywood Park</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>777</td>
<td>−27</td>
<td>−3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson City</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>634</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rivergrove</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
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| Total             | 1,140,445             | 1,031,801            | 108,644          | 15.3              |

* Not applicable.

per year). Wilsonville, King City, and finally Hillsboro, a community of 84,000 and now the fifth largest “city” in Oregon, have all grown by more than a fifth since the turn of the millennium. Six other municipalities in the area have added an additional population of between 10 and 15 percent on their 2000 numbers.

The three-county area within Oregon, the Portland MSA, offered a total of nearly 800,000 jobs in 2000—about 80 percent of the CMSA’s total job base of one million at that time. But the gravity of job growth within this city-region has shifted steadily westwards. As table 6.2 shows, Multnomah County, the home of Portland and dynamic suburban communities such as Gresham, still remained the largest employer in 2000, with well over 430,000 jobs.

However, job growth in Washington County increased much more dramatically in relative terms. Between 1990 and 2000, Washington County, which is home to the cities of Hillsboro and Beaverton, expanded its overall employment base by almost 60 percent (from 144,306 to 229,829). This growth compared with 30 percent for Clackamas County and 15 percent in Multnomah County. The upshot is that Washington County increased its share of the overall employment base from 23 percent to nearly 29 percent in the final decade of the twentieth century.

These generally westward trends have continued since 2000, although the dot-com bust led to calls within the business community in particular to focus more aggressively on economic development and less obsessively with land-use planning and urban growth management; “there’s so much focus on land-use laws and managing our growth,” one business leader complained at the time, “that we kind of forgot about making sure we could continue to grow jobs” (Maples, 2003: A1). In 2006, about one in seven Oregonians lived in Washington County whereas about two-fifths lived in the city-region as a whole. Only 8.8 percent of Washington

Table 6.2  Portland city-region job shares, 1990–2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jobs (Year)</th>
<th>Clackamas County</th>
<th>Washington County</th>
<th>Multnomah County</th>
<th>Total Metro</th>
<th>Total MSA</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total jobs (2000)</td>
<td>135,165</td>
<td>229,829</td>
<td>431,706</td>
<td>796,700</td>
<td>1,026,529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of jobs (2000)</td>
<td>16.97</td>
<td>28.85</td>
<td>54.19</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total jobs (1990)</td>
<td>104,203</td>
<td>144,306</td>
<td>377,615</td>
<td>626,124</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of jobs (1990)</td>
<td>16.64</td>
<td>23.05</td>
<td>60.31</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Not applicable.

Source: Imputed from data collected by Metro (2007b).
County’s population was over 65—the lowest in the state—while only two counties had a higher percentage of children below seventeen (Multnomah County also had a relatively small percentage of older residents.).

Even as early as 1970, the classic image of commuting between “dormitory” suburbs and “working” cities had already begun to diminish. While 38 percent of residents who lived in Washington County commuted centrally to Multnomah County, by 2000, this figure was only 23 percent. In contrast, Washington County became relatively more self-sufficient, less “suburban” in the traditional sense, and more likely to send workers to other peripheral counties, such as Clackamas. Whereas 51 percent of its residents worked in the same county in 1970, thirty years later this figure had jumped to 68 percent. Though substantially less integrated with Clackamas County in terms of commuting patterns, journeys from Washington County to Clackamas nonetheless doubled. Clackamas County still sent one-third of its workers to Multnomah County in 2000 (down from 42 percent in 1970); but it tripled the number of residents commuting laterally to Washington County (from 4 percent to 12 percent).

While these ostensibly suburban counties are more self-sufficient than in the past, the higher ratio of workers per household (necessarily using more cars), the overall increase in the metropolitan population, as well as smaller households (which means more units are needed to house the “same” population) have all led to more daily movement and more congestion, particularly during rush hours—a complex, multisourced structural reality substantially mitigated though not eliminated by the city-region’s well-known efforts to link land-use planning with mass transit investments.

Driving these demographic, spatial and commuting changes have been significant, even profound, transformations in the nature of labor force participation and the metropolitan economy as a whole. In 1970, for instance, the average household in the Portland area had a little more than one worker; by 2000, this number had increased to 1.44 workers, meaning that the metropolitan labor market expanded about 25 percent more than the number of working households even as overall household size shrank in all counties.\(^1\) More and more people over the past forty years, including higher ratios of women, have either come to the Portland area to work or have been forced into the labor market to maintain household living standards.

As elsewhere, the structure of the metropolitan area has changed since the early 1970s, reflecting a broader, global shift to “post-Fordist” accumulation strategies in many advanced economies. While manufacturing
jobs have increased in aggregated terms, the total increase of 15 percent between 1970 and 2000 is below the overall population growth of 85 percent (though the transformation to high-tech firms is extremely significant). In contrast, relatively well-paid service sectors such as education, health care, and business services have increased much faster in percentage terms than the overall population, meaning that these sectors have steadily captured a higher percentage of the metropolitan economy in recent decades. The locational logic of many “post-Fordist” firms, particularly those tied up with the global economy, are substantially different from the economic geography of manufacturing and transportation. Specifically, high-tech, information-heavy manufacturing, represented by firms such as Intel, populates municipalities such as Beaverton with new office parks and production complexes.

Dubbed the emergence of the “Silicon Forest” by the Portland Development Commission, the shift toward high-tech manufacturing in the 1980s and 1990s is seen in the investment of $750 million within the semiconductor industry alone. By 2007, the region supported 1,700 high-tech firms; by itself, Intel employed 15,000 workers in the region and was the state’s largest manufacturer. Expanding upon a solid base of electronics established in the 1950s, the Portland city-region now boasts global expertise in semiconductors, electronic design automation, silicon wafers, and display and imagining technology. New sectors targeted for substantial growth include bioinformatics and health care, even as the region lacks a major research university on par with, for example, the University of Washington-Seattle (Mayer, 2005).

While high-tech suburbs such as Hillsboro and Beaverton gained economic and demographic power from this overall shift, so have the inner core areas of Portland. In the 1970s, the inner city mostly lost households. By the 1990s, that trend had been reversed, a general “revalorization” of urban core areas of major American cities that is consistent with the experience of other (though not all) communities across the United States (Hackworth, 2005). Certain planning districts in inner-city Portland, once derelict and moribund, gained about 5 percent more households during the 1990s (table 6.3).

But the general revalorization of central city environments, known euphemistically as gentrification, has not solved problems of economic segregation or urban poverty per se. Overall, Portland was far richer in the early 2000s than it was a generation earlier, with total personal income (expressed in 1996 in dollars) more than 50 percent higher in 2006 than it was in 1970. But like other urban communities in the United States and all across the globalizing world, Portland’s richest census tracts gained
ground, while many of its poorest tracts actually experienced absolute declines in median household income when adjusted for inflation. This socio-spatial “duality” is expressed in (table 6.4).

The richest census tracts, those with a median household income over $100,000 per year, saw annual increases in income during the 1990s (1.2 percent per annum) that were almost twice the average for the metropolitan area as a whole (0.67 percent per annum). In dramatic contrast, the poorest census tracts actually saw their inflation-adjusted income diminish by nearly half a percent each year. Many census tracks actually experienced an absolute decline in median household income, suggesting that, at minimum, the “high-tech boom” of the 1990s was not always shared equally in social or spatial terms.

Portland’s richest places were getting richer; its poorer places were getting poorer—a structural reality seen across the United States and indeed much of the world. Moreover, annual growth in total personal income has also lost steam over the past four, post–Fordist, decades. In the 1970s, for example, (inflation-adjusted) total personal income

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**Table 6.3** Central-city revalorization in Portland, 1970–2000 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Downtown</td>
<td>−1.8</td>
<td>−0.9</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Non-core</td>
<td>−0.4</td>
<td>−0.1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Urban</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Imputed from data collected by Metro (2007b).

**Table 6.4** Annual percentage rate changes in median household income by Portland area census track in the 1990s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census track median household income</th>
<th>Annual % rate during the 1990s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100,000 or more</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80,000–99,999</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60,000–79,999</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40,000–59,999</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,000–39,999</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 20,000</td>
<td>−0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Census Tract Average</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Imputed from data collected by Metro (2007b).
increased by more than 4 percent per year; but this annual increase fell to 3.3 percent in the 1990s and only 2.1 percent in the 2000s. Whether or not these two major socioeconomic trends—rising class (and place) inequality as well as slower annual growth rates in total personal income—are related to another (and how) or in fact represent a more fundamental transformation in capitalism necessarily falls beyond present concerns. Suffice to note only that all these trends have all impacted upon the strategic management of urban growth.

For no local polity, however well intentioned, can escape larger structural realities operating at national and global scales, including those associated with neoliberalism. These realities include horizontal urban growth brought about by residential and economic decentralization, including the consolidation of suburban employment centers and edge cities; household income inequality associated with the collapse of mass production manufacturing and the rise of a bifurcated service economy; declining household size; and increasing rates of car ownership and usage.

That said, Portland’s basic “growth geography” is appreciably different than, say, Tacoma’s. This spatial difference can be illustrated, for example, by directly comparing the geography of density for census tracts between the two communities at the same scale. The Portland area has a much wider distribution of high-density census tracts than does Tacoma, its neighbor to the North. Whereas Tacoma’s densest areas are limited mainly to the downtown, inner city and along I-5, Portland’s dense neighborhoods diffuse widely across the urban landscape, including many neighborhoods well outside the downtown core and incorporating much of Multnomah County. More generally, as Houck (2006: 79) notes

Between 1990 and 2000, Portland’s metropolitan population expanded by 31 percent, while urbanized land increased by only 3 percent. By contrast, Chicago’s regional population grew by 4 percent between 1970 and 1990 but its urbanized land area increased by 46 percent. Kansas City’s population grew by 29 percent during the same period, and its land consumption was 110 percent.

This suggests, at least superficially, the explanatory importance of planning in deliberately shaping the geography and constitution of urban growth.
Urban Growth Management in the Portland City-Region

If nothing else, Portland has gotten into the “habit” of planning (Abbott, 1997), often attracting some of the biggest names in planning history. Areawide visions for the overall physical development of the City of Portland (and/or hinterland) date back at least to John Olmstead (1903) and Edward Bennett (1912), who both proposed grand schemes for the neoclassical beautification of the city through parks integration and the extensive use of public spaces. Legacies of these earlier recommendations include widened thoroughfares, a commitment to urban open space—including the continued refinement of many “city beautiful” parks—and impressive scale connections between city and regional activities.

While Lewis Mumford, as discussed in chapter 1 (cf. Stephenson, 1999), passionately challenged leaders in the 1930s to link future transportation and energy-supply improvements to garden city projects in a broader eco-regional setting, other major plans, especially one proposed by Robert Moses in 1943, encouraged Portland instead to “unabashedly pursue the automobile and related freeway projects” (City of Portland, 2007, no page number). These modernist rather than ecological planning ideas persisted into the mid-1960s, as evidenced by the 1966 comprehensive plan’s emphasis on “decongesting” neighborhoods as well as repeated references to the importance of urban renewal.

But quite different spatial strategies would characterize the 1970s. As Portland’s Bureau of Planning has recently noted: Only since 1972 has Portland deliberately tried to de-emphasize the automobile (City of Portland, 2007). In part, this strategic shift reflected the negative impacts of auto-oriented planning on the City of Portland (though over-platting and leapfrogging on the periphery were also targeted). Like most American communities, downtown Portland declined precipitously in several key respects in the years following WWII. Between 1950 and 1970, for example, the number of downtown housing units fell from over 28,000 to only 11,000, narrowing the socioeconomic mix. A few neighborhoods abutting the downtown had also sharply deteriorated. Large sections of the core’s industrial districts associated with warehousing and wholesaling became obsolete, leaving severely derelict spaces north of the retail core.

The retail core, while still regionally significant, was under pressure from outlying shopping centers, the local decline of nearby housing, and the spatial expansion of office uses. A high-density corridor of office functions still strongly characterized the north-south spine of the downtown.
However, planners and other actors worried that a further dispersal of
development within the downtown, while maximizing accessibility to a
high number of uses, ultimately threatened the core’s long-term viability
and character.

Instead, as articulated clearly and logically in a new downtown plan
published in 1972, greater emphasis would now be placed on reinforcing
the linear corridor of office uses while also redeveloping a “multi-nodal”
downtown a strong compact retail core would concomitantly; cross lat-
terly in an east-west direction, intersecting at the geographical and func-
tional heart of the city. Medium-density office zones would then flank
this core office-retail intersection, articulating commercial uses and
parking facilities with the postwar expressways now enveloping the core.

This hybrid linear/multi-nodal concept, while standard in many
ways, nonetheless included rare efforts to reconnect downtown func-
tions with the Willamette River, particularly as this involved the devel-
opment of a recreational esplanade. In an unprecedented and (even now)
radical and far-sighted move, the city decided to remove Harbor Drive
along the Willamette River, a limited access highway, using federal trans-
portation dollars to improve open space and transit facilities rather than
further subsidize automobile movement.

As part of its overall effort to strengthen the office-retail strategy, the
1972 plan further established that “no high rise buildings should
be allowed on or near the waterfront” (City of Portland, 1972: 9). New
circulation goals also included the prescient, contemporary-sounding,
desire to “develop a mass transit system which provides a viable alterna-
tive to the private vehicle [ . . . ] particularly for the handicapped, chil-
dren, the elderly, the poor,” and to “give maximum accommodation to
walking in the core” (p. 12).

The motivating part of the new pedestrian and transit strategy cer-
tainly was the economic and fiscal need to support the north-south/east-
west core strategy, including efforts to provide for a more diverse retail
base (“specialty concentrations”) that typically benefit from pedestrian-
ways. But the remarkable turn away from the car signaled by these pol-
cy development was not simply to save downtown business. That is too
simple. “Automobile traffic is noisy, smelly, and dangerous,” the plan
proclaimed; “so eliminating or reducing traffic will achieve important
environmental objectives” (pp. 11–12). The new plan called not only for
efforts to purchase still more land for open space and recreational uses,
but also for the steady development of a remarkably expansive array
of “traffic free areas.” “The Plan,” as stated in the circulation element,
“returns more of Downtown Portland to the man [sic] on foot” (p. 40).
In consequence, the plan specifically called for the development of transit malls with exclusive bus lanes and landscaped sidewalks as well as new thinking regarding, to cite only a few examples, the beneficial uses (and nonuses) of density regulations and incentives; ideas for rooftop open spaces; the cultural and economic importance of historic preservation; and the need to identify and strengthen a series of imageable districts that might collectively enhance the city’s vistas, views, and gateways as well as the overall sense of place that people experience today when both living and visiting downtown.

Finally, the 1972 plan divided the downtown into twenty-one districts, linking the overall vision with area-specific goals, regulations, and investments. Several of these districts overlapped with one another, reflecting—it might be argued—the steady movement away from the segregation of incompatible land uses, which was the hallmark of modernist planning and negative zoning, to the more interesting challenge of how to integrate diverse uses and functions in positive combinations that benefit multiple social, economic, and ecological objectives. A list of first projects was also developed as part of the plan’s implementation strategies, including those that linked the city to the river.

In 1988, a follow-up plan reviewed the successes and the deficiencies of the 1972 vision (which was updated formally in 1980). It also provided for a new spatial synthesis based on a series of subarea, transit, corridor, and riverside plans and public investments that either overlapped with or provided additional support for ideas first floated (though sometimes only vaguely) in the original 1972 plan. But one of the most important changes in 1988 was the expansion of the downtown to include neighborhoods east of the Willamette River, a move that arguably reflected the collective successes of the previous plans in regenerating core areas of the city, particularly as they facilitated connections across the river. While further intensification of the downtown core was at least theoretically possible, Abbott (2003: 174) explains the wider structural forces at play:

This choice of lateral growth over intensification of the CBD reflects the fact that Portland, with a small and dwindling supply of corporate headquarters, is not likely to develop a tall skyline dominated by 30- and 40-story office buildings . . . Instead, the market [has been] for buildings with 200,000 to 300,000 square feet.

Though disciplined by these market realities, Abbott nonetheless champions the explanatory importance of local political agency and
what others call planning progressively for sustainability, particularly in the form of dynamic individual leaders who considered the urban future at least partly malleable:

[Portland’s] strong urban core is the product and beneficiary of three decades of concerted planning that has engaged city government and downtown business interests in a strong political coalition that has also recognized the claims of environmental and neighborhood activists. [...] Portland is one of the few cities where the “growth machine” business leadership of the 1950s made a graceful transition to participation in a more inclusive political system. (2003: 171, emphasis added)

That said, a land-use survey in the mid-1980s revealed that the downtown area still had approximately 1,400 acres of “developable land.” About 8 percent of the total footprint of the downtown area, albeit widened to include adjacent industrial areas, remained vacant or underutilized (City of Portland, 1988: 19). Though maintaining strong thematic emphasis on maintaining the retail/commercial core and connections to the Willamette River, a major conceptual concern of the 1988 plan was therefore the retention and expansion of “industrial incubator areas,” with a sharper eye than previously on the redevelopment of underutilized or derelict economic spaces: “The industrial uses within the central city remain viable. They serve the commercial activities within the urban core and provide locations for industries that need or benefit from an inner city location” (p. 40).

But downtown regeneration was only one part of the overall story. In many U.S. communities over the years, deep socio-spatial divisions have emerged between the downtown “machine” and urban neighborhoods, often involving neighborhood resentment over the public investment priorities given to economic development in the central business district (CBD) rather than to neighborhood and quality of life issues (Clavel, 1985; Imbroscio, 1997). But other development tensions can also occur (Witt, 2003). Relative to other cities, Portland has succeeded in attracting infill all across the city, as previously discussed when presenting the growth data. One recent public study puts it this way:

Recent data indicate that multifamily units constitute the majority of new housing units and that the medium-density residential zones (particularly R2 and R1), primarily located outside higher-density centers and other mixed use areas, have been the location of a high proportion of the new apartment and rowhouse projects. While Central City areas, such as the Pearl District, have been the location of the greatest concentration of new
housing production, a larger total number of housing units are being produced in neighborhood districts outside the Central City. (City of Portland, 2005a: A1)

The steady densification of well-serviced central cities beyond the downtown core is, of course, a sine qua non of the contemporary smart growth paradigm, particularly where this involves mixed-use projects and close functional integration with new transit infrastructure and pedestrian orientation. And yet success—judged strictly on its own terms—has not solved all or even most socio-spatial problems. According to the Bureau of Planning

In recent years, Portland has [indeed] experienced a substantial amount of infill development in neighborhood areas with multidwelling zoning, most of which is located along transit corridors or at the edges of mixed-use centers. This infill development is helping to realize macro-level design goals calling for higher-density development to be concentrated near transit facilities. However, the design of individual projects is frequently not contributing to the community’s design objectives and aspirations. (2005a: 4, emphasis added)

In other words, the aesthetic (and political) danger here is increasing density without improving livability (City of Portland, 2004; cf. Bello and Adler, 2004). Tidy maps showing improved infill and urban development are one thing; actual neighborhood experiences are quite another, particularly where a series of new social cleavages may now be emerging to threaten what some see as Portland’s recently cultivated “civic expectionalism” (Johnson, 2003). As Chapman and Lund (2003, pp. 211–212) remark: “regional analyses only tell one part of the story; to understand issues of livability we need to come down to the level of the community . . . [Here] citizens are concerned not just about density but also with the quality and character of the development.”

Within this more intimate context of a (growing) concern with livability through density (rather than sprawl), the City initiated an “Infill Design Project” in 2005. The main objective of this project has been to improve the design performance of duplex, apartment, and row house development in neighborhoods outside of Portland’s central city, especially near transit facilities. While this project has sought to find ways of “encouraging desirable development, rather than simply regulating against ‘bad’ design,” it has also called for new efforts to “minimize regulatory complexity” (ibid., p. 5).²
Precisely how these two goals—improved control and minimized complexity—might actually work together in daily practice however is still a matter of some confusion. Efforts to provide clarity about specific design criteria for particular neighborhoods have been linked to citizen involvement in design charrettes and opinion research (City of Portland, 2004), including: decisions about pedestrian-friendly street frontages and the subordination of parking facilities; provisions for usable open space; the uses of durable building materials and energy-efficient technologies; and improved on-site stormwater runoff systems, that is, now classic development themes in urban sustainability.

Moreover, these types of efforts have been amplified by recent initiatives such as the Office of Sustainable Development’s (OSD) “G/Rated” program. The G/Rated program coordinates the activities of six City bureaus that provide public services to development and building community, home-owners, the business sector, and the city’s own development activities.

The two main objectives of the program are to expand market demand by educating the building industry and the overall public about green building and, in turn, to make green-building practices easier to implement. In line with the smart growth paradigm’s stress on the important role of design flexibility in spatializing sustainable development, the OSD has placed emphasis not only on policy developments and demonstration projects but also on “reducing regulatory and financial barriers” and “removing regulatory disincentives” to green-building practices. While efforts to “expedite” permitting and reform codes that tend to occlude building innovations have been much slower than desired, Portland is today the LEED capital of the country; programs like G/Rated build on the City’s broader policy and development strengths (City of Portland, 2003: 4–6).³

But even stronger evidence for Abbott’s hypothesized “graceful transition” is found in investments made in the regional light-rail system, known as the MAX (Adler and Dill, 2003). Using federal and to a lesser extent state funds earmarked originally for highway-building, Portland constructed the first MAX line (fifteen miles long with thirty stations) in the early 1980s, eventually connecting in 1986 the commercial-retail core with the City of Gresham to the east at a total cost of about $214 million. A second line, which opened in 1998 at a cost of $918, connected the downtown with Hillsboro to the fast-growing west, which added another eighteen miles and thirty-two stations of mass transit infrastructure. The third MAX line, running to Beaverton and the airport, expanded the system in 2001 by another five miles and four
stations at a cost of $125 million, while the fourth line, which opened in 2004, integrated downtown with the Expo center to the north. Extensions now under construction include new connections to Milwaukie, Clackamas, Tigard, Tualatin, and Wilsonville.

While these lines have been expensive to build, Tri-Met, the municipal corporation that operates MAX and the regional bus system, has recently estimated that these transit expenditures have stimulated perhaps $6 billion in additional private sector investments along the new lines (Tri-met, 2006). More practically, ridership has grown exponentially every year since 1986, without question taking direct pressure off the region’s highways, reducing the city’s ecological footprint, and improving ambient air and water conditions. Moreover, these metropolitan-level successes have been complemented within the downtown by the rapid development of a 7.2-mile street car system (or loop) within downtown Portland that was built in the late 1990s and now makes stops every three to four blocks (much of it free to use).

The new downtown visions of the 1970s as well as mass transit investments of the 1980s thereafter worked together, creating new synergies between land use and transit systems that, in many U.S. communities, largely remain coffee shop conversations. Cortright (2007) argues that, largely due to its land-use/transit interventions, Portlanders travel 20 percent fewer miles everyday when compared with other larger metropolitan areas. This generates a “green dividend” of $2.1 billion every year, $1.1 billion of which is savings on gas alone: A conservative estimate of the costs of driving is 40 cents per mile . . . All told, the out-of-pocket savings work out to $1.1 billion dollars per year . . . about 1.5% of all personal income earned in the region in 2005. [. . .] Since Portlanders don’t spend that money on transportation, they have more money to spend on other things. Because so much of what is spent of transportation leaves the state—Oregon makes neither cars nor gasoline—money not spent on transportation gets spent on sectors of the economy that have a much large local multiplier effect. (pp. 1–2)

While impressive, TOD and spatial development strategies have not restructured and cannot restructure the overall urban form of the city-region. Moreover, the relationships between urban form, transportation systems, and various sustainability “effects” (such as per capita CO₂ reductions or mobility choices) still remain underresearched and thus debatable (Newman, 1998; Lin and Gau, 2006; Quinn, 2006). Nonetheless, as Wheeler (2003) notes, TOD schemes such as those emerging around
Portland’s MAX system may help to at least reinforce five design values he associates with “sustainable urban form”: compactness, contiguity, connectivity, diversity, and ecological integration.

The most discussed TOD scheme in Portland is probably still Orenco Station, a publicly shaped and privately built development located north-east of Hillsboro. Orenco Station reflects the wider effort to rezone land adjacent to new light-rail investments in order to create development supportive of broader sustainability objectives (Bae, 2002; Podobnik, 2003; Houck, 2006). The Orenco scheme includes, amongst other design elements, a pedestrian axis surrounded by a grid of alley-loaded “skinny” streets; a mixed-use town center; “liner” buildings with limited on-street parking; a range of housing types and prices, including rental units; pedestrian-friendly street design and scale; live/work and loft units above retail; and far higher density than is typical for suburbia, up to twenty-five units to the acre (Mehaffy, 2003).

This and other schemes were conceived and implemented within the policy context of a progressively strong regional perspective on urban development. The City of Portland’s most recent comprehensive plan, for example, places recurrent and heavy emphasis on “metropolitan coordination.” Specifically, the plan seeks to “support the concept of an Urban Growth Boundary for the Portland metropolitan area.” The plan also seeks “to insure continuous participation in intergovernmental affairs with public agencies to coordinate metropolitan planning” (City of Portland, 2006b: 1-1).

But the concept of the UGB in the service of metropolitan planning is the handiwork of Metro, widely considered to be the strongest regional government in the United States (figure 6.2). Governed by a home rule charter and six directly elected councilors, Metro is responsible for delineating and managing the UGB for the region’s twenty-four cities and three counties. Although it does not have the authority to prepare comprehensive plans, it is responsible for regional functional plans as well as transportation, solid waste, and green-space planning. Moreover, it has the “astounding” power, as Seltzer (2003: 38) puts it, “to require changes in local comprehensive plans to make them consistent with regional functional plans.”

Established by popular vote in 1978, Metro grew out of a series of regional planning experiences stretching back as far as the 1920s (Abbott and Abbot, 1991). Though the complex by-product of higher-scale mandates from the Oregon state legislature as well as local self-interest in regional service provisions, Seltzer (2003: 54) argues compellingly that Metro owes its existence to the “organic” importance
of local cultural norms—“because the landscape and the people who live there demanded it.”

Metro did not become a truly serious political and planning force until the late 1980s. During most of the 1980s, it provided only weak coordination of local comprehensive plans (Seltzer, 2003)—making many mistakes and otherwise getting off to a slow start (Abbott and Abbott, 1991). However, as the metropolitan economy restructured
around high-tech capital, more detailed and aggressive management became more pressing and the regional-scale machinery available to Metro finally started to kick in. Planning capacity at Metro grew substantially in terms of staff and a clear institutional rescaling of power was now underway; this

[finally] raised the prospect of Metro exercising its functional planning powers, something it had never done in its first nine years. Local government within Metro’s jurisdiction knew of [this prospect] . . . and made it clear that exercising [such] power would be regarded as a serious usurping of land control. (Seltzer, 2003: 40)

Interestingly, Richmond highlights the pro-growth, market-building nature of (at least parts of) Metro’s UGB approach. Although UGBs are now used extensively across the United States to carry out directly the first principle of the smart growth paradigm (protecting open space, agricultural and environmental assets from sprawl), their actual use in Portland has, in his view, also “allow[ed] builders to intensively develop land within the boundary free from the NIMBY ("not in my backyard") obstacles they typically encounter elsewhere” (Lang and Hornburg, 1997: 2–3, emphasis added). Though potentially explosive, it appears that the “organic” instinct for inclusive politics seen in the downtown experience discussed earlier expanded beyond the boundaries of Portland to include most suburban jurisdictions, who ultimately supported Metro’s more prominent role.

Initial suburban support for Metro was especially important, according to Seltzer, in regard to the development of Region 2040. Region 2040 is today a fifty-year plan for managing urban growth that emerged from a discussion of three growth concept alternatives: “growing out” (the Moses-inspired sprawl choice, with significant expansion of the UGB); “growing up” (aggressive densification, with no expansion of the UGB); and “neighboring cities,” the preferred alternative, where moderate UGB expansion over time is attended by improved transit corridor development and Mumford- and Howard-style growth in adjacent cities.

A survey of 17,000 people in 1994 (Metro, 2000) revealed widespread citizen support for increasing development along transit corridors (84 percent); increasing growth in established centers (77 percent); reducing the average lot size of new residential developments (58 percent); and even reducing parking in retail and commercial developments (55 percent), although this last objective was fiercely resisted by many in
the business community and, to some extent, by transportation planners (cf. Adler and Dill, 2003). In addition, citizens passed a $135 million bond in 1995 to acquire open spaces in direct support of Metro’s regional greenways plan. Metro adopted its Regional Framework Plan in 1997, which sought to “unify” the various policies relating to the timing and spacing of UGB expansion, housing densities, transit improvements, and the green-space program (Seltzer, 2003). The plan, which also specified new policies relating to health and water quality, natural hazards and the relationship with Clark County in Washington, was amended in 2005.

But these amendments came on the heels of Measure 37, a Citizen’s Initiative passed overwhelmingly by Oregon (though not City of Portland) voters in late 2004 that, as discussed briefly in chapter 1, requires either compensation for the lost value of regulated property or the repeal of those regulations for certain years. By early 2007, Measure 37 had already resulted in approximately 7,500 individual claims (2,000 of which were located within the greater Portland region). This totaled more than 750,000 acres of land (http://www.pdx.edu/ims/m37database.html; cf. Martin and Shriver, 2006).

Though still too soon to determine the multiple impacts on Metro’s overall growth strategy and environmental performance, an early task force noted in 2005 that “almost all of the [Measure 37] claims are located outside of the UGB and on exclusive farm use and exclusive forest conservation (EFU/EFC) lands.” Accordingly, Metro immediately anticipated further difficulties with planning for future UGB expansions. These concerns also related to unease about the impacts on water quality and environmental considerations associated with wells and septic systems as well as the adequacy of public safety (Metro, 2005). Because inadequate public funds actually exist to provide for private compensation of lost development potential, solutions to these and other Measure 37-induced challenges included the use of TDR programs, conservation easements, and the extraterritorial extension of urban services.4

But these were small steps. Measure 37 exposed the basic truth that, as one Metro Councilor bluntly put it in early 2007, “the current growth management system [still] makes it nearly impossible for local communities, farmers, businesses and landowners to plan for the long term [. . . ] We’re required to make growth management decisions based on arbitrary timelines and land supply requirements, rather than on the types of communities we want to create” (Metro, 2007: 1) The new planning mantra was therefore still “greater flexibility” for areas within the UGB,
meaning improved temporal predictability and spatial precision about UGB expansion and service provision.

In order to implement more effectively the 2040 Growth Concept, state legislation (SB1101) passed in early 2007 allowed Metro in partnerships with the counties to designate urban and rural “reserve areas” outside the current UGB. While rural reserve areas would be protected from further growth, urban reserve areas would be considered first when additional residential, commercial, and industrial needs are steadily brought into the UGB. This reform, almost certainly brought about by Measure 37, expands the regional planning horizon beyond managing a twenty-year land supply—and thus allows the region to take a more thoughtful approach to planning for growth (Bragndon, cited in Metro 2007). But the politics of post–Measure 37 land-use planning remained in motion at the time of writing (Walsh, 2007), with still more state legislation in development that sought to dial back on some of the most threatening aspects of this property-rights initiative. “It’s going to be quite a fight,” one protagonist observed, “just like land-use issues always are in Oregon” (Oppenheimer, 2007: B1).

The New Territorialities of “Success”

Success is a dangerous and difficult word to use in any kind of social research. Success is the ultimate target of the postmodern critic: Whose success are we talking about, from what (privileged and always partial) vantage point? Can space benefit everyone equally? If not, is that space, however impressive from an aesthetic, financial, social, or ecological perspective, a success? A criminal, after all, can successfully carry out a crime. Indeed, for those who voted in droves for Measure 37, many of them in the Portland region, a definite kind of crime has been “successfully” committed by a range of state authorities for too many years, a crime of theft, a “taking” of property rights and thus a violation of the American Constitution’s liberal philosophy of state-society relations. In this sense, Portland’s management of urban growth is, for many voters and some researchers, “a dismal and dramatic failure.”

By many other measures, though, Portland’s approach to urban growth management does closely approximate the wider territorial aspirations—the normative planning theories—of the smart growth paradigm as defined in chapter 3. By these specific paradigmatic criteria, Portland is a raging success.

Through the sustained use of UGBs, in particular, metropolitan Portland has done more than any peer city-region to contain sprawl and
to protect open space, both outside and inside the built-up area, especially on farms and forests. In 1997, for example, Metro added less than eight square miles to its UGB. David Rusk (2000: 98) notes, “If the Metro Council sticks to its plans, over the next forty-five years, only about four square miles of current farmland will be utilized—as much farmland as is subdivided in the state of Michigan every ten days.” It is difficult to imagine, to say the least, how this environmental accomplishment might have been brought about in the more fragmented context that characterized the region before the 1970s.

Downtown planning has further helped to retain a sense of urbanism that many other communities have struggled to replicate. These same plans, even as early as the 1970s, signaled a prescient turn away from the automobile and a rare West Coast passion for the walkable street, emphases only later called planning for sustainability. The linear/multi-nodal urban core retains public access to the riverfront and functions through overlapping districts that exhibit detailed attention to the importance of functional integration and quality urban design, in addition to the importance of continuous and creative infill projects.

“Free ride zones” anchor the heartlands of a regional transit system that is highlighted above all else by efficient light-rail. Amongst other project achievements, this infrastructure has directly facilitated TOD within the city and also in suburban areas; according to one researcher, it has also helped to pay a “green dividend” of more than $2 billion/year. City and suburbs are also tied together institutionally through a very strong regional government, Metro, that has for years organized the temporal and spatial dimensions of the UGB even as it has helped to forge a regional mentality and consciousness that is, by and large, also unrivalled in other polities around the country. This development in particular, a major legacy of Mumford’s magisterial vision for the city-region in the mid-1930s, has arguably created a precarious, contested, and reversible but nonetheless still real space of regional unity that, in turn, draws and reproduces a precarious, contested, and reversible but nonetheless still real rationality of justice. As Abbot (1997: 30–32) has argued, “city and suburbs talk to each other—and often agree,” including discussions of social justice practices such as exclusionary zoning and fair share housing goals negotiated and reinforced by Metro as well as the State’s Land Conservation and Development Commission.

Moreover, in recalling the older ideas of Olmstead (1903) and Bennett (1912), particularly around urban parks and public boulevards, it has also been able to draw on the conservative rationalities of nostalgia without producing sappy, faux-façades and architectural quotations that
so often accompany New Urbanism and its site-building practices. In doing all this—in linking the backward-looking traditionalism of the City Beautiful Movement, for example, with the forward-thinking justice (and ecology) of Mumfordian regionalism—Portland actually managed to please Jane Jacobs herself, no fan of either school, who nonetheless recognized in the planned landscapes of the city a pleasing “ensemble” brought about by functional diversity, short blocks, street life, green space, mixed-use density, regional mass transit, and ultimately human-scaled designs of all kinds (Ozawa, 2003: 2).

Why then growing discontent with this pitifully rare achievement—this planning and territorial “edge” (Ozawa, 2003)? Many of those who know Portland and Oregon best, who observe matters closely everyday, have commented extensively upon the shifting political realities of Oregon’s smart growth system, realities that were apparent long before Measure 37 was actually passed by a majority of citizens (Abbott et al., 2003). Howe et al. (2004), for example, have noted the importance of the demographic and economic changes discussed earlier. These changes have led to important geopolitical shifts that, I would further argue, do begin to explain the increasing neoliberalization of spatial politics:

Until the 1980s, Oregon’s economy was dominated by natural-resource industries including timber, wood products, agriculture, and fishing. Portland, the state’s central city, was integrally connected with the resource focus through processing, banking, shipping, and other essential services. Cities throughout the state had much in common with each other, and people in Portland appreciated the relationships between the metropolitan region’s well-being and the rest of the state. (p. 392)

All this relative commonality and integration, symbolized by the rejection of antiplanning initiatives in 1971, 1978, and 1982, began to erode in the 1980s as the State’s natural resource industries faltered while Portland, in turn, restructured around high-tech and the global economy—a new regime of accumulation driving a new mode of regulation. By the turn of the century, “The schism between Portland and the rest of the state [was] wide and the anger deep” (p. 393). Cultural differences that could be tucked under the roof of a common economic family became more obvious after that roof was ripped off by the stormy transformation into a “post-Fordist,” and more unequal, economy. Farmers and ranchers, located outside of a Portland increasingly concerned with microchips, now saw land use in a different, harsher, more exposed light than before. Conservative politicians and pundits long
concerned with property rights and the “oppressive” and “authoritarian” (nonliberal) state sounded less shrill and quickly found a new, more receptive audience. Anti-planning became attractive.

In the fall of 2003, *The Oregonian*, the state’s leading newspaper, published a series of insightful articles on “the nine states of Oregon,” arguing that the “rural-urban” dichotomy that had made SB100 possible in the 1970s had diversified into a geographical and political “tapestry” where “Portlandia” (and the “Edutopias” of Eugene and Corvallis) stood out (and apart) from the more peripheral regions of “cowboy country” and “timberland” (Maples et al., 2003: A18). From a difficult but still real geopolitics of state unity, Oregon had thus transitioned into an era marked more by a new geopolitics of retreat.

Leading geographers such as Alan Scott (2001) have argued that this sort of territorial transition is happening all around the world and that, notwithstanding the heavy presence of the U.S. security state in the post–9/11 era, it may well amount to the beginning of the end of the “Westphalian” system of state space, where cities are nested inside states which in turn are nested inside countries. Instead, Scott sees “an extended archipelago or mosaic of large city-regions . . . coming into being, and these peculiar agglomerations are now beginning to function as the spatial foundations of the new world system that has been taking shape since the end of the 1970s” (p. 813). Scott’s parallel thesis is that “embryonic consolidation of global city-regions into definite political entities is also occurring as contiguous local government areas (counties, metropolitan areas, municipalities, etc.) club together to form spatial coalitions” (ibid.).

This “clubbing” thesis suggests, it would seem, that Metropolitan Portland, whose economic and social geography has been shifting “westward” and to the “periphery” for years now, nonetheless will inevitably build upon and expand its “embryonic” regional institutions, including its land use, transportation, and environmental planning institutions, as a functional imperative of the global economy. But even if true—and Scott’s clubbing thesis is considered to be overstated by many analysts of city-regions (e.g., Herrschell and Newman, 2002)—it is far from clear what new rationalities and spaces will invariably characterize these new political institutions (Ward and Jonas, 2004). As theorized in chapter 3, the basis for a “new regionalism” can vary from progressive to regressive, from community- and ecologically-based to corporate-based (or indeed, something less starkly dichotomous, wherein corporations becomes smarter and more progressive while communities and nonprofits become more business-oriented). As Ward and Jonas (2004: 2121) put it:
to assume that all city-regions operate as functionally integrated economic territories is not always very revealing in terms of understanding the diverse forces of the development and resurgence of such city-regions; economic regions are as much about conflict and division as about cooperation and association, and indeed emphasis on the one aspect presupposes the presence or possibility of the other.

Conclusions

Neoliberal rationalities that question “state presence” in the multiscaled management of land assets and urban growth over time have grown in recent years within the greater Portland region. This is most evident in headline grabbing events, such as Measure 37, which actually impact the entire state—and these events are tied up with broader structural shifts in the space-economy. Moreover, these rationalities are seen in smaller attempts to improve flexibility and improve regulatory performance. At the same time, the Portland city-region, symbolized by a still strong UGB and regional planning authority, has steadily constructed one of the most sophisticated planning regimes in the United States, an institutional and territorial accomplishment not easily overturned or even severely weakened. New territorialities of the state are therefore emerging in this still demonstrably unique place, but they require a theoretically hybrid sensitivity, one that ultimately requires us to contextualize neoliberalism with other kinds of spatial projects still working themselves out in time.

We thus end up with as many questions as answers. Will the hypothesized shift “downward” (to autonomy) and “rightward” (to markets), a consequence of the wider political rescaling in Oregon, mean that “Portlandia” will increasingly loosen its control on sprawl dynamics and thus weaken its capacity to promote urban infill and sustainable development—two of this city-region’s most impressive “accomplishments,” to use Carl Abbott’s word? Will it begin to emphasize, even more than it has, the neoliberal importance of “flexibility” and regulatory reform, not simply to bring about improved neighborhood and regional “design” à la the smart growth paradigm but also to ensure future accumulation? As Portland’s dynamic suburbs become increasingly more self-contained in terms of well-paying jobs, how will its residents relate to (and restructure) the central city? Will the central city function more and more as a “playground” for global elites, even when it is the “home” of the reverse commuter? What are the implications of such a possibility for the working poor, those who clean up (without
health care or pension plans) the flashy restaurants and cultural arenas that the globally favored creative class so enjoy (cf. Gibson, 2003)? Ultimately, is the geographical imagination that guides Portland’s model smart growth paradigm a necessary component of its political-economic future or is it, as some would argue, a disastrous hindrance to that future?

These emerging questions form both a research frontier and an important set of territorial challenges. However answered, though, it is clear enough that the relatively successful implementation of what we now call the smart growth paradigm, linking a range of spatial promises with an array of spatial practices, has bred its own distinctive kind of geopolitics. These geopolitics, old and new, cannot easily be mapped as either right-wing or left wing—but in fact come into full view deploying a hybrid, post-structural theorization of urban space that, without necessarily offering a universal explanation, demonstrates how multiple rationalities are always contending for the production and transformation of urban space over time. That is to say, these geopolitics show the multiplex nature of city dynamics and urban change.

As a general territorial project, smart growth’s periphery-core strategy seems to have forged a specific kind of state space, one that is “thick” (i.e., more authoritarian) in some places yet “thin” (more liberal) in others. With respect to thickness, efforts to preserve open space and reduce sprawl include the use of UGBs, habitat conservation plans, and exclusive farm use zoning, amongst other tools. More dramatically, the heavy involvement of the state legislature in urban development—as detailed in chapter 2—has certainly pulled once-localized policy discretion over land use into the ambit of a higher-scale political authority and regulation, in precisely the opposite direction classic liberal theory would predict or want.

At the same time, Portland’s emphasis on infill development and channeling new growth into core areas has also led to a parallel thinning of state power, at least within the confines of targeted growth areas (“removing barriers”)—supporting (albeit only partially) those who see the steady neoliberalization of urban policy and spatial development (e.g., Hackworth, 2007). In concrete terms, calls for infill involve, for instance, relaxing or reforming zoning restrictions that otherwise forbid more intensive forms of development (including affordable housing). For example, Raymond et al. (2000: 154) argue that “strict enforcement of regulations [in central cities of the USA] is one of the causes of decline in the amount of construction activity.” Accordingly, “cities can be more competitive in attracting development by adopting a more business-friendly philosophy and approach to building code enforcement” (ibid).
So while those who normatively favor a left-authoritarian variant of
smart growth—a justice-driven geography of metropolitan unity—
should worry about the “neoliberal” shifts that now seem to be at work
in the Portland city-region, this region still remains, at the end of the
day, the paradigmatic case study of how to manage urban growth in the
American institutional and cultural context. Furthermore, much of what
is still happening in metropolitan Portland cannot be explained in toto
by the neoliberal turn, including, for instance, the series of project ini-
tiatives and programs associated with broad urban sustainability goals
such as the City’s G/Rated program to say nothing of new TODs, the
expanding MAX system, and other developments. In this larger sense,
the Portland city-region will surely continue to generate new urban
reforms, institutional innovations, and planning lessons for many years
to come.

In all likelihood, moreover, no one will be studying these reforms,
innovations, and lessons more closely than Portland’s metropolitan
neighbors located due north in Washington State. Though many devel-
opment trends, spatial planning strategies, and political problems are
quite similar, Seattle-Tacoma nonetheless provides us with a second, dis-
tinctive, empirical case with which we might continue to explore, map,
and theorize the new territorialities of urban growth management
emerging unevenly across the contemporary United States.
CHAPTER 7

The Seattle-Tacoma City-Region: Rescaling the Spaces of Fragmented Places

All things are bound together. All things connect.
Chief Sealth [Seattle] (1854)

Introduction

The pathos and power of Chief Sealth’s haunting observations were directed originally at the dangerous severance of nature from society with which European-Americans gazed upon the nineteenth-century Pacific Northwest. And while we only now see—possibly in the eleventh hour—the disturbing truth of Chief Sealth’s wisdom, we also see that his ideas can be applied to more contemporary problems within society, in particular to people living in shared territories who must rely on different (but connected) levels of government to provide different kinds of (bounded) coordination, particularly where this involves efforts to sustain natural environments in a more equitable manner.

The breathtaking ecological setting along Puget Sound—an inland sea formed by receding Pleistocene glaciers some 12,000 years ago—provides an apt backdrop to explore the social and political possibilities of Chief Sealth’s fundamentally dialectical concerns about the world he feared would forever vanish. Put simply: how to live completely in this setting without destroying it? Now a dispersed, polycentric, multi-nodal city-region of some 3.4 million people, the City of Seattle literally keeps the Suquamish leader’s ideals on the daily tongue; for its part, the Sound City of Tacoma, which derives its name from the Puyallup word
for nearby Mount Rainer (Tahoma, meaning “mother of waters”), provides literary ties to the region’s natural splendor and grandeur.

Linking people and place with past, present, and future, urban growth management in Washington State, in general, and the Puget Sound region anchored by Seattle and Tacoma, in particular, now provides us with a second, distinct model of urban growth management from which, it is also suggested here, a range of new territorialities are now emerging—and from which a range of insights about the new spatialities of planning might be usefully gleaned. As in Portland, neoliberal rationalities are certainly important to consider, but this chapter argues specifically that the territorial scope (if not always the institutional strength) of state involvement in urban growth management has actually expanded at multiple spatial scales—and this dynamic has created a complex, still open, politics wherein discontent has multiple sources and varied authorships. For the scales and scope of state space revolve around a series of competing rationalities that variously highlight different kinds of territorial outcomes.

Growth Dynamics in the “Third Washington”

Like California, Washington is frequently thought of as “two states.” Differences between southern and northern California—or at least between San Francisco and Orange County—are legendary. But like neighboring Oregon, Washington is divided geologically and politically by the Cascade Mountains, or what some locals call the “Cascade Curtain.” To the east of the mountains lies the more arid, less urbanized, and more conservative terrain that Americans and others associate with the romantic culture of the Old West (where voting patterns are more similar to Wyoming). To the west of the Cascades, articulated increasingly with the Pacific Rim economy, is the Seattle-Tacoma city-region: wetter, greener, and generally more progressive (figure 7.1).

In truth, this functionally integrated city-region—this “Third Washington,” as some local planners call it—is the post–WWII conurbation of four core cities, including Seattle, located in King County and Tacoma, located to the south in Pierce County; but also Bremerton, to the west in Kitsap County; and Everett, the home of Boeing located to the north in Snohomish County (Vernez-Moudon and Heckman, 2000) (table 7.1). The nineteenth-century origins of these cities reflect the “break-point” theory in urban geography. Seattle and Tacoma, in particular, grew up around classic port functions, where the logistical articulation of rails and ships provided the initial spark for subsequent
urbanization patterns. Largely to transport the region’s vast lumber and timber-related resources, the Northern Pacific entered Tacoma in 1885 and the Great Northern connected to Seattle in 1893. New connections were also made with Portland at about this same time.

Today, the Seattle-Tacoma city-region, where three out of every five jobs in Washington State is located, consists of four, functionally interconnected counties and seventy odd general-purpose municipalities,
including Bellevue—an “Edge City” located near Seattle. According to Moudon and Heckman (2000: 121-122), the central part of this city-region resembles the San Francisco Bay Area as it was a few decades ago: some 3 million people spread in a large, low-density urbanized region which emerged out of the conurbation of the two older port cities of Tacoma and Seattle, and of the many small and even tiny towns around them.

This reading suggests more job-rich “edge cities” will appear in the future, although major strategic efforts are now being made to determine the location and nature of these new places, an issue also taken up later in the chapter.

Seattle is the dominant force, of course, both in the city-region and in the Pacific Northwest. With a 2000 population of 563,374, Seattle was the twenty-fourth largest city in the United States at that time (table 7.2). Like other cities in the West and South, Seattle grew much faster in the 1990s (9.1 percent) than in the 1980s (4.5 percent) and was one of the fastest growing larger cities in the country from 1980 to 2000. During this time, the regional economy began to add new high-tech, globally oriented sectors—symbolized by Microsoft—to its famous manufacturing expertise in aeronautics (which in turn grew up around early advantages in the region’s vast timber resources). Boeing still provides about 8 percent of the region’s jobs, but manufacturing, which provided 40 percent of jobs in 1960s, dropped to only 15 percent in 2000. In contrast, nonmanufacturing employment grew ten times faster than manufacturing employment over this period of time.

The City of Seattle has one the highest percentage of residents with university degrees in the country. It also has one of the country’s lowest “dependency ratios” (only 15.3 percent of residents are children) and one of the highest percentages of whites (67 percent), a racial character-

Table 7.1  Percentage of population by County in Seattle-Tacoma

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>1950</th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>King</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitsap</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierce</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snohomish</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Puget Sound Regional Council (2001a).
istic it shares with Portland. Like other U.S. cities, though, the white population has decreased in relative terms, even as the city continues to attract both migrants and immigrants, which relatively few major U.S. cities can claim. Seattle is therefore less black and less white—and more Asian and Latin American (although more immigrants moved to neighboring suburbs than to Seattle).

Immigrant-rich suburbs reflect new settlement trends. Despite its economic health (e.g., three-quarters of Seattle residents worked in Seattle and median household income increased 15 percent in the 1990s, which was four times faster than the national average), suburbs in King County grew more than twice as fast (22 percent) as did Seattle (9 percent) during the same period of time. In part, this growth reflects the presence of relatively affordable housing—and amenity demands for more family space (i.e., classic reasons). But many of King County’s “suburbs” are also major employment centers in their own right.

In addition to Bellevue, which housed about 110,000 jobs in 2003, communities on the east side of King County are densely populated with small- and median-size firms that form a constellation of high-tech employment opportunities in new sectors of the regional economy. This includes new firms in biotechnology, chemicals, electronics, instrument, and software as well as opportunities in less well-compensated “multiplier effects,” such as restaurants and other service-economy jobs. The suburb of Redmond alone, for example, home to the Microsoft campus, provided 77,400 jobs in 2003—a figure lower but roughly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>Growth rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seattle (King)</td>
<td>516,259</td>
<td>563,374</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tacoma (Pierce)</td>
<td>176,664</td>
<td>193,556</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bellevue (King)</td>
<td>86,872</td>
<td>109,827</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everett (Snohomish)</td>
<td>69,974</td>
<td>91,488</td>
<td>30.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Way (King)</td>
<td>67,449</td>
<td>83,259</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent (King)</td>
<td>37,960</td>
<td>79,524</td>
<td>109.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakewood (Pierce)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>58,293</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renton (King)</td>
<td>41,688</td>
<td>50,052</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redmond (King)</td>
<td>35,800</td>
<td>45,256</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auburn (King)</td>
<td>33,650</td>
<td>43,145</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bremerton (Kitsap)</td>
<td>38,142</td>
<td>37,259</td>
<td>-2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gig Harbor (Pierce)</td>
<td>3,236</td>
<td>6,465</td>
<td>99.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Puget Sound Regional Council (2001c).
comparable to the city of Tacoma’s own employment base; for its part, Seattle still provided a dominant 475,500 total jobs in 2003 (PSRC, 2004b).

As in other urban areas across the world, the globalization and improved quality (and lucrative compensation) of parts of the labor market in King County has put enormous pressure on housing markets, particularly for those who do not work directly in the “New Economy.” While increased Latin American immigration is one reason for a small decline in home-ownership rates in recent years, the simple fact is that (like other high-tech areas on the West Coast) housing costs have increased faster than incomes all across the region, but especially in job-rich King County.

One result of this dynamic has been increased growth pressure in northern Pierce County, particularly for single-family homes, where house prices historically have been lower but commute times to King County are minimized (i.e., a “perfect storm”). In 1995, the median sales price of a home in King County was 37 percent higher than what it was in Pierce County; it was 67 percent higher a decade later (PSRC, 2005b). Accordingly, from 1990 to 1999, Pierce County’s population grew 2.2 percent per year compared with only 1.3 percent per year in King County. While King County retains a higher percentage of the city-regions’ job share than its population share, in contrast Pierce County, the home of Tacoma, has a lower percentage of the regions’ job share than its population otherwise warrants.

Put another way, the basic purpose of much of Pierce County, which housed 760,000 people but provided only 209,000 jobs in 2003, has been to rest King County’s labor markets, which provided well over one million jobs—a situation that has resulted in longer and larger amounts of intercounty commuting as well as growth pressures in unincorporated areas. Accordingly, while 95 percent of people who live in King County also work there, a much lower percent of those living in Pierce County work within their home county. About 25 percent of Pierce County residents work in King County, up from about 12 percent in 1980 (PSRC, 2003a, b). Overall, there has been a substantial increase in the number of workers commuting to a different county—from 107,895 in 1980 to 263,699 in 2000 (PSRC, 2003a). Although far closer to Tacoma, less than one-fifth of the residents of Puyallup, for example, commute to Tacoma for work; nearly a third commute to communities in King County.

Part of the spatial imbalance, wherein the two large counties of King and Pierce “specialize” to some extent in work and home, respectively,
relates to the economic problems experienced in the city of Tacoma in the post-WWII era. This should not be taken too far. Tacoma provided about 100,000 jobs in 2003, five times more than any other city in Pierce County, and third only to Seattle and Bellevue in the metro area. And with a 2006 population of roughly 780,000, Pierce County as a whole—with Tacoma as the main economic engine—is actually more populous today than a few U.S. states (Alaska, North and South Dakota, Vermont, and Wyoming). It is, in many respects, an extremely successful and dynamic subarea.

But the Tacoma has always been grittier, more blue collar, poorer, more violent, and considerably less educated than its more famous and well-healed neighbor. Like other cities in the Pacific Northwest, it remains predominately white, although it has increasingly large populations of Asian (6 percent) and Latin American (8 percent) immigrants along with an African American population of about 11 percent.

Part of Tacoma’s historic reputation has to do with the nearby location of two major military bases, which remain important employers and thus crucial economic actors in local development. (The U.S. military employs nearly 30,000 people in Pierce County compared with only 1,500 in King County.) Other than this military imbalance, the overall economic structure of the Tacoma is, in one sense, roughly similar to Seattle’s economy. However, aside from large quantitative differences, the nature of Seattle’s FIRE and manufacturing sectors include a much higher percentage of high-tech, “New Economy” firms.

While it has long been a major employment center in the South Sound region, Tacoma’s downtown nonetheless suffered heavy divestment in the 1960s and 1970s more reminiscent of central cities located in the Midwest and Northeast than those in the West. Like many American cities, that is, Tacoma experienced a significant period of economic, social, and physical decline, initially due to the mass suburbanization of families discussed in chapter 2. Retailing decentralized in the 1960s, crime rates increased, schools declined, gangs appeared, and the city developed a sharply negative image in the region. Tacoma’s population grew over 30 percent during the 1940s, but an average of 3.3 percent per decade in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s (not much better than the decadal rate of 2.4 percent sustained during the Great Depression).

In a dramatic break with previous periods of urbanization, downtown became a center of government with ancillary uses—a single-use district for public servants and low-wage service sector jobs. It had only a scattering of manufacturing, located mainly at the southern edge of the CBD, where underutilized warehouses and manufacturing sites still
form a classic, Chicago-like “zone of transition” between the central core and adjacent low-income neighborhoods (Dierwechter and Coffey, 2002).

Tacoma’s twenty-year renaissance—like the “comeback” of dozens of other U.S. downtowns in the same period (Monclús and Guàrdia, 2006)—emerged slowly from the paradoxical rubble of belated urban renewal efforts, which included the disastrous razing of several historic buildings along a two-block section of a major arterial. This intervention severed links between the Union Depot-Warehouse District and the more viable northern section of the CBD. However, the action raised concerns about the loss of the city’s historical landscape. Ultimately, Union Station, abandoned years earlier by a cash-strapped Amtrak, sparked the revival in the late 1980s. A concerted effort to preserve this fine beaux-arts structure, which was actually slated for modernist-style demolition and removal, resulted in a $40,000,000 renovation and its new use as a federal courthouse.

This preservation effect was reinforced with the construction of the Washington State History Museum in 1996 and, perhaps most importantly, the University of Washington at Tacoma in 1997, which has brought an ever-growing number of students into the urban core. More recent developments reflect classic “culture-led” regeneration strategies now seen all across the world: a Museum of Glass, an Art Museum, a convention center; the construction of a light-rail line; multipurpose waterfront redevelopment; large-scale condo projects; mixed-use retailing; warehouse renovation; an “arts” high school; and a steady flow of high-end restaurants. All this new activity, discussed later in the chapter, is reflected in the simple fact that Tacoma gained 16,892 people from 1990 to 2000. The rebirth was now apparently sustainable.

But as in Seattle, Tacoma’s suburbs, including the relatively job-rich municipality of Lakewood, as well as the vast unincorporated areas just beyond them, gained considerably more (roughly 100,000). During the 1990s, again due mainly to the globalized dynamism of King County, Pierce County’s population expanded from 586,203 in 1990 to 700,820 in 2000, meaning that the City of Tacoma captured about 15 percent of the county’s total growth (PSRC, 2001a). However, in 1990, people living in unincorporated areas of the county outnumbered residents of municipalities by more than 37 percent; this number dropped dramatically in the year 2000, where residents of municipalities outnumbered those living in unincorporated areas by 20 percent. In part, this major shift in local political identity was due to the incorporation of several
new suburbs in the mid-1990s; but it was also because of the new spatial policy emphasis under the Growth Management Acts of 1990 and 1991 to funnel growth deliberately into more compact areas. The smart growth era had arrived.

**Growth Management Strategies**

Chapter 2 surveyed major aspects of the State of Washington’s overall urban growth management system, which was introduced in 1990 and 1991. In brief, the new system mandated local comprehensive planning in fast-growing areas of the state, which strengthened state legislation passed in the early 1970s (the SEPA and the SMA) that focused more narrowly on the protection of shoreline and water resources but, once again, otherwise left local governments “to operate under the crude and extremely lenient Planning Commissions Act” (Settle and Gavigan, 1993: 876). “GMA,” as everyone in Washington refers to the overall planning system, swiftly became a new organizing discourse for both planning and development in the 1990s and beyond, not only because it actually shifted and rescaled institutional powers in the state but also because it started to change the physical environment itself.

First of all, the state legislature now required local communities to focus on key problems, directly inserting state power into the fundamental question of what is locally important. Though the state still gave communities considerable policy discretion, developmental elements such as housing, infrastructure, utilities, capital facilities, transportation, and especially land use were not discretionary. In one sense, this single act of mandating specific elements began to normalize the highly uneven territorialities of local planning, forcing at least parts of local planning policies to resemble one another—and thus creating a kind of intermunicipal harmonization of spatial promises and practices, stitching together both the imagination and implementation of local plans by making people think about (and work toward) the same kinds of problems: sprawl, housing, public facilities, ecological deterioration, and so on. This is hardly evidence of neoliberal retreat.

The state also instituted efforts to strengthen regionalism, albeit in a less comprehensive manner than seen in the case of Portland, Oregon. While the harmonization of local plans initiated a “bottom-up” regionalism, where the coordination of local efforts creates policy (and environmental) convergence, two other developments represented more direct support for regional planning, albeit at two separate (though interrelated) administrative scales.
The first scale was the entire city-region, or what might be thought of as the functionally integrated but politically fragmented four-county area. Under the new system, an older metropolitan planning organization (MPO) created in the 1960s became the Puget Sound Regional Council. In addition to providing technical expertise and broad strategic spatial planning services, the PSRC was given explicit powers, which were strengthened in 2007,

to certify that the transportation elements of comprehensive plans adopted by counties, cities, and towns within the region reflect the guidelines and [that] principles developed pursuant to [the GMA] are consistent with the adopted regional transportation plan, and, where appropriate, conform with the requirements of [the GMA]. (State of Washington, 2007)

The second scale of regionalism was the urban county, in particular Pierce and King Counties who already had considerable planning capacities before the GMA. The urban county now performs a crucial role in the multitiered system of urban growth management that has emerged since 1990. Several local planners confirm a shift in power, noting that urban counties have become “heavy spaces,” as one planner put it, in large part because, like Metro in Portland, they set the UGBs and also coordinate planning policies between jurisdictions. As stated formally in the Growth Management Act, counties

Shall designate an urban growth area or areas within which urban growth shall be encouraged and outside of which growth can occur only if it is not urban in nature. Each city that is located in such a county shall be included within an urban growth area. An urban growth area may include more than a single city. An urban growth area may include territory that is located outside of a city only if such territory already is characterized by urban growth whether or not the urban growth area includes a city, or is adjacent to territory already characterized by urban growth, or is a designated new fully contained community. (Washington State Legislature, 2002a)

This is not, of course, by unilateral edict. Though given statutory authority to establish the boundaries of urban growth, counties work closely with other local governments through interlocal service agreements (figure 7.2). One example is the PSRC, which was created to promote intergovernmental cooperation and to work toward coordination, consistency, and compliance in the implementation of growth
management goals, comprehensive planning, and transportation planning by county government and the cities and towns within Pierce County. This county-regional body also serves as the formal, multigovernment link to the PSRC (PCRC-GMCC, 2006).

The PSRC provides local governments with a “30,000 foot view of the region,” helping individual jurisdictions to focus on the big development picture. As one planner put it, local governments still have to do all
the unseemly “pig wrestling,” where developers, citizens, and planning staff work out the messy details of smaller-scale plans and specific site-level projects. But the PSRC provides a bigger framework within which to think more broadly about the purposes of that wrestling. In particular, they are valued as a technical and research resource—as the “revealers of Great Truths,” this same planner observed, “like what’s really happening with vacant land or how much housing space is really needed.”

For some, new county power has been attended, though not matched, by the growing power and relevance of the PSRC. While the counties have gotten “heavier” during the GMA era, the PSRC still remains a “light” political force but not lightweight. It is not Portland Metro, by any means, but neither is it irrelevant. In part, their policy and political presence is due simply to the quality of the institution: “They are just really, really well-staffed—an amazing technical resource,” as another planner emphasized, “their web page alone is an unbelievable asset for cities.” But as the metropolitan planning organization for the region, they also carry a “big stick” in federal transportation dollars, “the resource that always counts most.” In this sense, the importance of the PSRC has grown beyond simply providing a spatial and technical imagination for the Seattle-Tacoma city-region as a whole, though this role should not be discounted. Rather, the PSRC has gained relevance in recent years because it has shifted its overall geographical strategy with respect to the disbursements of these federal dollars.

According to several officials, over the years, the PSRC has gotten away from a “peanut butter approach” to transportation disbursements, where federal dollars were spread too thinly across the region. Instead, they began to focus strategic attention on twenty-three regional centers. “Once they did that, everyone wanted to be a regional center—and they started to listen more.” Whatever the motivation for paying more attention to the PSRC (“Everyone wants to be a center if money is involved,” as one person put it), this strategic shift has, in many people’s minds, created a new “spatial hierarchy,” and thus at least the horizon of an emerging, if not uniform, consensus about what is and what is not an appropriate focal point for future public investments. While money is the easiest form of power, local perception of technical rationality and objectivity as well as “outsider status” are also important aspects of the PSRC’s growing policy presence in urban growth management.

The PSRC’s spatial hierarchy of resources for the city-region as a whole has emerged fitfully over the past decade, starting with the publication in 1995 of VISION 2020, a comprehensive regional plan for urban growth management that was amended in 2007 and is now being
updated to 2040 (PSRC, 2007a). The amendments to VISION 2020 outline a “preferred alternative” for metropolitan growth that deploys the synoptic concept of “Regional Geographies,” a term that is now starting to filter down the governmental system through public outreach and policy diffusion. This concept, aside from its intriguing etymology, “provides a description of an overall development pattern that the central Puget Sound Region should assume over time,” and is based on the notion that the region’s different types of cities will play a variety of roles in the region’s future. These roles range from major hubs of activity . . . to less intense regional, city and town centers throughout the region’s core suburban, larger suburban, and smaller suburban cities. (PSRC, 2007a: 3)

The goal of the regional geographies concept is therefore to shape more precisely the growing development forces now almost fully contained within the region’s UGBs, an “anti-sprawl” result that is one of the signature, though flawed, achievements of the GMA to date.

As the Growth Management Policy Board of the PSRC (2007a: 3-6) has put it, the “preferred alternative” articulates a strategy wherein growth is not only focused within UGBs, the main regional task of the 1990s, but, no less importantly, growth within the urban growth areas “is focused in cities containing regional growth centers” while “rural and natural resources lands are protected.” This second task suggests that a lot more work needs to be done to facilitate quality infill and urban revitalization, particularly around the economy, a more refined spatial concern also seen in Portland.

This regional goal mirrors the urban logic of the City of Seattle’s (2004) spatial development strategy, which as elaborated in its comprehensive plan deploys the idea of “urban villages.” While the sustainability discourse both names and strongly permeates nearly every corner of Seattle’s comprehensive plan and broader governance agenda (cf. Portney, 2004), the strategic and practical focus on the various plan elements are tied together through detailed regulatory and investment attention paid to the city’s urban villages, which provide the practical face of the smart growth paradigm. As stated in the plan:

The goal that unifies all the elements of the Comprehensive Plan is to preserve the best qualities of Seattle’s distinct neighborhoods while responding positively and creatively to the pressures of change and growth. A key component of the City’s plan to achieve this goal is the urban village strategy. (City of Seattle, 2004 [1994]: viii)
That strategy specifically envisions a string of connected “villages” inside a high-tech metropolis increasingly characterized by class and ethnic integration, pedestrian-oriented commercial facilities well serviced by multimodal transportation, a variety of housing opportunities, well-integrated parks and public spaces, and citizen engagement in civic and political life. Again, this represents a search for unity and diversity as much as anything else.

The City of Seattle’s strong sustainability concerns also extend to King County. The most recent example is the initiative launched in the summer of 2007 that extends the mandates granted under SEPA guidelines to climate change policy. Specifically, the new policy, issued as an executive order, requires “climate change impacts” to be considered (though not yet mitigated) during the environmental review of new development projects. According to one source, King County is the first local government in the nation to add greenhouse gas pollution to the environmental review of local construction projects, a policy linked legally to a 2002 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that determined that greenhouse gases are “pollutants” (King County, 2007). While some experts question whether this extension of SEPA authority will produce the desired results, King County’s commitment to such policy goals is nonetheless extremely progressive from an ecological perspective.

But Seattle and King County are only one part of a broader city-region struggling with the “next phase” in the smart growth story. While the objective of the PSRC regional geographies vision is, as in Seattle and King County, “to achieve better jobs-housing balance across the region,” it also now reflects the widespread concern (and even deep angst, in some quarters) that the region’s concurrency provisions have failed to achieve the same level of success as the UGBs and the mandatory planning provisions (though both these tools are also critiqued). This less sanguine view of the region’s performance is particularly marked in the South Sound region, which rarely gets anything like the national attention that Seattle attracts but is, nonetheless, crucial to the region’s overall future if for no other reason than its labor and housing markets are, as discussed earlier in the chapter, so functionally integrated with Seattle and King County.

Planners and other development actors, including those in the building industry, who have worked in Pierce County communities for decades worry especially about whether or not the new growth that has been successfully contained behind the UGBs is “quality development.” The subtext here is a profound disappointment with the region’s concurrency provisions. One senior planner noted that, while concurrency is
ostensibly a crucial part of the GMA model, “we just left levels of service to local communities and we let them establish the financial means.” As these means are “hopelessly inadequate,” the upshot has been a steady disintegration in levels of service, particularly as this involves transportation. “Here’s what happens: you don’t deny development, that doesn’t happen. What you do is that you just lower levels of service. In fact, no one has denied anything—not one that I know of since I’ve been here—based on [inadequate] parks, schools or roads.”

This fundamental problem has led to sharp criticism over the years, particularly from the press. While planning since the GMA “is a big improvement on the days of laissez-faire,” one editorial concluded, “it is far from a success” (Editorial, 2004b: B4). In brief, the policy combination of overly large but still relatively effective UGBs, discussed below, without equally effective concurrency provisions has led to “higher levels of density, very high density. But it’s not the kind of development that would lead you to say, you know, ‘God Bless the GMA,’” as another planner lamented, on overall policy experience that is for him “just inexcusable.” While the local press and others have repeatedly called for higher impact fees on developers, who simply pass on these costs to new, often first-time home-owners, those fees that have been enacted over the years do not remotely approach the actual costs of development.

The political difficulty of instituting adequate development impact fees reflects, for many planners and public officials, the phenomenal power of the development community. “It’s so politically charged. They give an awful lot of money to politicians,” one official noted. In contrast, representatives from the development community point out that further impact fees to meet concurrency requirements simply push up housing prices for new home-owners—augmenting the growing affordability crisis. Instead, in their view, more policy attention should be placed on tools like tax increment financing (TIFs), which the State of Washington does not currently allow.1 From the perspective of the development community, major problems with the GMA include what the Master Builders Association of Pierce County (2007, p. 7) calls “the ever-growing labyrinth of development regulations and the need to simplify them.” In other words, the development community calls for flexibility and regulatory streamlining:

Since the mid-1990s when the Growth Management Act was adopted in the County, regulations governing critical areas, stormwater runoff quantity and quality, street and road design, and land use, as well as those governing house design and lot layout, have all increased in volume and
complexity. With the added complexity has come unintended consequences and permit review delays. Industry members requested that an effort begin to reexamine existing County code language, departmental policies and procedures in order to remove unanticipated and unnecessary barriers to development. (ibid.)

While time is money, much of the concern, according to the same source, is related to largely unintended inefficiencies associated with growing state power over urban growth dynamics, an otherwise legitimate development that nonetheless could be improved:

The MBA recognize[s] that additional requirements adopted over the past 10 years were based on new knowledge and sensitivity to land development practices; however, a large number of regulatory changes completed in separate efforts over time, each of which was based on good intentions and reasoning, have resulted in “code conflicts” that sometimes cause an applicant to play the role of middleman between competing policies, priorities, or rules as they work their way through permit approval. (ibid.)

When asked about the importance of flexibility in supporting improved environmental results, planners tended to agree with the complaints about code conflicts—we should “burn our codes,” as one acidly put it, “and start all over.” But public figures also worry that the mantra of flexibility is actually a “four-letter word.” When developers say they want greater flexibility, that is, they mean they want to get around extensive community participation. Paradoxically, one representative of the development industry agreed, but saw the matter as one of timing. While participation is important during planning, it should not be used “at the very end” when a developer is ready to build. But a broader culture of “populism” often means that communities and citizen groups see their voice, rather than the agreed-upon development procedures, as the final arbiter of specific projects and initiatives, whatever the procedures might mandate on paper.

Interestingly, the City of Tacoma has worked extremely hard on improving the permitting process, speeding it up while also working toward greater flexibility, almost to a fault. As stated in the Growth Strategy and Development Concept Element of the City’s comprehensive plan:

The development intensive approach in the comprehensive plan recognizes that different types of land use may be located in the same areas as long as the character of the area remains consistent. The approach permits
greater flexibility in land use arrangements and encourages innovative techniques of land development. (City of Tacoma, 2006: GD-6)

Yet improved flexibility and development streamlining—removing “added complexity,” as the Master Builders put it—may actually impede development projects that ultimately strengthen local support for quality infill and densification over time. A growing concern in Tacoma, for example, is the deepening perception that urban growth management means “forcing” development onto urban communities, as indeed it does. In fact, the GMA is used as “shield and sword” when planners encounter urban resistance to take more development. While greater density is often seen as the main culprit, quality design may be a more important factor. Planners with the City of Tacoma note that people in the community are willing to accept infill as long as it is in the scale and character of the neighborhood. “They get it,” one planner argued, “the New Urbanism ideas—they want that.” But past infill in Tacoma has frequently been “big and ugly,” out-of-scale, placeless—development that mocks the built traditions of the city: “So how do you mitigate those types of fears out there in the community,” this same planner wondered, “when you’re always trying to ‘streamline’ your regulations to make them more flexible?”

Paradoxically, the “streamlining culture” relates to the City’s long-standing efforts to capture a higher share of regional development, to pursue economic development consistent with urban revitalization and more compact and vibrant environments in the city-region. Like many other central cities, Tacoma has tried to develop a “business-friendly, economic development culture.” Part of that culture of planning is eight-week permitting. “But it’s hard to balance that sometimes with good design regulations, which may slow development down” (something citizens often demand from local government). This line of reasoning echoes recent New Urbanist arguments that, in order for smart growth policies to be successful, “changes in physical form are a necessary precondition for urban economic, social, and ecological change” (Knapp and Talen, 2005, p. 109). However, this does not simply mean, “removing regulatory obstacles to urban development on par with the need for reforming planning policies,” as many New Urbanists also demand (ibid.).

The growing danger to the smart growth agenda in Tacoma, then, is that too little development will pass through as quality infill because proper “mitigation” through sharper urban design controls is not adequately done. In other words, the smart growth rationality of quantity...
may overwhelm the New Urbanist call for quality, generating pushback—a development tension of which local planners are keenly aware. Already, according to one city planner, people are questioning the land-use intensification that Tacoma is formally hoping to accommodate. Tacoma’s pro-growth, “we’ll-build-anything” history, that is to say, has started to bump up against a new set of questions from both citizens and politicians, such as “whether or not the city really wants to accommodate 52,000 more people,” which is its allocated share for regional growth in the coming years.

To date, as indicated earlier in the discussion, the most dramatic redevelopment activity has been downtown. Thus downtown is arguably the most interesting potpourri of smart growth initiatives: light-rail, mixed-use, condos, historic preservation, waterfront regeneration, and so on. An important part of the overall “template,” though, is a broader strategy to implode additional growth into other mixed-use nodes connected along new activity corridors analogous to Seattle’s urban villages (figure 7.3). Thus far, growth trends in these noncentral nodes have not been as dramatic as in the downtown area, meaning that “smart growth principles” of planning and design are not yet obvious to the average citizen in Tacoma, who may or may not spend much time downtown.

While market forces explain the lack of adequate infill throughout the city, particularly in the mixed-use centers, these forces are shaped in important ways by what some see as a second major challenge of the GMA, at least in the South Sound: namely, the idea that “everyone plans together at the sub-regional level.” The basis for such “planning together” are countywide policies adopted in Pierce County during the early years of the GMA era. However, according to multiple sources, these countywide policies are not as relevant as they should be. As one suburban planner volunteered: “I’m embarrassed to admit that I don’t crack open the county-wide policies that much—maybe once a year.”

Another experienced planner, less sanguine about the region’s overall record than most other informants, strongly indicted the practical implementation of countywide planning policies, particularly in regard to channeling new growth away from unincorporated areas. “We’ve made progress, sure, but I’m not that happy with the GMA because it gives too much flexibility in how your community does growth management. There’s too much room for local interpretation.” One example is recent countywide work on improved affordable housing. As countywide policies are discussed, “there’s this flurry of emails and all the ‘shall’ s are becoming ‘shoulds.’”
While local resistance to affordable housing reflects, as discussed in chapter 5, classic NIMBY values, a much broader problem has plagued the countywide policy experience. The UGB tool originally instilled “total fear” in Pierce County’s decades-old growth culture. The “growth lines” meant that, as one official put it, “you were either rural or you

Figure 7.3  Tacoma’s spatial growth strategy.

While local resistance to affordable housing reflects, as discussed in chapter 5, classic NIMBY values, a much broader problem has plagued the countywide policy experience. The UGB tool originally instilled “total fear” in Pierce County’s decades-old growth culture. The “growth lines” meant that, as one official put it, “you were either rural or you
were urban. And rural meant you were [financially] dead.” Specifically, Pierce County feared the loss of tax revenue from urban growth, which has led some to call Pierce County the “City of Pierce” because it “acts more like a city than a county.” This “city” behavior has not always led to appropriate cooperation around important growth management issues like the future annexation of land adjacent to the City of Tacoma, another “big disappointment” of the GMA experience for some local planners.

The failure to forge a stronger form of countywide planning is seen most dramatically in the nature of the development that has occurred in the intervening years. Because Pierce County was so focused on revenue enhancement from new growth it did not see its primary job as protecting farmland, a more rural objective. But the growth itself relates to the earlier discussion that highlighted large differences between the valuation of land between Pierce and King Counties, economic realities that have driven a lot of the local political responses. A related problem is that the original UGBs were far too big. “We’ve got 80-year growth boundaries, not twenty year boundaries,” one planner complained; another agreed, using the term “vastly oversized.” Development will therefore only “look better when things start to fill up, when we get to where Portland is, which maybe will allow use to do more innovative things.” But at the moment, this planner continued, too much new development is going on the very edges of the UGB, where land is cheaper, and “that’s not leading to good results a lot of the time,” especially because “we haven’t really tiered development the way we should.”

“Tiering development” refers to the more refined policy effort to “fill” the designated growth areas in (temporal and spatial) tiers, consistent with parallel investments in adequate public facilities. Tacoma, for example, is currently using tiers as part of its urban growth areas located mostly south of the city. Interestingly, tiering for sprawl mitigation is linked to improved regulatory flexibility for development (as well as concurrency goals, investments associated with capital improvement plans, and the additional regulatory protection of critical areas through the critical areas ordinance). All this is stated in great detail within the Pierce County Comprehensive Plan (1994, p. 19A.30–3), which for this reason is worth quoting at length:

D. LU-UGA Objective 3. Discourage sprawl and leapfrog development by phasing growth and through the development and use of “tiers.”

1. Urban growth within UGA boundaries is to be located first in areas already characterized by urban growth that have existing public facility and service capacities to serve such development.
2. Urban growth is located next in areas already characterized by urban growth that shall be served by a combination of both existing public facilities and services and any additional needed public facilities and services that are provided by either public or private sources.

3. Coordinate phased growth with municipalities and collaborate in the development and refinement of the tiering concept as a growth management tool.

E. LU-UGA Objective 4. Through the use of tiering, encourage adequate public facilities and services concurrent with development.

1. Areas already characterized by urban growth that have existing public facility and service capacities or are planned to have them within six years are designated as the primary growth area, i.e., Tier 1.
   a. Development shall be encouraged to occur in Tier 1 by providing:
      (1) Streamlined development review and administrative procedures;
      and
      (2) Focused investment of public revenues for facilities and services in Tier 1.

Representatives of the development community pointed to a different concern than tiering. Disagreeing strongly that the growth boundaries are too big—“we’ve created a finite supply of land here”—one informant raised concerns about the environmental effects of the tool itself: “One [person] who does a lot of development always says that we should not have put in a ‘round circle’ [the regional UGB]—instead we should have followed the soils.” From this perspective, UGBs brought land into development within the urban growth area that otherwise would not have been developed as quickly—or should not have been developed at all because of its ecological value. In other words, the UGB, while easy to understand and market to citizens, is “too crude.”

Still, the above critique does not represent a wholesale indictment of the GMA’s search for collaborative regionalism per se, particularly where this has facilitated cooperation between traditionally opposed camps. “The GMA has created a structure that has facilitated collaboration,” one official noted,

I don’t want to say that it forced people to collaborate, but you see it in the last four to five years especially—I’ve seen a real shift there—between the conservationists and the environmentalists [on the one hand] and the developers [on the other]. I think both camps are realizing more and more that open space protection and profitable development are not necessarily
opposite ideas. People don’t just want to buy a house. They want open space, they want a nice neighborhood. There’s more discussion [in the development community especially] of the “livability factor”—the developers are starting to see that. In 1991, back when we established the critical areas ordinance, that was not the case. It was really controversial. But people are starting to work together. And I think a lot of credit has to go to [Pierce] County for that. The county helped to get the [two] camps to compromise and work together.

A representative from the development community agreed that, on the whole, the GMA has “forced people to talk with one another that probably would not have under the previous planning system.” But opportunities for collaboration between environmentalists and developers remain underexploited and tenuous, particularly in policy areas such as affordable housing—where both constituencies, in the view of several informants, face the hostility and suspicion of the median voter, at least where policy efforts involve improving residential density and working toward mixed-use projects.

In part, because the GMA theoretically requires strong commitments to citizen participation, even as the law predetermines the use of particular spatial management tools (such as UGBs and local comprehensive plans with mandatory policy elements), Pierce County like other urban counties in Washington initiated a process of subarea planning in the 1990s for its large, but fastest-growing unincorporated areas. This has led to the fairly rapid development of eleven “community plans” over the past several years. Technically, each of these community plans for otherwise unincorporated areas in the South Sound Region represents only one “element” in the overall Pierce County Comprehensive Plan. However, community plans are essentially stand alone comprehensive plans in their own right—and could serve as the policy foundation for community plans in any future municipalities that might incorporate in these same areas. Indeed, these community plans may have forestalled new municipal incorporations in the region, directly affecting the political geography of the local government.

While providing for “a local voice,” the stated objectives of these plans are to refine Comprehensive Plan polices to reflect the unique character of the community plan area, and to address local issues that may not be incorporated in the Comprehensive Plan. In addition, the plans are designed to refine the scale and level of detail that can be attained under the broad guidelines of the comprehensive plan (Pierce County, 2007). The community plans are the responsibility of a com-
munity planning board: Citizens and landowners appointed by the County Council from the local area who—in effect—take over responsibilities normally vested in a municipality’s planning commission. Though these boards cannot “color outside the lines” of GMA legislation and other legal and policy requirements, as one planner put it, these plans have nonetheless varied in both content and style enough to cause, initially, anxiety in the development community.

“We initially opposed the community plans,” one informant from the development community admitted, “because it adds more complexity to regulations in the unincorporated areas.” Whereas countywide guidelines were previously uniform, that is, the community plans have added local texture and regulatory contingency to how new development might proceed, at least where county-level guidelines are “silent” on issues of local interest, such as community character and design review.

And yet, this same informant also reported, “A lot of citizens think they can control everything and ignore GMA. But they find out they can’t. We use the [community] plans now to say, ‘hey look, you’ve got to implement the GMA now. You can’t do whatever you want.’ ” A senior county planner agreed that the community plans had unleashed a new territorial dynamic, and was especially reflective about the prospects of this new development. “What we’ve done is that we’ve created a new class of citizen out there. Before a lot of people didn’t even know where their services came from. Now we’ve got a group of citizens that are starting to put pressure on us. They know a lot more about how the system works and the hope is they’ll give us more precise ideas.”

Yet the community plans experience aptly illustrates the tension between decentralized citizen participation, on the one hand, and managing spatial policy across a large urbanized county ostensibly charged by the state legislature with promoting economic development and affordable housing, on the other—and more generally with moving spatial policy into “smarter” forms. For example, despite a strong rhetorical commitment to “Support safe, diverse neighborhoods where people can know and interact with each other,” an initial survey of residents in Gig Harbor, a wealthy community west of Tacoma, nonetheless revealed that

an overwhelming majority (82%) . . . indicated that they were opposed to allowing duplexes within all single-family residential neighborhoods. A strong majority (68%) indicated duplexes should be allowed only in duplex neighborhoods. When asked about size of commercial structures, a strong majority of respondents (68.7%) indicated that commercial buildings should be no larger than 5,000 square feet if outside the City of Gig
Harbor. A strong majority (61.4%) also indicated they were opposed to buildings of up to 35,000 square feet and an overwhelming majority (78.2%) indicated they were opposed to buildings in excess of 35,000 square feet. (Pierce County, 2002, p. 17)

This suggests that, as one city planner put it, “smart growth is something we’d like to move toward—if that means more [social and spatial] integration. It’s a goal. But I think we’re just doing growth management right now.”

Scaling-down planning responsibility, moreover, hardly removes conflicts from growth planning dynamics. It fact, it may sometimes foreground these conflicts by creating a new discursive arena for political participation. One of the most recent examples can be found in efforts to institute the Alderton-McMillin Community Plan for an unincorporated, once “rural” area with now highly fragmented patches of good farmland located in between several fast-growing suburban and small-town municipalities (figure 7.4). This area includes a complex mosaic of both municipal and county planning jurisdictions.

After years of deliberations, the appointed community planning board prepared a plan that proposed to use, interestingly enough, TDRs to carry out a major local, regional, and state goal: not only to protect remaining farmlands from further urban development but also to compensate local farmers for foregone profits on the otherwise extremely valuable land parcels (see chapter 5). However, the “receiving areas” proposed by the Alderton-McMillin community planning board were not originally located within established urban growth areas as designated by Pierce County. Instead, the receiving areas would have allowed three neighboring cities (who all have their own urban growth areas) to expand over time into the protected farming valley.

One such city, Orting, claimed it was running out of land within its municipal borders. “We have about 1 to 2 percent of ground left to build,” the City Administrator complained—a fact that downplays extensive growth areas to the north of the city and, more importantly, the exceptionally low-density of most of its newer residential neighborhoods, which are traditional cul-de-sacs that ignore New Urbanist design critiques in favor of typical postwar American design principles. Despite the community imprimatur of the Alderton-McMillin plan, the Pierce County Planning Commission ultimately opposed the proposed receiving areas (totaling about 1,200 acres) and thus the potential expansion of the three neighboring cities, including Orting, into nongrowth areas within the valley. The County Council’s Community Development
Committee later reversed the Planning Commission’s decision, but a veto threat from the County Executive in turn checked this reversal (Editorial, 2007).

This conflict created two major, but place-contingent political camps: developers, city officials/planners, and local farmers, on the one hand,
and land conservationists, county planners, and Alderton-McMillin residents opposed to further growth, on the other. So while classic socio-economic categories in land politics (new developers vs. old residents) appear at the same scale, scale conflicts also bring different kinds of planners into conflict, complicating the simple view that, for example, planners as a professional class of actors protect residents from developers (or simply help developers overcome residential NIMBYism). Instead, multiple spatial rationalities intertwining at multiple spatial scales over the sociotechnical use of range of complex planning tools (comprehensive and community plans, UGBs, TDRs, etc.) are all working together, if antagonistically, to figure and refigure particular places in particular ways.

The Scaled Territorialities of Seattle-Tacoma

As in Portland, the policy effort both to direct new urban growth and to determine the specific kinds of “work” it does has produced a range of new territorialities of scale within the Seattle-Tacoma region. That region, like Metropolitan Portland, is itself an increasingly distinct economic, political, and cultural space, a “Third Washington” slowly pulling out of the bounded, “areal,” nineteenth-century-based cartography of Washington State. As in Portland, this claim should not be taken too far. However “globalized” or “disembedded” this city-region has become over the past generation or so, particularly around the high-tech landscapes of the Eastside of King County, it still remains directly subject to the constitutional and fiscal powers of the state legislature. Traditional scales of governmental power, or what Brenner (1999: 431) has called “the relatively fixed and immobile forms of territorial organization,” still matter even as a new series of regulatory and investment spaces now begin to emerge.

However the Growth Management Act, passed in 1990 and amended in 1991, has without question “scaled up” certain kinds of land-planning powers in the otherwise fragmented, disjointed, conurbation of “Seattle-Tacoma,” subjecting both municipal and county governments to a new kind of state-directed legal and built-environmental agenda. Mandatory comprehensive planning, in particular, has led to a certain degree of policy convergence across the local governmental landscape, wherein specific planning elements and regulatory tools, such as the regionally coordinated UGB, seem to have forged new horizontal and vertical spaces of regulation where few had previously existed:

The region’s counties and most of its cities have completed their jurisdictional plans, all of which are reviewed and approved for compliance with
the Act. The state of affairs is an important accomplishment in its own
right and unique in the nation (with the exception of Portland, Oregon).
(Vernez-Moudon and Heckman, 2000: 132)

To be sure, not all powers have “scaled up” to Olympia. Concomitantly
reflecting an extant culture of “populism,” the GMA has also left impor-
tant physical-material choices to local communities, a decision that has
arguably further fragmented rather than partly integrated the overall
region both politically and physically. Nowhere is this clearer than
in concurrency policy, where “local autonomy” and the rationalities
of “freedom” have worked against a broader geopolitics of collective
responsibility, both within and between generations. More generally, the
constant refrain of “flexibility” suggests, as in Portland, the considerable
empirical importance of much wider neoliberal rationalities and ways of
thinking about the state’s “spatial presence” in metropolitan society.

That said, the new, always changing, always open, always hybrid, ulti-
mately “multiplex” territorialities of the smart growth paradigm in
Seattle-Tacoma simultaneously reflect rationalities of justice and diver-
sity, rationalities that tend to support spaces of unity and engagement
rather than, for example, geographies of retreat. Aside from its strong
commitments to sustainability principles, for example, the City of
Seattle is searching for ways to occasion and stabilize “urban villages,”
wherein public transit, active civic and political participation, cultural
diversity, and old-fashioned “mixed-uses” à la Jane Jacobs might work
together to coproduce spaces of engagement and even unity, though it is
not always clear how these spaces might relate to one another in actual
places nor how (and when) the local state should assert authority and
when it should step back to allow for spontaneity and “the uses of disor-
der” (Sennett, 1971).

Though rarely seen as the scale of “diversity,” which is too often locked
into neighborhood or community discourses, the PSRC’s interesting
new concept of “regional geographies” champions the long-term possi-
bilities of a connected but still functionally diverse “spatial hierarchy,”
wherein different kinds of communities might perform different kinds of
economic, political, and even cultural roles as part and parcel of the
overall metropolitan-wide effort to improve the form and function of
city-regional life as a whole.

So too are the new territorialities emerging within Seattle-Tacoma
sometimes shaped by equally strong rationalities of nostalgia, particu-
larly where these spatial rationalities of culture intersect with the more
aggressive use of specific kinds of state power. Nowhere is this intersection
more obvious than in recent efforts within Pierce County, as elsewhere in the region and indeed the country, to protect farmland from the bulldozer of the subdivision developer, one of the conflicts discussed in the Alderton-McMillin community planning experience. Eloquent, well-reasoned, discourses combine the warm pathos of cultural loss with the cool logos of soil analyses to persuade public opinion of the desperate need to control growth, deflecting it to other, more appropriate, places. “At stake,” one recent example puts it, “is whether the past and current agriculture-base community [in the Orting Valley] will have a fighting chance or if it will succumb to urban development pressures to convert farmland into houses and shopping and industrial centers” (Kyer and Putney, 2007: B3).

In attempting to control territory in order to direct interactions within specific areas, then, the GMA system within Seattle-Tacoma is cutting right across the familiar political categories of left versus right and authority versus liberty to produce a range of open, eclectic, and perhaps incompatible, urban spaces. Rather than a single kind of “state space,” or a simple layering of authority, where levels of control lie on top of one another, we observe a tangled series of new political arenas that move across scales and places and thus challenge many received imaginaries of state-society realities. On the one hand, we see the steady emergence of a “light” (though not lightweight) region in the PSRC experience, wherein a visual, technical, investment and partly regulatory space now stretches across the otherwise fragmented patchwork of the city-region. On the other hand, we note the definite rise of “heavy” counties now in charge of UGBs and the coordination of population allocation. Unlike most objects, the city-region is both heavy and light, an odd but consequential result.

We further note the strange, possibly counterproductive, inversion of older political spaces and behaviors, particularly where this involves current and future growth policy. The City of Tacoma, long desperate for any kind of growth it could attract its way, has started to hear the soft rumblings of “no-growth,” even as the entire paradigm of smart growth in this and indeed most all other city-regions in the United States is predicated sharply on funneling as much new growth as possible into the city and, more specifically, into growth nodes that might someday support the continued evolution of transit-oriented developments and dynamic, mixed use, sustainable neighborhoods on par with Seattle, Portland, or Vancouver, British Columbia—Tacoma’s bioregional neighbors.

But the obstacles are formidable. These obstacles relate to the “city-like” behavior of Pierce County over several decades, where the aggres-
sive control of peripheral growth (to protect farmland and critical areas, for example) has historically given way to a love of growth and thus to an original fear that the new UGBs would mean “death.” (Better to ensure eighty-years of growth space rather than the twenty years ostensibly required by the GMA process.) Counties acting like cities, welcoming as much growth as possible? Cities acting increasingly like counties, questioning whether the wealth putatively associated with new smart growth policies of mixed-use nodes might actually fill the ever-larger potholes or simply put more daily pressure on residential streets? This suggests a complex rescaling dynamic is now at work.

Specifically, there is evidence that the state has “thinned” somewhat around the smart growth concept of flexibility, at least in the case of Tacoma, where an “economic development culture” that seeks taxable infill has led to a certain measure of regulatory streamlining. The irony here, though, is that this regularity streamlining—so important to New Urbanist dogma—may actually now threaten the local political acceptance of greater land-use intensities in precisely the area where, according to both smart growth and sustainability discourses, it is most needed. Long resistant to forcing developers to offer something interesting in terms of projects or urban design, Tacoma may well find that it is actually creating adverse local political conditions through the flexibility doctrine.

While we might fully expect the development community to demand greater flexibility as well as the streamlining of building codes and site development standards—or the “thinning” of the state’s control over land development—we do not expect this same community to champion the value of “community plans.” And indeed, the development community originally opposed Pierce County’s decision to create “community planning boards” because these new (decentralized) institutions created, in their view, yet another layer of spatial policy description (or spatial democracy) that, in fact, “thickened” the regulatory state’s power vis-à-vis the market not by centralizing power but by doing just the opposite: creating “a new class of citizens” at the decentralized layer of the community. Ultimately, though, they came around, seeing these community plans as a useful way to tie local communities to broader territorial agreements about the need to manage not halt new growth (“Hey look, you’ve got to implement the GMA now. You can’t do whatever you want.”).

Paradoxically, others believe the regional state has not become nearly powerful enough—that the regional state is actually too “thin,” too weak, and too tolerant of local discretion—where “all the ‘shall’ are
becoming ‘shoulds.’” In particular, the discontent of some municipal planners relates to the failure of countywide planning policies to better facilitate the speed of urban infill in cities like Tacoma. City planners worry that they are not keeping pace with the allotted population allocation—and indeed recent permit data bare that out. Cities like Tacoma, while growing, are falling behind their allotted goals. Moreover, while the PSRC can (de-)certify transportation elements within local comprehensive plans, or even point out policy inconsistencies around growth projections, they frequently offer recommendations that are, in truth, ignored by local municipalities. This may have to do with open hostility to being told what to do—but it may also have to do with inadequate local planning capacity, with a thin rather than thick state. As one suburban planner noted, it would be interesting and productive to adopt a TDR program and to improve the municipality’s regional imagination, but that would require another full-time person (or more work for his already overworked staff).

Is the GMA “working?” In a way, this is the wrong question. Or perhaps it is only the start of the right question. The GMA system in Seattle-Tacoma is starting to work as designed. But the problem may well be the design, especially as this relates to temporal issues frequently raised by a number of informants. The share of people living in “compact neighborhoods,” defined as twelve dwelling units per hectare or greater, went up from 21 percent to 25 percent in the first decade of GMA’s implementation (Northwest Environment Watch, 2002). However, the Seattle-Tacoma city-region still required 25 percent more land per resident than did Portland at the same time. In that sense, these two “accomplishments”—preparing and certifying comprehensive plans that are ostensibly integrated across policy and governance scales and that also improve residential densities—may or may not have been related to one another, or perhaps they were related only tangentially. All told, then, the results so far, as one planner put it, do not compel any of us to say “God Bless the GMA.”

Discontent, moreover, is not simply located outside the state; it is not only about the recipients of naked, bureaucratic, state power who fear policy elites scheming to take away their property rights and turn the metropolitan hinterland into a yuppie playground. Discontent is, interestingly enough, also located within the state, expressed eloquently and repeatedly by planners and other public officials who look upon the new system’s institutional and environment handiwork with both angst and regret. Yet there is also hope, often expressed by looking south: “We’re not there yet, but I think we’ll get there in time,” and: “I think some of
the development will look better in twenty years, when we get to point where Portland is.”

Perhaps so, perhaps not. For the “regionalization” of urban policy and planning that many observers think increasingly characterizes (and indeed should characterize) the political geography of subnational economies in both the United States and other societies is more nuanced than might be supposed. In the specific terms of this book: The new political geographies, or territorialities, of smart growth are sometimes thick, sometimes thin; sometimes Left, sometimes Right; sometimes about tradition, sometimes about diversity; sometimes local, and sometimes federal-regional. Rather than a simple administrative march to a “new regionalism” of sustainable settlements, then, we observe what Brenner (2002: 3) has theorized in his attempt to “decode” these institutional experiments as the “place-specific political responses to the new forms of socio-spatial polarization and uneven geographical development that have been crystallizing in US city-regions under conditions of postfordist urban restructuring and neoliberal (national and local) state retrenchment.” For Brenner, that is, all these variegated responses capture a new, “extremely heterogeneous . . . politics of scale,” wherein local state-level and federal actors are all “struggling to adjust” to the new conditions associated with the postindustrial, globalizing economy (ibid.).

Conclusions

Economic and cultural globalization has recently added new kinds of growth dynamics to the older processes of suburbanization and sprawl conurbation within the Seattle-Tacoma region. Edge cities, for example, have formed while the spatial intensity of the “new economy” in and around Seattle in particular has pushed many less-well paid workers into northern Pierce County, where housing is still cheaper. Though uneven, growth pressures have nonetheless characterized both the old central cities and the new suburbs, with opportunities emerging for downtown and neighborhood landscapes, seen, for instance, in the dramatic new developments of Tacoma’s central business district. A new spatial planning regime has therefore coalesced along multiple scales around the shared need to shape these volatile changes, one that emphasizes improved regional coordination of appropriately serviced growth within urban growth boundaries.

Results have been mixed, particularly within Pierce County. That said, the GMA has created something novel—and this, at least is some respects, has likely improved the Seattle-Tacoma region’s institutional
capacity to confront both current and future socio-spatial challenges. The fact that local comprehensive plans within a single city-region contain at least five common policy elements, for example, and that all municipalities and unincorporated areas now plan within a shared regional growth arena contribute to, if nothing else, a new geopolitical and regulatory landscape and territorial form of spatial governance whose long-term prospects, like any new technology, remain underexploited and to some extent largely unknown even to the those who have built it.

Yet we should not privilege time over space; we should not assume that “in time” the politics of space will ease, that success will invariably arrive as the good model of the good region comes more completely into view, as Seattle and Tacoma become more like Portland (which, as shown in chapter 6, has its own problems). Rescaling the spaces of fragmented places around a new set of smart growth promises and practices—around a new paradigm that is itself defined by often contradictory spatial rationalities—has not led and will not lead inexorably to an easy spatial integration over time.

For in the end “space,” as geographers have argued for decades, is not a series of preexisting, malleable containers that, like Russian dolls, easily nest one within another, creating ordered, seamless places where salmon, people, cars, buildings, farmers, developers, homeless children, soils, soccer moms, and mountains might inhabit a balanced “ecology of growth.” All these disparate things do connect; all are bound together in a multiplex city-region. But as Chief Sealth likely knew as well as anyone, living completely in a region as naturally stunning as Seattle-Tacoma is, like life in any ecosystem, a spatial struggle tempered by the parallel needs to collaborate in a fast-changing world.
CHAPTER 8

Greater Baltimore: Hope through Smart Growth and the Geopolitics of Retreat

Their comings and goings in reincarnation do not end; through death and rebirth, they are wasting away.

Sri Guru Granth Sahib

Introduction

In his elegiac collection of essays, *Spaces of Hope*, David Harvey (2000) provides a leading narrative for what he calls “the Baltimore story.” Within Baltimore, he maps the growth of soup kitchens and the decline of economic opportunities for workers and minorities. He also juxtaposes the global vibrancy of Johns Hopkins University, home to one of the country’s finest medical schools, with what amounts to the third-world life expectancies nearby (pp. 133–155). Outside of Baltimore, in the spatial hinterlands of the post–Fordist service economy, he finds only Robert Fishman’s “bourgeois utopias” (figure 8.1):

The affluent (black and white) continue to leave the city in droves . . . seeking solace, security, and jobs in the suburbs . . . The suburbs, edge cities, ex-urbs proliferate (with the aid of massive public subsidies to transport and upper-income housing construction via the mortgage interest tax deduction) in an extraordinarily unecological sprawl . . . Developers offer up this great blight of secure conformity (alleviated, of course, by architectural quotations form Italianate villas and Doric columns) as a panacea for the breakdown and disintegration of urbanity first in the city and then, as the deadly blight spreads, in the inner suburbs. And it is there, in that bland and undistinguished world, that most of the
metropolitan population, like most other Americans who have never had it so good, happily dwell. Residency in this commercialized “bourgeois utopia” . . . anchors the peculiar mix of political conservatism and social libertarianism that is the hallmark of contemporary America. (p. 138)

For Harvey, urban planning as an instrument of territorial management is not irrelevant; but it invariably serves capital, a reading that might
lead us to interpret the policy agenda of urban growth management—smart or otherwise—principally in terms of the necessary “spatial fix” associated with urban restructuring and suburbanized accumulation. In this sense, there is still a kind of “wasting away,” as Granth Sahib observes, even in what appears superficially to be a slow but steady (sub)urban policy restructuring across the city-region since the late 1990s, one of the themes of this chapter.

Harvey supports his critical, mournful narrative of Baltimore by referencing the massive public subsidies spent on hotels, convention centers, condo projects, sports stadiums, and the city’s best-known symbol of popular reincarnation: the inner harbor waterfront. “Every new wave of public investment,” he argues, “is needed to make the last wave pay off” (p. 141). The reduced revenue (uncollected from a fickle and footloose capital) translates into reduced social services for a frightened and frozen underclass. The collapse of the city’s manufacturing base is replaced by a bifurcated service economy that, at the bottom end, appears to require two income earners in working-class households rather than one—but no obvious way to pay for daycare, which makes it harder for these same families to stick together, which makes female-headed households more likely, which makes poverty more entrenched.1

Meanwhile the “bland and undistinguished world” of the city-region’s fast-growing suburban counties in cultural orbit around the central city has steadily captured the state legislature, making it progressively easier for “local” communities to shut out the impoverished and marginalized through physical and legal gates and, furthermore, to set up special tax-assessment districts to keep “their” wealth. “The overall effect is division and fragmentation of the metropolitan space,” he laments (p. 152)—a thousand little geographies of retreat rather than an emerging territory of spatial engagement and unity, as theorized in chapter 3. And the post–Reagan federal state in Washington, D.C., watches from forty miles away, decentralizing welfare and other major social functions of the Keynesian polity built originally by FDR and LBJ as fast as possible. “It is the supreme rationality of the market”—of urban neoliberalism Boomer-style—“rather than the silly irrationality of anything else.” (p. 154).

Yet Harvey’s book, lest we forget, is about hope, about the possible spatialities of other rationalities, including justice and diversity, and the ways that they comingle and battle to shape places, a focus inspired sharply by Lefebvre’s (1991) dialectical approach to the production of space. One such example, for Harvey at least, is the social and political agency associated with Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development
BUILD)—a nonpartisan, interracial, interfaith organization engaged then and now in a local living wage campaign as well as other social justice issues.

But still other spaces emanate directly out of and through the local state, including housing partnerships and social investments suggesting, I shall argue here, that the geopolitics of smart growth in greater Baltimore are more nuanced (and open) than Harvey’s compelling narrative otherwise fully captures (as he himself might hope). In particular, it is not clear that, despite an intense level of socio-spatial and racial fragmentation largely foreign to the Pacific Northwest, all the suburbanites “happily dwell” in uniform pods of commoditized spaces that are in turn encased solidly in a geography of conservative-libertarian retreat. Nor is it clear that the new spaces of planning agency within the City of Baltimore reflect tout court the supreme rationality of the “free” market. While neoliberal landscapes are probably undeniable, other urban spaces—of unity and hope—are also being produced. Those spaces need attention too.

Growth Dynamics in Greater Baltimore

The City of Baltimore perhaps vies with only a handful of other large American communities (Detroit, St Louis, Camden) for the city most shaped by a “near-death” experience but also the poignant, if still precarious, possibility of reincarnation. Portland may well have “only been one restaurant or two above a logging town” in the 1950s (Johnson, 2003: 103); gritty Tacoma may have also lost much of its early promise and economic potential by the late 1960s; even Seattle once fretted nervously in the early post–OPEC years about an “after-Boeing” future (with popular period billboards reading: “Will the last person who leaves Seattle please turn out the lights?”). But all these places, for all of their problems, are located on the increasingly favored West Coast. Whatever local agency has or has not accomplished, demographic trends operating at the national scale have long worked in their favor.

Not so Baltimore. As Cohen (2001) reminds us, between 1950 and 2000, the City of Baltimore, founded in 1729 and incorporated in 1797, experienced what Douglas Rae calls “undercrowding”—a pattern of persistent, absolute population loss—and thus a surplus of “unemployed buildings.” From a peak population of 950,000 in 1950, Baltimore was reduced in size by 31 percent within fifty years; Portland, Seattle, and Tacoma all gained population over the same period of time, albeit slower and more unevenly than their suburban regions. In contrast, almost 300,000
people—about half the population of Vermont—had basically evaporated, leaving this old port city with anywhere between 12,500 and 42,500 abandoned buildings, depending on the definition deployed and who did the counting, at the turn of the new millennium (ibid.).

Over the course of the 1990s, the number of vacant (though not necessarily abandoned) housing units for purchase or rent also increased in many (though not all) of the city’s neighborhoods, with an average increase across all neighborhoods of 56 percent and a median of 74 percent (figure 8.2). Within the context of a shrinking urban population, the white population fell from two-fifths of the city to less than one-third while the black population increased as a proportion of the total (albeit now smaller) population from 59 percent to 64 percent. Overall, though, Baltimore in 2000 had 28 percent fewer whites and 3.9 percent fewer blacks than it did in 1990 (The Hispanic population increased in both absolute and percentage terms, as it did in many urban and rural regions across the United States, but still remained a relatively small percentage of the city’s population base.).

While the 2000 population of the city was 88 percent of the 1990 population, the number of zero to four year olds collapsed by 27 percent, from 57,000 to 41,700. Married families made up barely a quarter of the population while single mothers made up almost a fifth, yet both

![Figure 8.2](image_url)  
**Figure 8.2** Changes in total vacant housing units in Baltimore neighborhoods, 1990–2000.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Change 1990—2000</th>
<th>Baltimore (%)</th>
<th>Anne Arun. Co. (%)</th>
<th>Baltimore Co. (%)</th>
<th>Carroll Co. (%)</th>
<th>Hartford Co. (%)</th>
<th>Howard Co. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>−11.53</td>
<td>14.61</td>
<td>8.98</td>
<td>22.31</td>
<td>20.02</td>
<td>33.84</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total white population</td>
<td>−28.42</td>
<td>8.70</td>
<td>−4.55</td>
<td>21.00</td>
<td>16.68</td>
<td>19.43</td>
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<tr>
<td>[% Change of total population]</td>
<td>−7.46</td>
<td>−4.42</td>
<td>−10.56</td>
<td>−1.03</td>
<td>−2.48</td>
<td>−8.96</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total households</td>
<td>−6.69</td>
<td>19.82</td>
<td>11.78</td>
<td>24.27</td>
<td>26.07</td>
<td>33.09</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total single mothers</td>
<td>−2.62</td>
<td>43.59</td>
<td>48.33</td>
<td>49.14</td>
<td>49.53</td>
<td>64.66</td>
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<tr>
<td>[% Change of total HHs]</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>1.27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total vacant units</td>
<td>56.05</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>34.64</td>
<td>6.95</td>
<td>−34.64</td>
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<tr>
<td>[% Change of total units]</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>−0.72</td>
<td>−0.30</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>−0.71</td>
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<td>Total unemployed</td>
<td>−3.58</td>
<td>11.56</td>
<td>16.64</td>
<td>17.58</td>
<td>7.87</td>
<td>45.58</td>
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<tr>
<td>[% Change of total labor force]</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>−0.03</td>
<td>−0.19</td>
<td>0.37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total white collar</td>
<td>−13.86</td>
<td>14.55</td>
<td>5.09</td>
<td>25.77</td>
<td>23.43</td>
<td>25.35</td>
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<tr>
<td>[% Change of total labor force]</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>1.35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total blue collar</td>
<td>−33.48</td>
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<td>−11.10</td>
<td>−0.80</td>
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<td>3.69</td>
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<tr>
<td>[% Change of total labor force]</td>
<td>−4.40</td>
<td>−2.22</td>
<td>−2.96</td>
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<td>Total college degrees</td>
<td>9.44</td>
<td>47.56</td>
<td>32.16</td>
<td>58.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>[% Change of total population]</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>3.82</td>
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<td>Median HH income ($99)</td>
<td>−4.07</td>
<td>6.48</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>9.58</td>
<td>6.65</td>
<td>7.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Derived from Baltimore Metropolitan Council (2003–2006a, b, c, d, e, f).
categories were smaller as well. (Fewer families, fewer children, including single moms.) In absolute terms, the only kind of household that grew in numbers—and this does represent an important trend—was the one-person household, with 90,000 individuals living alone in 2000 (a figure that represented about one-third of Baltimore’s total households at this time).

This demographic transition reflects economic change. Most dramatically, blue-collar jobs fell by 33 percent in a single decade. White-collar jobs increased their percentage of the smaller overall labor market by roughly 2 percent but, in aggregated terms, these jobs also fell by nearly 14 percent. While the total number of Baltimoreans with college degrees expanded, the precipitous decline in manufacturing jobs probably does as much as anything to explain the fact that median household income fell by more than 4 percent (adjusted in terms of 1999 dollars).

In contrast, household income rose everywhere else in the region over the 1990s, ranging from a low of 3.39 percent in Baltimore County, just north of Baltimore, to a high of 9.58 percent in Carroll County (table 8.1). All these suburban counties also gained white-collar jobs in both aggregate and relative terms, and thus attracted a lot more educated migrants. In fact, Howard and Harford counties both saw absolute gains in blue-collar jobs, something increasingly rare in the United States, although the much faster growth of white-collar jobs meant that the number of blue-collar jobs in these two counties nonetheless fell as a percentage of the overall labor market. (In other words, their economies were both more “white” and more “blue” but relatively “whiter” than “bluer”.) Overall, Carroll and Howard counties had one-quarter more households in 2000 than they did in 1990, while Howard County had one-third more. All these new suburban households drove down local vacancy rates and drove up housing starts.

In particular, Howard County, adjacent to Washington, D.C., attracted a remarkably diverse range of residential migrants searching for greater housing affordability in Maryland. While the total white population increased by nearly a fifth in Howard County during the 1990s, for example, it actual fell by 9 percent as a percentage of the total population. The white population fell relatively in Baltimore County; but it also fell in absolute terms (the only county in the city-region exhibiting this trend).²

To these generic census figures—and they go on and on—could be added dozens of thematic maps that simply reinforce Harvey’s overall picture of socio-spatial fragmentation, economic segregation, and suburban sprawl in the waning decades of the last century. Only a handful of
2000 census tracts in the suburban counties included areas where the percentage of families living below the poverty level exceeded 20 percent; in contrast, too many census tracts within central Baltimore were defined mostly by this reality. Multiple neighborhoods within Baltimore saw median household income decline anywhere between 6 percent and 16.7 percent, whereas the northern regions of Baltimore County and the western regions of Howard County (near DC) saw median household income gains of between 12.6 percent and 30 percent (Baltimore Metropolitan Council, 2007b).

Changes in commuting patterns also reflect the new city-regional reality of the 1990s. Overall suburb-to-suburb commuting within the city-region increased by 24 percent during the 1990s and well over 40 percent for Anne Arundel County alone. The number of workers commuting into the Baltimore city-region from other regions in what amounts to a complex multistate functional arena (Maryland, Virginia, DC, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and even West Virginia) also expanded by more than 40 percent in the 1990s, about twice the increase in the number of Baltimore-area workers who labored elsewhere.

Integration in the form of commuting increased across the entire city-region. For example, Carroll County, located in the northwest part of the region, sent 15,000 workers to nearby Baltimore County but also 3,700 workers to Anne Arundel County in the distant southeast. In addition, Carroll County received substantial numbers of workers from Anne Arundel County—and indeed from all other counties as well as the City of Baltimore. For its part, the City of Baltimore still imported more daily workers than it exported; however, “reverse commuters” from a smaller Baltimore were growing relatively more important, especially to Baltimore County but also to the DC area. While 66 percent of residents of Baltimore worked within the city in 1990, the economic erosion of urban jobs took its toll, reducing this figure to 61 percent a short decade later, a reversal of fortune from the patterns that dominated metropolitan dynamics in the first half of the twentieth century—300,000 people ago—when suburbia was, supposedly, a place of bucolic residence and the city was a dynamic place of work (Beauregard, 2006).

And yet, since 2000, in particular, the City of Baltimore seems to have regained fresh energy and motion, less in absolute demographic terms (so far) than relative to the surrounding urbanized counties and to the brutal past just recounted. Popular discussion of “renewal” is now everywhere (Gately, 2002; cf. Hampson, 2007), though many question, with Harvey, how far the putative reincarnation of Baltimore extends or,
in fact, can extend (cf. Rast, 2006 and Newman and Ashton, 2004). As one observer of Baltimore has recently put it:

Two decades [on], there is substantially more glitter—across the Inner Harbor in Locust Point; eastward along the waterfront in Harbor East and Canton and in parts of downtown. And there are projects such as Frankford Estates in Northeast and Clipper Mill in North Baltimore, plus individual rehabs in neighborhoods across the city, which, while not glitzy, are substantial and important. That is no small feat, and it should not be minimized. But there is still far too much rot. City planners classify nearly a fifth of the city’s residential areas as distressed, based on such factors as sales prices and vacancy rates. The city’s poverty rate has been little changed from the late 1970s to today, with nearly one in five families living below the poverty level. (Siegel, 2007)

Despite these problems, hope for the city still seems resurgent (Mansour, 2001a, b). “In a break with the past,” one public agency reported in 2005, “substantial new development has occurred in the past five years and taken advantage of the opportunities for infill development that vacant properties present” (City of Baltimore, 2006a: 11). Though total population losses have continued into the 2000s, albeit at a slower rate than in precious decades, “it is essential to recognize the impact of household growth . . . on an urban environment. In Baltimore’s case, while population in certain neighborhoods has declined, the number of households in them has increased” (ibid.). The City has now actually run budget surpluses, a new reality attributed to higher-than-expected income tax revenue.

The new trend, which is related to the growth of one-person households discussed earlier, is also exemplified quantitatively in figure 8.3 and table 8.2 below. Figure 8.3 charts the total permitted value of new residential construction between 1998 and 2005 for the City of Baltimore and the five-county functional area that surrounds the city (Anne Arundel County, Baltimore County, Harford County, and Howard County).

While the highly urbanized counties, some of which bleed into the Washington, D.C., area, still capture the lion’s share of new residential growth, it is nonetheless clear from the data that one of the most interesting new developments since 2000 is the strong new residential investments in the City of Baltimore. Table 8.2, while based on a limited period of time, nonetheless further illustrates that the City of Baltimore is attracting proportionately higher amounts of both residential and nonresidential developments in recent years.
What to make of these new trends? How do they relate to Maryland’s well-known smart growth legislation (as outlined in chapter 2 and briefly reprised below)? What is being done with this new development, especially in Baltimore itself, and with what tools and techniques? And most importantly, what types of new tensions and state territorialities is the detailed management of this new growth within the context of this new state legislation now generating? The discussion now considers these overall questions, drawing on but also extending broad themes developed in chapters 6 and 7, particularly where they involve the multiplicity of spatial rationalities shaping this region of the country.

**Smart Growth in Greater Baltimore**

The State of Maryland is today not only wealthy, with the third highest median household income in the United States, but also small, occupying only about 12,400 square miles. Within the context of shrinking household size, the state is also expecting 1.5 million new residents by 2030. This combination is potentially lethal with respect to settlement patterns. In 1973, low-density residential development consumed only about 300 square miles, a figure that jumped to almost 900 square miles by 2002. (While high-density development has also expanded, it represents...
Table 8.2  Residential and commercial construction (permitted value) in Greater Baltimore, 1998–2005

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<tr>
<td>City of Baltimore</td>
<td>26,657,718</td>
<td>104,445,076</td>
<td>151,482,930</td>
<td>468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne Arundel Co.</td>
<td>288,220,528</td>
<td>245,351,298</td>
<td>279,515,932</td>
<td>−3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baltimore Co.</td>
<td>291,333,355</td>
<td>328,866,642</td>
<td>361,824,282</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carroll Co.</td>
<td>134,569,470</td>
<td>137,406,312</td>
<td>132,626,771</td>
<td>−1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harford Co.</td>
<td>193,299,225</td>
<td>277,395,185</td>
<td>345,860,926</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard Co.</td>
<td>214,849,170</td>
<td>272,909,879</td>
<td>325,976,456</td>
<td>52</td>
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Source: Derived from Baltimore Metropolitan Council (2003–2006a, b, c, d, e, f).

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<tr>
<td>City of Baltimore</td>
<td>104,935,326</td>
<td>245,346,865</td>
<td>151,804,451</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne Arundel Co.</td>
<td>131,569,124</td>
<td>191,317,996</td>
<td>125,032,431</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baltimore Co.</td>
<td>110,604,047</td>
<td>121,446,140</td>
<td>110,446,140</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carroll Co.</td>
<td>47,662,874</td>
<td>49,331,052</td>
<td>32,151,000</td>
<td>−15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harford Co.</td>
<td>48,399,087</td>
<td>43,827,373</td>
<td>150,622,391</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard Co.</td>
<td>96,485,610</td>
<td>144,574,999</td>
<td>238,192,509</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Derived from Baltimore Metropolitan Council (2003–2006a, b, c, d, e, f).
less than 1 percent of the land in the state.) Over the same period of history, moreover, Maryland lost over one thousand square miles of forest and agricultural lands (Maryland Department of Planning, 2007b).

Within this shifting land-use context, Maryland’s statewide approach to urban growth management in the 1990s emphasized, as discussed in chapter 2, a spatial strategy that attempts to protect vulnerable forest and agricultural areas from further urban development, particularly lower-density residential development, while stimulating urban areas to receive more intensive development. Though Maryland has built its current system in stages, including an initiative in 1974 that allowed state planners to participate in local land-use discussions, and while the system per se also makes use of many (once unrelated) federal and state initiatives, the key legislation passed in 1997 was, again, built around five main programs: Rural Legacy; Priority Funding Areas (PFAs); Brownfields; Live Near Your Work; and Job Creation Tax Credits.4

The PFAs are the most relevant program for our purposes here, particularly where they intersect with previously established UGBs (figure 8.4). As discussed in chapter 2, PFAs represent one of the most important new management tools in regard to the targeted re-urbanization of long suffering cities such as Baltimore. While UGBs in Oregon and Washington try to seal in growth, PFAs try to entice growth back into urban environments through the strategic use of state money related to funding services as well as regeneration programs such as housing assistance, job creation, historic preservation, and brownfield cleanups.

Both approaches are strongly geographical, with clear spatial statements about where new growth should go. But PFAs deploy the carrot of incentives more than the stick of regulation: “The thrust of the initiative was relatively simple: the use of state financial resources as incentives to alter development behavior” (Frece, 2005: 108-109). This approach is illustrated in figure 8.4. In addition to the City of Baltimore, the periphery around the core city, where so much recent growth has gone, is targeted for priority funding.

In themselves, PFAs do not mean that residential or commercial development will necessarily occur within well-serviced areas anytime soon. In fact, the Maryland Department of Planning, amongst others, notes that many local zoning codes still remain significant obstacles to the successful implementation of the state’s overall strategy, in part because of what they allow and in part because of what they forbid:

Many zoning codes still contain permissive agricultural and rural zoning outside of Priority Funding Areas and still prohibit dense, mixed-use
development inside Priority Funding Areas. Local governments throughout Maryland have either updated their zoning codes or expressed interest in doing so, and the State is working to provide assistance when requested. (Maryland Department of Planning, 2007d: no page number)

So these (and other obstacles) to the full implementation of Maryland’s version of the smart growth paradigm are empirically significant.

Figure 8.4 Priority Funding Areas (PFAs) in Greater Baltimore.
In a 2001 analysis of residential growth outside of PFAs, example, 1000 Friends of Maryland (2001: 2) had already noted that the PFA in Anne Arundel County “is still very loosely drawn” and, because of this fact, “actually acts to expand the range of development spilling over from eastern Howard County.”

In addition to the presence of “conventional” rather than “smart” zoning, the study also found that “Baltimore County can be expected to contain growth within the limits of its Priority Funding Area”—a fact explained by “the county’s strict adherence to the urban/rural demarcation line and strong agricultural zoning” (p. 5). While Baltimore County’s designated growth areas “are typical, car-oriented suburbs that do not fulfill their potential to create attract pedestrian environments” (ibid.), less than one-fifth of building permits issued by the County in 1980 were for multifamily structures, a figure that jumped to almost one-third of all permits in 2003 (HUDUser, 2007).

The PFAs have also effected the investment agenda of the state’s various transportation authorities, including the Maryland Department of Transportation as well as the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (2004, 2006), which is the federally designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Baltimore city-region (Norris and Krautler, 2000). According to Pederson (2002), state transportation funding was directed increasingly to PFAs in the immediate years after passage of the landmark 1997 legislation. Investments in transit expanded from $1.4 billion in the FY 1994–1999 capital program to over $2.5 billion in the 2002–2007 capital program (though a gubernatorial change in 2002 impacted these original commitments).

While state investment also expanded in highways, “significant changes” attended both where and how these monies were spent (ibid.: 95). One example is Access 2000, a program to provide sidewalks along state highways and local streets to improve pedestrian friendliness. Other examples have included new efforts to refocus congestion management on improved intersections rather than on standard highway widening as well as on drainage, sidewalk, and aesthetic and landscaping improvements along highways located in urban and older suburban neighborhoods in need of economic revitalization.

But a more important concern may be the actual implementation of concurrency tools, or adequate public facilities ordinances (APFOs) for transportation and other services. Concurrency/APFO is required by state law in Washington, but not in Maryland (though local governments in Maryland must prepare capital improvement programs as well as revise their comprehensive plans every six years) (National
Center for Smart Growth Research and Education, 2006). However, APFOs are used in most (though not all) Maryland counties and a few cities in tandem with PFAs to ensure the provision of infrastructure and services concurrent with permitted residential, industrial, and/or commercial development. In theory, APFOs anywhere applied will link capital improvement programs with land use, transit, and environmental planning. In Maryland practice, though, as one recent study argued,

while there are some positive aspects of APFO implementation in many of the 12 counties [studied], . . . overall there are problems with: (1) inappropriate use (i.e., over-reliance on the APFO as a planning tool), (2) inconsistent standards, and (3) unintended consequences. (National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education, 2006: 14)

As in Washington State and Florida, inadequate funding has been a common theme, especially with major state budget cuts passed after 2002. But other problems identified by the study include the “over-reliance” on this single tool rather than its appropriate coordination with other planning tools; the use of building moratoria in some school service areas “even when there is more than adequate capacity in adjacent school districts” (cf. Bento, 2006); and finally their application in ways “that often deflect development away from the very areas designated for growth in county plans to other counties, other states, and often to rural areas never intended for growth” (National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education, 2006: 15).

Aside from deflecting development away from well-serviced locations, these flaws in actual APFO implementation may work regressively with deeply held NIMBY attitudes, resulting in a powerful constellation of extant geopolitical forces working against more compact development patterns (National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education, 2005). These problems (and others not discussed here, such as uneven gubernatorial leadership and competence) also illustrate the outer limits of using the “power of the state budget as an incentive for smart growth,” as Knaap and Frece (2007: 43) have repeatedly argued (cf. Cohen, 2002; Shen and Zhang, 2007; Howland and Sohn, 2007). Accordingly, “while the idea that the state should not underwrite urban sprawl remains a valid concept,” they reason,

the hope that the state budget could be used to curtail urban sprawl has not been fulfilled. [ . . . ] It is unlikely that the targeting or removal of state
subsidies alone will ever have a significant effect on sprawl without com-
plementary land use plans and regulations. (Knaap and Frece, 2007: 43)

Ultimately, Knaap and Frece posit that, to improve the overall system
in Maryland, PFAs should be turned into regional UGBs, which they
believe are more effective urban containment tools, while the state
should also strengthen state financial support for and regulatory over-
sight of local infrastructure planning and finance. “State incentives
are either too small or are poorly suited to the situation,” Knaap and
Schmidt-Perkins (2006: no page number) additionally reason, “to have
major impacts on land development trends, especially without support-
ive regulatory policies at the local level.”

The presence of such policies, though, is often locally decisive. For
example, Baltimore County, whose PFA literally “overlays” a much older
UGB, has received more sanguine evaluations and positive assessments
in recent years, not only from advocacy and consultancy groups (1000
Friends of Maryland, 2001; Duerksen and Snyder, 2005) but also from
state planning agencies within Maryland (Maryland Office of Planning,
1995) as well as local journalists (Sears, 2007). This suggests the impor-
tance of understanding how more recent spatial policies conceived at the
scale of the state intersect (in complex and contingent ways) with older
efforts at the local level to create specific environmental outcomes. That
is to say, it suggests the importance of “local physical, socioeconomic,
and political environments in influencing the pace and patterns of urban
development” (Shen and Zhang, 2007: 1457). For place, history, and
current growth trends all matter (Howland and Sohn, 2007).

Baltimore County’s forty-year-old UGB, known locally as the Urban-
Rural Demarcation Line (URDL), includes urbanized land around the
City of Baltimore as well as undeveloped areas where growth is currently
expected; rural and agricultural land in the County is located well
beyond the URDL (Maryland Office of Planning, 1995: 9-10) and, by
and large, has been well protected. In addition to the use of agricultural
downzoning, the County has built on a tradition of purchasing ease-
mants that dates back to the 1970s but was expanded through state and
county PDR programs in the 1990s. Four major “rural legacy areas” have
been established. Indeed, the County’s Master Plan communicates the
ideal geography of smart growth as the coordinated separation of rural
and urban spaces, in large part as the product of these various planning
tools.

Though the URDL is crudely managed in some respects, lacking the
detailed attention and scientific analysis we observe in, for instance,
Metro Portland and to a far lesser extent Seattle-Tacoma, the combination of various tools (e.g., URDL, PFAs, master and subareas plans, rural legacy and rural zoning, APFOS, form-based codes) as well as the political and administrative commitment to their use (and reform) over long periods of time seems to have made a major policy (and spatial) difference within the broader city-region. “More than any other county,” one evaluation has argued,

Baltimore County can be expected to contain growth within the limits of its Priority funding Area. Although the PFA is still a very large percentage of the county’s land area, the county’s strict adherence to the [URDL] and strong agricultural zoning have made Baltimore County a model for how to keep new growth out of rural areas. Over the next twenty years, development is expected to consume a smaller amount of rural land outside the PFA than in any other county. (1000 Friends of Maryland, 2001: 5)

“We were ready for the [state] infrastructure money that came with the new PFAs, we just scooped it up, no problem,” as one Baltimore County planner put it, “because everything was already in place. We had the URDL so we were already spending money inside the line. And we had this planning philosophy on [directing] growth for a long time, so it was easy for us to use the PFA dollars.” Other counties, such as Carroll County, “struggled a lot more” with the new smart growth policies of the 1990s, “though they are coming on board now. Some of the decisions they made [over the years] were not too “smart,” like on water and sewer-age. But the state dollars are impacting them.” As another planner put it:

Carroll County and Harford have been the real “problem counties” [in the region]—but in the last 5–8 years they seem to have changed. They were really running rough-shod for years, but then in Carroll County they voted in a smart growth county council. That was a pretty big change.

In addition to the continued use of the URDL, Baltimore County’s master plan (Baltimore County, 2000) anticipates further dynamism in key “Growth Areas,” such as Owings Mills and Perry Hall-White Marsh, two large nodes targeted in the late 1970s, as “self-sustaining” communities with housing, employment, and a full range of services clustered around strong commercial-employments cores.

Seen as a direct response to low-density suburban sprawl, these two nodes are set to generate a significant share of the county’s future economic and employment growth (Baltimore County, 2000: 172). Owings Mills was connected to the region’s subway line in 1987, a fact that has
arguably stimulated recent mixed-use projects such as the $220 million Owning Mills Town Center initiative (Mosher, 2005). This new project may help to address the extant problem of “typical, car-oriented suburbs that do not fulfill their potential to create attract pedestrian environments” (op. cit.).

More generally, the potential of TODs in the city-region is enormous, particularly in regard to future light-rail-supported nodes. After investing heavily in a single subway line (Metro) that currently connects the Johns Hopkins medical complex in the heart of the City of Baltimore with Owens Mills located in Baltimore County—a transit line which some locals see as a poorly conceived response to nearby Washington DC’s extensive subway system—the region largely moved to light-rail in the 1990s, building a major line running north-south between 1992 and 1997. While many of the stations along this line, which presently runs city-regionally from Baltimore County to Anne Arundel County, function more as park-and-ride complexes for commuters, other stations, particularly within the city, appear to have attracted significant commercial and residential investments.

But extending smart transit systems from urban zones into suburban areas has not always been easy. Some original stations on the light-rail line had to be scuttled because, as one planner mockingly reported, “people [out in the suburban counties] said, you know, gangs would come in on the rail line from Baltimore, rob their houses, and get back on the train with their TV sets!” This comment, meant to underscore the general irrationality and illogical nature of this deeper fear, nonetheless highlights the enormity of race as a major structuring variable, not only in terms of the City of Baltimore’s long-term renaissance, but also in terms of the prospects for greater regional cooperation around, for example, land-use/transit investments.

But race, as important as it is, sometimes melds with new class identities. As part of its initial community outreach efforts on proposed investments in the region’s new “red line,” which is set to run in an east-west direction, one county planner reported that recently suburbanized black households were just as likely to resist transit stops in their neighborhoods as were whites:

“We’ve been doing outreach on that and what we hear is: ‘Mass transit? Absolutely not in my neighborhood.’ ” In African American communities [in the County] you hear, you know, “hey, we moved out here; we’ve made it; we don’t want that.”

However, this same planner thought some of this resistance could be overcome through “education” and the more extensive use of design
charettes and other community-based planning techniques. In fact, the more extensive use of charettes is part of a larger effort in Baltimore County to reform “out-dated, 1970s” zoning codes with “form-based codes,” a relatively new initiative it shares with the City of Baltimore. “We’ve used it in the Towson [town center] community planning and have gotten 200 people to these meetings.”

Where else might advocates of smart growth find hope? Paradoxically perhaps back in Harvey’s City of Baltimore, where tools such as APFOs are redundant because the city was built up to hold, after all, a much larger population and where, in recent years, the City has passed an inclusionary housing ordinance and has furthermore initiated a twenty-year, 400-mile-long integrated bicycle network (Fuller, 2006). Following the data presented earlier, considerable central-city reinvestment has occurred since the last census, particularly in housing units.

However, this raises two crucial questions. First, does this have anything to do with Maryland’s state growth management program, including not simply tools like PFAs but also other urban strategies discussed below? Second, even if it does, what kind of growth is the city now experiencing? Put another way, how has the smart growth paradigm shaped the local management of this new growth—and in whose interests?

The first question is difficult to answer definitively, not least due to the surprising paucity of research on the topic (cf. Talen, 2003). On the one hand, central-city revitalization is widespread, occurring in states with but also without strong land-use planning regimes that seek explicitly to limit suburban sprawl and refocus urban development (see Birch, 2007; cf. Kline, 2000). This general revalorization of core areas likely relates to a complex array of factors, including not only the demographic changes discussed earlier but also shifts in attitudes toward quality of life, commuting stress, as well as broader geographical restructuring within globalized city-regions (Hall, 1997; Scott, 2001a, b). Moreover, as Hackworth (2005) demonstrates, the revalorization of central cities such as Baltimore does not necessarily lead to a parallel de-valorization of new suburban areas on the metropolitan fringe.

On the other hand, Casey and Nelson (2003) have shown in a national study of metropolitan areas, using statistically controlled data from 1980 to 1998, that the presence of a state growth management program does have a significant impact on the share of new metropolitan residential construction attracted to primary central cities (as well as Portland, Seattle, Tacoma, etc.). Though their study focuses mainly on the rise of urban housing investments (rather than on the effects on people), they conclude that demonstrably higher shares of residential
construction “suggest that state growth management programs may have the potential to contribute to a comprehensive strategy of central-city revitalization” (p. 393).

What has Baltimore made of this potential? A “comprehensive strategy of central-city revitalization”—one of the Big Promises of the smart growth paradigm—means more than simply removing unpleasant regulatory barriers to capital or securing the city for yuppies and tourists (though both seem part and parcel of urban smart growth, of which more in a moment). Where socially progressive, it also means looking beyond the “glitter” into the “rot,” linking economy with society and ultimately with environment, that is, sustainability. In Newman’s (2004: 36) view, it means looking beyond the increasingly obvious “transformation of the urban façade” we now see in many older cities such as Baltimore to explore the “real costs of urban revitalization.” It means, as one Baltimore planner succinctly put it, “planning for poverty.”

Both single-family and multifamily housing in Baltimore have recovered substantially since 2000, after a steep decline in the 1990s, with permits for multifamily about the same as those issued for single-family units (See http://socds.huduser.org/permits/index.html.). However, both single-family and multifamily investments may simply be part of an overall policy effort to attract the middle and upper classes back to the city rather than lift up those in poverty—to plan for hoped-for people rather than for actually existing residents (Keating and Krumholtz, 1991). The social and policy geography of Baltimore certainly reflects these challenges. The downtown and inner-harbor areas, where considerable reinvestment has occurred of late, are surrounded almost completely by a ring of public housing projects, which are themselves embedded in a broader zone of urban renewal initiatives—a veritable palimpsest of twentieth-century U.S. urban policy.

Central to the overall challenge, then, is spreading investments spatially and linking improved tax revenues to affordable housing and transit choice. “While the city center and waterfront neighborhoods are experiencing increased investment,” the Planning Department worries, “the neighborhoods within a 3 to 5 mile radius of the city center have continued to see disinvestment” (City of Baltimore, 2006a: 12). This is possibly one reason why, as one Baltimore planner put it, “There was a sense that we were supposed to benefit from the PFAs—but I’m not sure about the reality.”

Nonetheless, the state’s overall smart growth paradigm has influenced the contemporary approach to this challenge. Baltimore’s conceptualization of urban smart growth is reflected in its new comprehensive plan
(titled “Live, Earn, Play, Learn”) and in documents explaining the spatial rationalities of this new plan (City of Baltimore, 2006a, b, d). Here thematic and policy emphasis is placed on the imagination and implementation of “sustainable redevelopment in an urban context” (City of Baltimore, 2006a: 8). In part, this involves the targeted liberalization of the city’s regulatory powers, including substantial reforms to the zoning code. In its section on implementation, for example, the new comprehensive plan—with the admittedly neoliberal subtitle, “A Business Plan for a World-Class City”—calls for changes that cohere with both the smart growth paradigm’s strong emphasis of improved regulatory flexibility as well the New Urbanist mantra of form-based codes (City of Baltimore, 2006d: 163):

- **Ease of use**—A new zoning code should be as brief and user-friendly as possible and should work seamlessly with the new electronic zoning maps.
- **Flexibility**—Flexibility should be the key factor to consider when revising the zoning code in order to reflect and respect historic patterns in Baltimore while providing flexibility for contemporary development and design solutions.
- **Design standards**—A new Zoning Code should include form-based approaches and design standards that offer opportunities to neighborhoods and reflect the variety of existing building types.

However, the plan also calls for dramatic zoning and construction reforms to promote sustainability through further transit investments, such as:

- **Parking standards**—Parking standards need to be completely rewritten to encourage transit oriented developments and reduce auto dependency.

The new bike plan is part of a broader sustainability initiative that now includes the future establishment of a “sustainability coordinator” who will work closely with the Mayor’s office. In addition, land-use policies relating directly to the state’s overall smart growth program call for the more aggressive targeting of new urban growth within specific neighborhoods, in part through public investments, such as more transit stops, as well as the development of subarea plans and the further refinement of regulatory tools.5 “While it is our goal to promote the entire City,” the comprehensive plan states,
there are many areas with naturally strong markets where development moves forward with only limited City intervention. However, there are other areas where the City needs substantially more resources to effect lasting change to the real estate market. This Plan recommends further refining the City by designating Growth Promotion Areas (GPA) to provide us with specific areas within the City to strategically attract additional resources and capital to capture a substantial part of future State growth.

GPAs—growth areas within growth areas—are urban spaces marked by distinct socioeconomic and material features, including not simply adequate infrastructure capacity but also 20 percent or greater vacant housing stock and/or land as well as demonstrable capacity for TOD.

All these features of contemporary spatial planning policy, it might be argued, suggest that, whatever the profound obstacles involved, the City of Baltimore is thinking fairly hard about how to link new economic growth to both social and ecological rationalities—that is to say, thinking about how to link New Urbanism, smart growth, and sustainability to higher scale policy imperatives and agendas while also building on decades of urban policy experiments across the city. But is this argument more than “a defense of utopian thinking” (Friedmann, 2000)—or is it, in contrast, the “propaganda” and “self-deception” that urbanists of different theoretical stripes frequently associate with specific visions of the good city (Pinder, 2002; Amin, 2005)?

Race and the Precarious Territorialities of Unity

The new territorialities of the smart growth paradigm as it has slowly embedded itself in recent years within Metropolitan Baltimore do share many common characteristics with the territorialities already mapped in the previous cases of Metropolitan Portland and Seattle-Tacoma. In terms of growth trends alone, for example, continued problems associated with spatial decentralization (sprawl) and economic globalization (inequality) mark each community. Moreover, all three local cases owe much to the nonlocal politics of state legislatures and, in Oregon and Maryland especially, the original support of visionary governors.

Even more to the point, recent policy efforts to manage contemporary growth dynamics across the otherwise fragmented political patchwork of these city-regions each reflects the notable impact of a diverse range of spatial rationalities, from freedom and flexibility—always flexibility—that call for the targeted “roll back” of the overbearing local state to
equally strong calls for tradition via, for instance, historic preservation policies that necessarily “pull in” the state’s regulatory powers over the creative destruction of markets entirely free of inherent nostalgia but driven exclusively by profit.

It is admittedly difficult, to be sure, to look beyond the brutal spaces of retreat in the present case in order to find (and take solace in) the nascent spaces of unity that Harvey and others seek to locate within (but mostly outside) the restructuring capitalist state at various scales. Much of the City of Baltimore quite simply looks like it has gone through war, as indeed, in an economic sense, it almost has. And like a weary soldier who has lost an arm or a leg, it is hard to imagine a full recovery of the city’s soul after the vibrant life-blood of 300,000 people has slowly drained away. Much of what is new in Baltimore feels like prosthetics: good to have, of course, but somehow no substitute for what was lost. So while the casual observer might (just) get away with “resisting the reality of race” (Goldsmith, 2000) in Portland or even in Seattle-Tacoma, both still overwhelmingly white places, the race question—the question at the very core of the American experience—is also at the very core of Harvey’s Baltimore story.

Race permeates not simply the reality of spatial retreat but also the discourses of tradition and diversity to say nothing of engagement and justice as well as the broader search for an urban version of smart growth that aggressively champions sustainability projects and values. To talk about smart growth, to do smart growth, in Metropolitan Baltimore is to engage with race (cf. Marcuse, 1996). The precise geography of the region’s relatively new light-rail system, for example, owes a great deal to race imaginaries, to discourses of gangs in search of TVs to steal, even as this rail line is simultaneously one of the most obvious manifestations of regional thinking and city-suburban interrelations.

The same racial imaginary also likely works against the Baltimore Metropolitan Council, the region’s designated MPO, from being as politically and territorially significant as, for example, the PSRC to say nothing of the well-documented role of Portland’s Metro. Since its dramatic reformulation in 1992, Norris and Krautler (2000) argue that, in fact, the Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC) has been a more effective institution than its predecessor, the Baltimore Regional Council of Governments. In this sense, regionalism is gaining relative strength. In their view, this strength relates in large part to the political “structure” of the BMC, a private nonprofit corporation established by the state legislature that is controlled directly by the mayor of Baltimore and the elected executives of the five surrounding counties. Thus by the mid-1990s, the
BMC went from “planning to doing,” a development strengthened by the new transportation policies of ISTEA and later TEA-21.6 “As the MPO for the region,” Norris and Krautler (2000: 111) note, “the BMC (and hence the executives) have considerable influence in the allocation of transportation funds for the region.”

But the efficacy of the links to local land-use planning, particularly around TOD and other smart growth ideals, are less obvious. “They exist,” one local planner acknowledged, “but [the transit-land use nexus] has not really been thought through that rationally.” Again, race is a factor: “The line between the City [of Baltimore] and Baltimore County is more than just a line,” another official noted, “it’s part of people’s identity out here.”

For scholars of spatial planning, urban policy, and racial segregation in metropolitan America, race places a specific kind of burden on the smart growth paradigm: “To what extent,” William Goldsmith (2000: 20) has asked, “can versions of the new package of ideas actively support social change? Under what circumstances will these new programs [of transit-oriented development, mixed-use zoning and city infill] provide the means to the broader goal, a real alternative to the racially organized, exclusionary metropolis?” (cf. Bullard, 2007). Though complementary of Maryland’s “pro-city” policies, in general, and former Governor Paris Glendening’s metropolitan vision, in particular, Goldsmith finds little reason to except too much from the smart growth agenda in Metropolitan Baltimore. “Unfortunately,” he concludes, “resistance to the program is greatest in one of the places where it matters most—in the suburbs of Baltimore.”

There is truth in this statement. According to local planners, for example, there has been recent pressure to “downzone” land that lies within Baltimore County’s URDL, a development that would not only work against the full potential of regional TDR programs designed to protect farms and forests outside the urban core but that would also work against multifamily housing and transit-supportive environments. Moreover, even where PFAs are in place, some city planners question whether or not adequate new growth has followed directly in the policy wake of prioritized spending (e.g., “There was a sense that we were supposed to benefit from the PFAs, but I’m not sure about the reality.”).

At the same, there is also evidence that the active, even virulent, “resistance” Goldsmith is most concerned with has weakened in other key respects, such as in the surprise election of a “smart growth” council in Carroll County. This political change does not mean, of course, that this otherwise relatively conservative, Republican-oriented area will “open up the suburbs” (Downs, 1973) to the minority workers of inner-city
Baltimore through, for example, more active affordable housing strategies or job training and transit programs. But it does suggest, for a third time in this book, that the actual emplacement of smart growth is reflective of a range of contending spatial rationalities, progressive and regressive, rather than all one or all the other, and that it is still open and evolving and thus politically malleable.

Accordingly, new unity might well be located in the territorial efforts to support new urban sustainability initiatives, such as the integrated bike plan in the City of Baltimore, or in the plan to hire a new sustainability coordinator, or in the Growth Promotion Areas located within the most deprived, “war-torn” communities of the city. Unity might be found in the City of Baltimore’s Project 5000 (“P5K”), which aims to acquire and return 5,000 vacant and abandoned properties to productive use, a concrete “smart growth initiative” now amplifying and giving new direction and energy to parallel efforts at neighborhood renewal, such as the Reservoir Hill Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative or EBDI, “a broad urban renewal effort in East Baltimore, where more than 1,000 properties were acquired and offered through Project 5000” (City of Baltimore, 2006a: 13).

Finally, new unity might just be found in the ability of Baltimore County, whatever identity lines exist to divide and fragment metropolitan space, to “scoop up” the state’s PFA allocations as designed even as it builds on an older, generally quite successful, planning tradition long focused on protecting open space and conserving forestlands from the suburban sprawl machine. As discussed in chapter 4, these peripheral goals of urban growth management matter too.

But hovering above all these relatively little achievements—these painfully ordinary, at times prosaic, “spaces of hope”—is the simple demographic and statistical fact that, for all its many problems, the City of Baltimore seems to have stopped the bleeding and thus has staved off what for a long time looked like a slow, diseased death. If a just rebirth is some ways off, if the city’s reincarnation around something smartly designed and sustainably lived, is still “precarious,” as multiple local planners repeatedly put it, the new territorialities of spatial planning policy and development practice in and around the city are at least contending with an older geography of retreat. Baltimore is no longer wasting away.

**Conclusions**

Maryland’s approach to urban growth management is now synonymous with the smart growth paradigm, in general, and the spatial rationalities
that justify greater policy “flexibility” and financial “incentives” rather than top-down legal “sticks,” in particular. The approach to urban growth management in Metropolitan Baltimore is therefore different in key respects from, say, Portland’s more “successful” approach, which, conceived a long generation ago, still reflects much stronger state and regional control over local land use, transportation, and other planning arenas than seemed possible to state legislatures in the so-called “neoliberal nineties” (Mukherjee, 2006). Interestingly, pre-smart growth era strategies and policy commitments to less trendy “growth management,” such as Baltimore County’s forty-year old URDL, have provided a usable foundation upon which to construct more recent ideas, such as form-based codes, rural legacy programs, and TOD schemes.

Back in the City of Baltimore, the smart growth paradigm for urban growth management has also provided a new philosophical and conceptual framework for the latest comprehensive plan even as the very fabric of the city, ranging from historic lines of row housing to dense transit corridors and mixed-use neighborhoods, directly provides the overall paradigm with considerable built-environmental inspiration. But the city also exhibits, as one planning document puts it, “obsolete zoning” (City of Baltimore, 2006c: 7). The recent turn to urban sustainability and the new links to New Urbanist design concepts, such as form-based codes to replace the “obsolete zoning,” are thus notable examples of how the ideal spaces of the smart growth paradigm—the spaces that provide a new kind of hope through a new kind of urban imaginary—are presently acting in very concrete ways upon the regulatory and material landscape across the city-region.

If this urban imaginary in Metropolitan Baltimore is shaped, as in Portland and Seattle-Tacoma, by multiple, often contending, even contradictory, spatial rationalities, as I once again argue here, it is also shaped by broader social factors that strike the outside observer as much more locally significant, in particular the enormous challenge posed by race relations. In this sense, there are certainly a number of key similarities with the other case studies, especially in regard to the kinds of normative planning goals being pursued, but the differences and contingencies are equally important to underscore.

All urban imaginaries, including the smart growth imaginary, include utopian aspirations, which, in turn, promise to deliver the “good city” (Amin, 2006). Harvey’s *Spaces of Hope* is, in fact, a book about utopian thinking, about contemporary urbanism and the search for justice as much as any other theme, with the Baltimore story as an important part
of his analysis. In the past, utopian thinking, particularly in planning studies, has tended toward an over-confident authoritarianism, wherein the old problems of history might be solved by the new solutions of geography (as if space could stop time). As discussed in chapter 2, there are elements of this tendency in smart growth, both as a paradigm and set of spatial practices. We know now what to do if only we were allowed to do it.

All this has been easy fodder for right-wing liberals such as Fredrick Hayek and Milton Freidman, and to some extent, left-wing advocates of urban diversity and cultural engagement like Jane Jacobs. However, as David Pinder (2002: 237) suggests, utopian thinking (and thus urban imaginaries for the United States like smart growth, which reflect and absorb these critiques) should not be wholly abandoned, a development that for him leads to “a closing down of imaginative horizons of critical thinking and even a slide into a reactionary acquiescence to dominant understandings of cities.”

In this sense, the contradictory, multiplex, heterodox nature of both the promises and practices of smart growth—as well as the range of geopolitical tensions it is generating in this place—may not be a bad thing. Ultimately, that is, too much consensus and harmony may be deadening to innovation, an entirely false sign that utopia is easily built and attained, that planning history has finally reached its “useable future.” As Carl Abbott (1997: 37-38) argued in his prescient mid-1990s analysis of Portland’s changing fortunes:

Consensual politics leave little room for dissent. For they assume basic agreement on community goals. With all its virtues, the Portland style tends to muffle radically dissenting voices. Although advocates of the Portland consensus would disagree, it is possible that a pattern of co-optation stifles a serious hearing of good ideas by whittling away at genuine alternatives until they fit the mold. [. . . ] [Yet] unheeded voices are the seeds of political revolution.

In so far as there is less consensus in what is a much more traumatized place like Metropolitan Baltimore, presumed weaknesses may someday turn out to be presumptive strengths. For the “good city,” as Ash Amin (2006: 1009) writes, reflects not so much the lockstep implantation of already-imagined models of a perfect world but, instead, a capacity to generate “newness that arises from spatial proximity and global flow and connectivity, forever forcing responses of varying type and intensity in
the face of negotiating strangers, strangeness and continuous change.” Patrick Geddes might have said something like this. Smart growth’s inherent hybridity and built-in tensions, which reflect the dialectics of spatial desires and critiques made over the course of urban planning’s long search for improved urban form, may therefore yet flower as brightly in Baltimore as anywhere else in the country.
CHAPTER 9

Madison-Dane County: Regionalizing the Progressive Tradition?

Madison may be so developed as to establish a new standard for city making in the United States.

John Nolan (1911)

Introduction

Boosters for the City of Madison beat out rivals in Green Bay, Mineral Point, and Milwaukee to become the capital of the new Territory of Wisconsin in 1836. As John Nolan noted in his plan for the city published in 1911, many of the arguments for selecting Madison were entirely logical. Madison was, for example, “centrally situated between Lake Michigan and the Mississippi River [and] it would be a reasonable compromise between the conflicting interests of Green Bay and the mining section of Wisconsin; [moreover] its selection would tend to develop the still wild interior” (p. 22). But Nolan well knew that there were also more base motives: “Madison’s claims were strongly supported by Judge James Duane Doty, an influential politician and the owner of the proposed site” (ibid.).

Whether founded through reason or power or both, Nolan nonetheless thought Madison possessed enormous potential as a site for what he called “a new standard for city making.” Located along the isthmus of two main lakes, Madison benefited from natural features, for him, reminiscent of Geneva, Switzerland. A political seat and a pleasant place to live, Madison was also home to a large and growing state university. In combination, these various features might allow the city to create, with proper planning, its own “individuality”: 
As a Capital City, Madison should possess dignity and even some restrained splendor; as a University City it should manifest a love of learning, culture, art, and nature; as a residence city it should be homelike, convenient, healthful and possess ample facilities for wholesome recreation. Fortunately, much of the opportunity in all three directions still stands open and it is one of the main purposes of this [plan] to show how the natural and adequate provision for the improvement of Madison will lead to a direct development of its individuality as a city. (ibid.)

Nolan recommended seventeen major interventions, including new laws to improve the public’s control over private buildings, street widening programs, parks planning, improved public use of lakefronts, marshland reclamation, and new methods for controlling land subdivisions. But his plan called for a good deal more than ornamentation and beautification. It called for “methods of improving the housing of people of small means” and for “the [improved] co-operation of the State, the railroads, private individuals and the city” (ibid.). All this represented an expansion in state power that, while commensurate with the ethos and optimism of the Progressive Era, nonetheless bordered on a new philosophy of urban political economy. Perhaps sensing this, Nolan ended his “report”—now one of the classic urban statements in American planning history—by embedding these reforms firmly within a more familiar liberal discourse that championed the extant ideology of U.S.-style competition:

More than fifty cities in the United States have begun comprehensive improvements on a large scale and Madison cannot hold even its present place by present methods. Cities are as definitely in competition as individuals and a new standard of city making has been set. Any city which hopes to advance must accept this new standard and find ways and means to apply it to local conditions. (p. 145)

This odd (but now familiar) mix of increased state power over the dynamics of urban growth and spatial development—the search for a new standard of city making—tempered by a broader ideological discourse of liberalism and competition remains visible in the contemporary smart growth era, albeit updated to include not simply the City of Madison but also the urbanized territory across Dane County and increasingly beyond. And so, the State of Wisconsin, long associated with policy innovations such as worker’s compensation and the progressive income tax, and with reformist and even radical politicians such as Robert “Fighting Bob” La Follette and Robert Ziegler, the last socialist
mayor of Milwaukee, seeks to recover its once radically innovative reputation in urban planning history. Tempered by more regressive tendencies, and conflict-laden as in all other city-regions, Madison-Dane County nonetheless at least demonstrates the ongoing possibilities of regionalizing a local progressive tradition, where new geographies of unity and engagement might be forged over time even as parallel discourses of nostalgia and freedom also compete for political resources.

Growth Dynamics in Madison-Dane County

Until 1970, demographic growth in the City of Madison and Dane County grew in tandem with one another (figure 9.1). Unlike Baltimore, that is, the City of Madison grew a healthy 68 percent during the 1960s and 1970s, while Dane County grew by about 62 percent. The postwar expansion of higher education and the growing economic impact of the high-profile research university both had their effects. From a base population of only 96,000 in 1950, Madison had reached 171,000 people by 1970, but then just as suddenly proceeded to lose more than 1 percent of its base population over the next ten years—the only decade of absolute population decline before or since (DCDPD/DCRPC, 2005c).

The demographic stagnation of Madison during the 1970s, mirrored in Seattle-Tacoma, invariably slowed regional growth; however Dane County still expanded its overall population during the 1970s by more than 11 percent (one-third its rate in the 1960s but still significant evidence of spatial decentralization through suburbanization). By 2000, less than half of all Dane County residents actually lived within the City of Madison, down from a peak of 57 percent only a few decades earlier (DCDPD/DCRPC, 2005c). By the end of the twentieth century, moreover, growth in both the City and County was driven as much by migrants as natural increase—while the white population in both City and County grew relatively slower than the African American, Asian, and Hispanic populations. Interestingly, the suburbanization of African Americans over the 1990s was particularly noteworthy. Whereas 78 percent of all blacks lived within the City of Madison in 1990, this figure fell to 71 percent in 2000.

In the opening years of the twenty-first century, Dane County’s overall rate of population growth was a crisp 7.4 percent—far outpacing the U.S. average of 4.9 percent over the same period of time and, perhaps more importantly, the lower rate of 4.0 percent for the State of Wisconsin as a whole (where many rural counties suffer from out-migration and relatively low labor-force participation rates). Of the county’s sixty-one
general-purpose municipalities, including the tiny Village of Rockdale (with a population of only 210 in 2004), as well as the City of Madison, which topped 218,000 the same year, only six communities actually lost population between 2000 and 2004.⁰
However, in 2005, four municipalities—Madison, Fitchburg, Sun Prairie, and Verona—housed more than 60 percent of the county’s total population of just under 460,000. In only five years, these four municipalities gained 21,665 people, about 68 percent of the county’s total population gain (State of Wisconsin, 2005). Indeed, the Cities of Verona and Fitchburg, located just south of Madison, both grew by nearly one-third during the 1990s, followed closely by the Town of Sun Prairie, located to the northeast, which expanded its local population by a quarter; for its part, Madison grew a comparatively slower but still healthy 9 percent during the 1990s (DCDPD/DCRPC, 2005c).

Figure 9.2 below charts the overall shift in population by type of community since 1970. While the City of Madison has remained demographically and economically dominant, it has also steadily lost its overall share of the county’s population. Small towns within metropolitan regions appear increasingly favored by many residents, but the real growth is in classic suburban cities and nearby communities pulled into the metropolitan economy that either house or are located near job clusters and cultural and commercial services. Future growth for the USAs around communities such as Verona is expected to increase from 9,300 in 2005 to over 15,000 in 2030; similar rates of increase are also expected for Waunakee and Sun Prairie (DCDPD/DCRPC, 2006).
Unsurprisingly, Dane County’s labor force participation rate has long exceeded both statewide and national rates (State of Wisconsin, 2005). The structurally stable State of Wisconsin, including UW-Madison, employed 41,000 people in 2004 (DCDPD/DCRPC, 2005d). In 2005, the education sector alone employed nearly 32,000 people. Other important employers included professional services (15,000) health care/hospital staff (13,000); ambulatory health care workers (11,000 jobs); nursing and residential caregivers (6,700); assistance workers (5,958); retail (31,000); wholesale (10,600); transportation and warehousing (8,300); and administrative and support services (12,000) (DCDPD/DCRPC, 2005a).

Dane County firms collectively paid wages nearly 10 percent higher than the statewide average; reflecting the City of Madison’s strategic political status in the state, public administrators were paid 23 percent more than the statewide average. Overall, per capita personal income in Dane County in 2003 was nearly one-fifth higher than for the State of Wisconsin as a whole, reflecting not simply better local wages but also better income from pensions and investments as well as government transfers (State of Wisconsin, 2005). Dane County is therefore a major economic engine for the broader super-region, drawing in many more commuters than it sends out. This important reality is reflected directly in the fact that Dane County firms paid $1.1 billion more in wages to residents of other counties than Dane County residents earned from firms in these counties (State of Wisconsin, 2005).

In addition, as elsewhere in the United States, local households are considerably smaller than in the past, not simply in the City of Madison but all across the County (table 9.1). In 1970, for example, the average household in Dane County contained 3.1 individuals, a figure that dropped to under 2.3 by 2005. This meant that, even had the area’s population completely stagnated, more housing units (if not necessarily subdivisions) would still have been required. While single-family housing did not expand in percentage terms, it still constituted about two-thirds of all housing units, a figure not substantially different from where it was in 1970. In 2005, there were 65,000 more single-family homes in Dane County than they were in 1970, an absolute increase of 118 percent.

Moreover, many newer homes built in the 1980s and 1990s were considerably larger in square footage than those built during the 1950s and 1960s, relating not only rising wealth but also higher rates of car ownership, higher number of cars per household, and the parallel demand for more private garage capacity. The strong demographic and economic performance of the region in recent decades, with the resurgent
City of Madison at the core, has translated into sustained pressures on residential and commercial land markets as well as constant threats to the agricultural and ecological terrain. According to the 2002 Census of Agriculture, farmland acreage had decreased 5.9 percentage and crop-land acreage 8.3 percent in the previous five years. Dane County farmland rezoned from A1 to create new residential lots varied between 800 and 1,600 acres per year over this particular period of time (DCDPD/DCRPC, 2006).

Between 1994 and 2005, Dane County municipalities created about 3,000 new parcels per year. Between a quarter and third of these new parcels, mostly subdivisions, were created by the City of Madison. The rest were created in more peripheral locations. Over these same years, for example, “towns” (areas of the county outside of villages and cities) created about one-fifth of all parcels, though not necessarily beyond the USAs. The populations of towns increased by more than 15 percent between 1990 and 2005, putting growing pressure on these otherwise rural areas. One ecological consequence of this growth has been the need to mitigate nitrate, sodium, and chloride concentrations in watersheds and area wells. While many of these efforts have improved or at least maintained water quality due to expanded wastewater treatment, “nonpoint source stormwater runoff continues to be a problem” (DCDPD/DCRPC, 2006: 24).

### Smart Growth in the City-Region

Managing stormwater runoff, and a multitude of other problems and challenges, has required city-regions such as Madison-Dane County to manage growth into something different than it might have become with less assertive regulatory and investment oversight by the state. As discussed

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Towns</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>−1.24</td>
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<td>Villages</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>−0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cities</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>−0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>−0.77</td>
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<td>County</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>−0.81</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: DCRPC [Dane County Department of Planning and Development/Dane County Regional Planning Commission] (2006).
originally in chapter 2, in 1999, the State of Wisconsin joined the list of U.S. states whose legislatures now engage directly with matters of local land-use planning and, to a lesser extent, metropolitan coordination of urban growth and development policy.

Before the new legislation, euphemistically called the Smart Growth Law, the state government certainly influenced local land use and growth dynamics through shoreline and floodplain zoning requirements as well as initiatives such as the Farmland Preservation Program, which provided income tax credits to farmers in jurisdictions with agricultural preservation plans in place. The State also influenced local growth choices, often dramatically, through its own major capital expenditures, especially highway spending. Moreover, regional planning commissions, such as the Dane County Regional Planning Commission (recently renamed the Capital Area Regional Planning Commission), were empowered with advising the Department of Natural Resources on the extension of USAs, a tool similar to UGBs (DCDPD/DCRPC, 2001a; 1000 Friends of Wisconsin, 2002).

Indeed, USAs have been used in Dane County since 1973, including a large central USA around the Madison-Fitchburg core as well as several “satellite” USAs in peripheral areas (figure 9.3). Over time, these USAs have steadily reduced the percentage of units with on-site wastewater systems. In 1975, for example, almost 20 percent of new residential development fell beyond USAs. In 2005, this figure dropped to only 8.0 percent (DCDPD/DCRPC, 2001a).

By and large, then, the USAs have reduced but not eliminated sprawl while protecting agricultural assets. As evidence, one planner compared the contemporary land-use situation in Dane County with neighboring Waukesha County. Twenty-five years ago, the two counties had about the same population and growth trends. Yet today little agricultural activity is left in Waukesha County. In contrast, USAs have worked with exclusive farm use zoning to protect local agriculture uses, notwithstanding the constant market pressures discussed earlier. “Dane County is highly unusual in that sense,” this same planner argued, an accomplishment that is “impressive” given the more intense growth pressures attending the globalization of the regional economy.

Most residential development activity since 2000, as indicated in table 9.2, has been located diagonally, on a line from Verona and Fitchburg within the south and southwest of the core area, into the City of Madison, which permitted 45 percent of the County’s single and multifamily housing, and upwards toward Sun Prairie in the northeast. Current projections for land demands through 2030 include over 1,500
acres in Verona and 3,148 acres in Sun Prairie. The City of Madison and its contiguous communities such as Fitchburg and Middleton are expected to release another 12,800 acres for urban development before 2030.

As elsewhere, counties and other local governments (cities and villages) possessed the traditional power to conceive and implement
Table 9.2  Permitted units in Dane County, 2000–2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality (2000–2006)</th>
<th>Total units</th>
<th>Single-family units</th>
<th>Multifamily units</th>
<th>% permits single family</th>
<th>% permits multifamily</th>
<th>% total units permitted</th>
<th>Cumulative % permitted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madison</td>
<td>14,322</td>
<td>5,326</td>
<td>8,996</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unincorporated</td>
<td>3,523</td>
<td>3,263</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun Prairie</td>
<td>3,455</td>
<td>1,814</td>
<td>1,641</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verona</td>
<td>1,654</td>
<td>719</td>
<td>935</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitchburg</td>
<td>1,428</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waunakee</td>
<td>919</td>
<td>881</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>834</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>83</td>
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* not applicable.

long-range plans through zoning and other techniques largely without much horizontal and vertical coordination of policy. Specifically, cities and villages historically were allowed to implement plans and implementation strategies without the involvement of County authorities. Until the new legislation in 1999, though, most local governments did not actually develop comprehensive plans for managing growth, even as they guarded their legal powers to do so. Cities and villages today retain strong annexation powers, wherein annexation requires the agreement of landowners but not the landowners’ jurisdiction.

Passage of the Smart Growth law reflected a critical statewide concern with the outright absence of local comprehensive planning and the outdated or insufficient nature of plans in too many jurisdictions; public discussion at the time also centered on innovative (if somewhat romanticized) reform in other states, in particular Maryland, where “incentives” rather than “mandates” seemed especially appealing (Ivey, 1997). In part, through the advocacy of 1000 Friends of Wisconsin and other key groups, the new law in Wisconsin borrowed elements from other state policy experiences, such as the local consideration of statewide planning goals as well as content and minimum standards for comprehensive plans (including new state funds to pay for local plan preparation). However, more aggressive management proposals offered originally by State Senator Brian Burke (D-Milwaukee) and the rising environmental advocate (and later mayor of Madison), Dave Cieslewicz, such as the statewide use of UGBs, were dismissed by organizations such as the Wisconsin Association of Realtors as “social engineering at its worst” (D. Hall, 1999: 1B). Later efforts to introduce even stronger growth controls in Dane County were also defeated (Zaleski, 2000). Maryland—not Oregon—provided the leading state model of urban growth management.

Key decisions on where to build a street or how to design a subdivision were still made locally (Editorial, 2000). Nonetheless, in making land-use decisions dependent upon new comprehensive plans by 2010, the new law has substantially impacted the policy geographies of local governments without plans; it has also impacted those communities with a strong planning tradition, such as the City of Madison, as both the content of plans and the new spirit of the smart growth paradigm (including the still-evolving discourses of design, flexibility, and sustainability) provided fresh space and momentum for a fundamental rethink of territorial management (ibid.).

While the state legislature discussed reform over several years in the mid- and late-1990s, finally getting bipartisan action in 1999, local
leaders in Madison-Dane County pressed forward with new planning efforts. A newly elected Dane County executive made land use, natural resource, and open space protection a centerpiece of her governance agenda in 1997. The new initiatives included the creation of $4 million annual “stewardship fund” to purchase parks, open space, and conservation easements. Other key initiatives included a revolving loan program to help communities revive their downtowns. But the executive also had to manage a much older and seemingly intractable schism between the towns and cities, dating back at least to the 1960s if not earlier. With an eye on a difficult reelection, she backed away from fully supporting the Dane County Regional Planning Commission’s Land Use and Transportation Plan—an integrated plan the cities supported but the towns did not (Balousek, 1997).

Dane County was now expecting another 100,000 residents within twenty years (Still, 1999). Yet statewide resistance to smart growth measures, particularly the mandatory preparation of comprehensive plans, remained almost toxic, especially in rural towns where growth had been less intense, even within metropolitan regions, and where taxes for improving service provision were seen as inadequate (Hayman, 2002). But while statewide support from the development community stopped at the “social engineering” edges of UGBs, the new law required zoning reforms, including “traditional neighborhood development” (TND) in communities greater than 12,500, that met with greater enthusiasm, particularly where this might allow for improved flexibility in the adaptation of local development proposals as well as “improved consistency” in code enforcement, an important theme taken up again in a moment (Ivey, 2002b).

By 2002, though, as communities began to realize both the institutional and spatial challenge of the new planning mandates, tempers flared beyond small-town Wisconsin, where planning (and zoning) traditions were (and are) thinner. One example was an effort in a suburb of Madison, Middleton Hills, to authorize narrower streets and smaller lot size—classic smart growth space—that only passed after considerable local opposition (Derus, 2002). Eventually local disquiet translated into new efforts at the state level to repeal the law, first in 2003 by a small-town Republican State Representative (Davidoff, 2003), with selective support from the agricultural and development community, and later by more prominent Republicans on the Joint Finance Committee (provisions later vetoed by the Democratic Governor). By 2005, several well-known fault lines, which also passed through and actually divided the state Republican Party, were now clear, including
third-generation farmers and newer residents collocated on the urban fringe (Walters, 2005).

In 2002, the Wisconsin Land Council awarded Dane County and fourteen local communities with a multijurisdictional planning grant to assist in the creation of a new comprehensive plan for their city-region. The new steering committee included members of Dane County’s Zoning and Natural Resource Committee and Strategic Growth Management Committee, the Mayor of the City of Madison, President of the Dane County Towns Association, as well as representatives from the development, environmental, and farming communities. In addition to crafting a public participation plan, the new committee worked on policies for housing, economic development, natural and cultural resources, and transportation and utilities. Finally, a new agenda for sustained citizen involvement in visioning exercises, titled “Attain Dane!,” was introduced in early 2004 even as “nasty infighting” between “urban liberals” and “rural property rights” advocates started to tear at the initial harmony originally established in 2002–2003 (Editorial, 2004a, b).

“Attain Dane!” built directly on policy ideas already crafted by the new County Executive in the 1990s, especially in the areas of farmland preservation and “sensible growth” through improved infill design in cities and villages. Interestingly, the infill program, called BUILD, had rhetorical and policy similarities with Maryland’s priority funding approach, certainly as this related to local efforts to make better use of existing infrastructure and placing community services, jobs, and shopping in closer proximity to one another.

Between 1999 and 2006, according to one progress report, the BUILD program distributed $1.3 million in planning grants around Dane County, which in turn was thought to leverage $37 million in public investment and almost $130 in private investment—all along smart growth lines. Exemplary BUILD projects included, for example, the redevelopment of an industrial site in Sun Prairie into a mixed-use, residential-commercial complex called “Cannery Square.” But BUILD grants were also used to facilitate an intergovernmental and TDR agreement with the Village of Cottage Grove, arguably reflecting the closer relationships being forged between urban infill and farmland/open space preservation (Dane County, 2006a). On a scale of one to ten, one local planner reported that the BUILD program “has been a 10—a raging success. We’ve had to turn down great proposals.”

While practical accomplishments, such as façade improvements and new commercial property, are the most visible signs of this success, the program also has “softer” effects. Like the community planning experience
in Pierce County, Washington, BUILD has “focused attention and educated people” about the importance of planning for smart growth, preventing poor development choices: “It’s just a lot less likely [now] that a project will go through, like a shopping mall, without discussion or people noticing it. It’s made people savvy about planning and development.”

The County’s new urban infill initiative is also notable from the broader perspective of the smart growth paradigm because it so closely follows some of the leading tenets of New Urbanism, especially as these tenets relate to development values associated with TND. These values include, for example, more local emphasis on compactness and walkability; an improved hierarchy of connected streets; more discernable community centers; greater in situ housing choice; and, perhaps most importantly, “a diverse mix of activities (residences, shops, schools, workplaces and parks, etc.) [that] occur in proximity” (Dane County, 2004b: 14).

A “model” TND ordinance based almost wholly on these generic tenets was drafted by a “Smart Growth” steering committee in 2003. The original purpose of the model was to provide helpful “guidelines” (not top-down mandates) to smaller municipalities scattered across the County so they would adopt TND principles within their jurisdictions and planning regimes. (Madison, Sun Prairie, Fitchburg, and Middleton, with populations all over 12,500 people, were required under state law to adopt TND ordinances). “[The model] is not meant to be adopted in total,” the ordinance carefully notes, “but modified as needed to meet individual community needs” (Dane County, 2004b: 4). However, in practice, as one planner noted, “[in smaller communities] it hasn’t [yet] permeated the zoning codes very much.”

The bulk of the ordinance, however constructive and nonthreatening in tone, is nonetheless a fairly consistent philosophical attack on the deleterious inflexibility of traditional zoning and even Planned Urban Development zoning (PUDs) across the County.3 “While PUD zoning,” the ordinance acknowledges,

allows flexibility, it does not allow traditional neighborhood forms of development by right. In many cases, developers of TNDs that use PUDs still have to negotiate specific variations from standard zoning requirements. Such negotiations add time and cost to the process and can result in compromises that undermine the qualities that constitute traditional neighborhoods. (ibid.)

The parallel development of a TDR/PDR program as part of the County’s overall “farmland preservation plan” is also noteworthy—and
not simply because it mirrors the Maryland model of smart growth discussed in chapter 8. The Dane County TDR program, initiated in 2006, amended the Dane County Code to create two brand new regulatory spaces in the form of “overlay zones”: the TDR Sending Area Overlay and the TDR Receiving Area overlay. Each of these new spaces, moreover, is maintained by three distinct “scales” of the state: the town board (where most farmland is located), the county board, and the county executive—a fact that reflects, as noted originally in chapter 5, the considerable administrative complexity that comes with this so-called “market-oriented” technique. Again, though, the technical analysis of the TDR program emphasized, like the TND program, “flexibility” in what amounts to a narrow but still sophisticated form of regional planning, where both new spaces and state scales are at play:

The amendment would require that all TDR transactions be consistent with town-development plans adopted by the county board. This provided flexibility for towns to design TDR programs that suit their particular needs [and] to create joint TDR programs with neighboring communities. (Dane County, 2006b, no page number)

Aside from citizen visioning, the TND ordinance and the TDR scheme, another notable aspect of the Attain Dane! Era has been consideration of a system of tax base sharing and intergovernmental agreements to distribute the benefits of development and to reduce competition for development among municipalities (Dane County, 2004). Such a system, rarely seen outside of the Twin Cities experience in Minnesota, was conceived as part and parcel of a larger program that encourages broader agreements between neighboring municipalities, that is to say, improved regionalism (Kittner, 2005). A final comprehensive plan for the County was still being drafted in mid-2007.

Counties are supposed to be regionally inclined; cities are not. Yet “thinking regionally” had also gained fresh energy in the City of Madison. In particular, as one planner observed, there has been an “explosion” of interlocal service agreements, including joint-planning agreements focused on issues such as extraterritoriality and annexation. In part, this is structural. As discussed at length in chapter 2, the state’s new legal emphasis on “intergovernmental cooperation” has to be codified as a policy element in local comprehensive plans.

But local political leadership and local institutional culture also mattered, as it did in Dane County. The new mayor of Madison elected office in 2003, Dave Cieslewicz, worked previously as leader of 1000
Friends of Wisconsin, an organization central to passage of the state-level smart growth legislation. As a candidate for office, Cieslewicz emphasized “the need to thinking regionally”—linking this approach to growing state deficits and the attendant requirement to “work together more efficiently.” Cieslewicz mapped out five regional strategies, including improved service relationships with Dane County and the City’s municipal neighbors, a fair-share affordable housing scheme, and the improved development of a regional transit system (Cieslewicz, 2003).

Once mayor, Cieslewicz’s administration followed up on what he called “a once in a lifetime opportunity” for regionalism and more effective urban growth management afforded by Wisconsin’s new smart growth law. By mid-2005, moreover, a draft of the city’s new comprehensive plans was characterized as strongly “New Urbanist.” Key features of the draft plan included more mixed-used zoning, the extensive use of village squares (even in the outskirts of the city), the containment of “Big Box” retailers within compact, mixed-use developments; new ideas for the use of street cars and, within the regional context, transit-oriented developments and commuter trains (Mosiman, 2005a: B1). Central to the implementation of this new plan since its formal adoption has been the desire to completely rewrite the zoning code, “a product of the 1960s [that] doesn’t promote density or mixed uses and encourages sprawl, leaving neighborhoods and development with uncertainty about how and where to grow” (Mosiman, 2005b: B1).

Aside from major zoning reform, the most notable implementation initiative within the City of Madison was passage of an inclusionary zoning (IZ) ordinance in January, 2005. The IZ ordinance mandated that 15 percent of homes, condos, or apartments in new projects include units priced for moderate income buyers. In addition, with a broader goal of placed-based class integration in mind, the ordinance capped the amount of profit available to owners upon resell, with the objective of keeping the units affordable (Ivey, 2005). Though supported originally by key real-estate interests in the city, the ordinance was soon characterized by members of the wider business community as a new form of “price control”—a common complaint about IZ initiatives everywhere in the county; it was also increasingly defined as “unworkable” in what was then seen as a soft housing market, yet another radical Madison experiment in social engineering (Wall, 2007).

In addition to its strong political commitment to improved housing equity, the City of Madison has long been associated with sustainability values and environmental initiatives. It has, for example, one of the most well-regarded bicycle systems in the county—rivaling (and arguably
exceeding) the systems in Portland and Seattle and certainly providing inspiration to contemporary efforts in Baltimore. One of the key organizing themes of the Madison new comprehensive plan, moreover, is “to grow in a sustainable manner.”

This theme winds through and helps to give philosophical shape to various policies elements within the overall plan, including continued efforts to create new development patterns and service infrastructure that supports “energy-efficient lifestyles” as well as the “long-term conservation of natural resources and the health of our environment” (City of Madison, 2006: Intro-5–7). Concretely, the plan seeks to spatialize sustainable development through smart growth practices that focus on “promoting urban infill and redevelopment, and high performance green building.” Other core ideas include the creation of new “mixed-use, transit-oriented developments,” and “appropriately scaled mixed-use redevelopment . . . at strategic locations in the City” (ibid.).

The turn to green building, for example, is seen in the community facilities element, where the City has committed to “using green building principles wherever feasible in the design construction and operation of new and existing buildings” (ibid.: 4–9). However, these principles are extended to promoting private sector development changes in the land-use element, where policy focuses strongly on encouraging “‘green building’ where public and private buildings are designed to conserve energy, water and other resources, minimize waste, and prevent pollution, both during their construction and long-term operation and maintenance” (pp. 2–70).

**Regionalizing the Progressive Tradition**

The easiest map that can be drawn to capture the new territorialities of smart growth in Madison-Dane County deploy the lines of a simple Cartesian imagination of progress, or policy “modernization” across time and space. These lines see progress—or progressive politics—in terms of “the diffusion of an innovation from a core region to a peripheral subordinate region or from an anterior historical period to a subsequent one” (Santos, 1979: 12–13).

In the present case, the City of Madison is the “core” source of innovation; in contrast, Dane County is the “subordinate” region into which new planning innovation has steadily diffused, albeit not without substantial resistance and political tension. Put simply, then, we have wandered somewhere in the middle of a still-unfolding spatial story characterized by an overall political effort to regionalize the progressive
urban traditions of the City of Madison. Here the leftward rationalities of justice and diversity are attempting to produce new landscapes of unity and engagement.

These progressive, leftward, traditions arguably started a century ago with John Nolan, who saw in this particular prairie landscape the enormous potential for “a new standard of city-making,” albeit one that drew (oddly) on parallel discourses of competition and cooperation; on calls for greater state presence in the control of individual land-development decisions; and also on liberal, boosterish talk of intercity competition—hybrid from the very beginning. Steadily populated over many decades by university-oriented progressives and social radicals, in recent years, Madison’s smart growth agenda arguably goes beyond the now common urban mantra of New Urbanism and sustainability, linking these two discourses directly to strong equity issues. Indeed the most notable example of Madison’s left-progressive tradition is the recent effort to address affordable housing concerns through passage of a new IZ ordinance. This ordinance represents the City’s latest effort, that is, to emphasize “public planning as an alternative to private power,” to deploy Pierce Clavel’s (1986: 1) phrase from his book, The Progressive City.

But such a reading also simplifies the situation at hand. Madison certainly continues to exhibit the territorial markings of an urban polity concerned with producing and sustaining new spaces of engagement and diversity, in part through the use of urban planning powers. Its integrated bike system and the more recent emphasis on both public and private green-building practices, for example, are admirable achievements that extend the social agenda of planning to global ecological concerns (or seen another way, “socialize” and “localize” these global ecological concerns).

Most impressive in terms of the smart growth paradigm, though, is the new mayoral emphasis on city-regionalism, on linking the city’s urban fortunes with suburban and rural developments and functional needs (a vision largely missing in, for example, Tacoma). Yet the actual politics and turf battles of IZ also suggest complex, contested, and conservative forces, where urban-scale push back to progressive policies can be as fierce as anywhere in the state. Though initial support from the local business sector would not occur in every U.S. community, that same community has since dismissed the ordinance as “social engineering,” a phrase that draws heavily on liberal critiques of state-society relationships (the same phrase used to beat back more aggressive, Oregon-like UGBs).
Nor is Dane County as “passive” as the diffusion model of spatial change suggests. Urban service areas extend across the whole county—and have for many years. Even more importantly, Attain Dane! represents an important regionalization effort, as does the new TDR program. According to one analyst, Attain Dane! seeks to go beyond past Countywide planning practices, which “tend[ed] to be merely a mosaic of 20-year community plans” (Slavney, 2004: 1). Getting beyond the “mosaic” model of regional planning, it is suggested, will allow for “permanent” rather than provisional open space and thus reduced land speculation. “We’re going hog-wild over regionalism right now,” one Dane County planner reported. “It takes a long time for people to let go of their boundaries but that’s what’s happening. It’s a huge issue here.”

While rural resistance to specific policies has been linked sometimes to the cultural hegemony of urban progressives, particularly where this involves property rights, still other Dane County initiatives suggest as much policy innovation of anywhere else in the region. One example is the BUILD program, which seeks to push new commercial development back into towns and villages rather than allow it to spread randomly across the landscape—a locally popular smart growth initiative, especially when coupled strategically with the strong new emphasis on open space preservation. In addition, BUILD grants have been used for affordable housing initiatives, suggesting strong social justice concerns.

But the landscapes that attend smart growth innovation in Dane County are not always about strong equity and justice orientations—or even about planning in the conventional sense of truly anticipating the future by engaging wholly with the present. In truth, they may also be about the spatialization of tradition and nostalgia, or at least contemporary copies of tradition and nostalgia—an overall territorial effort to “stop time” in order to deal with the trauma of losing the good old days to disjointed sprawl, high-tech, yuppy-filled industry, and randomly located retail and office parks with ocean-like parking lots. As Howell Baum (1999: 5–7) has eloquently argued:

Anxiety about contingency encourages people to distort what they remember and stop time. When the future seems overwhelming, when security seems contingent on more than can be controlled, people may hold fast to the past, stuck on memories that resist change. Thus, living in the past, they avoid experiencing a present and cannot learn from current events. [. . .] The problem of individuals and communities stuck in the past and unable to plan is not that they do not remember enough, but that
they remember too much. They remember certain experiences too vividly and rigidly. They identify so strongly with particular good or bad memories that much of their identity is attached to being part of some time in the past; they cannot imagine themselves otherwise.

Has the State of Wisconsin “learned too much”? Paradoxically, Madison, Sun Prairie, Fitchburg, and Middleton, with populations all over 12,500 people, are once again required under state law to adopt TND ordinances; they are required, that is, to be traditional, to recover a socio-spatial diversity that probably never actually existed (or existed in only the narrowest sense, where race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and physical (dis)abilities were mostly invisible). This fact alone, without consideration of any others, suggests at the very least an interesting mélange of authoritarianism and traditionalism, of state political power at the legislative level and community cultural expression at the local level—a multihued territoriality of smart growth shaped by not one, but many, contending spatialities and scales of governance.

Both the diffusion and varied types of “discontent” with the actually emplaced smart growth paradigm—discontent with the resistant rural; discontent with the elite urbanists; discontent with the social progressives; and even discontent with (post)modernity itself—thus collectively reflect the uneven regionalization of a progressive tradition, but perhaps not one that is summarized by a core-periphery imagination of urban social change. Instead, the core itself, the City of Madison, is regionalizing its own planning imagination, or at least trying to, even as it simultaneously seeks to rethink its Fordist-era zoning rules and concretize the new concerns with (un)sustainability through new comprehensive planning mandates. And while it carries on with many progressive, even radical, traditions, it also looks to the doctrine of New Urbanism for the recovery of lost spaces, “stopping time” no less than the suburban and rural residents on the periphery, and thus dealing with the future by mobilizing contrived memories of the past: front porches, narrow streets, walkable neighborhoods, shops around the corner.

**Conclusions**

The State of Wisconsin has joined a still fairly short list of U.S. states that see major land-use reform at the legislative level as a key factor in confronting the enormous challenges posed by contemporary demographic
trends and development patterns. Following on from the influential experience of Maryland, Wisconsin passed its Smart Growth law in 1999–2000 principally to force communities across the state to actually plan for future growth rather than to permit development project by project, willy-nilly. Central to this reform has been a strong emphasis on intergovernmental collaboration.

The City of Madison, of course, has long engaged in urban planning. And while Dane County did not have a culture quite as strongly established, the city-region as a whole has deployed USAs for more than a generation. The new state legislation, though, has initiated a new era in Wisconsin planning history, bringing the state more closely into local conversations about the relative importance of planning doctrines such as “comprehensiveness” and “traditional design” and “intergovernmental relations.” This has started to change both the institutional and material landscapes of this city-region in important ways. It has also problematized our understanding of urban or even metropolitan politics.

In consequence, as I have argued throughout this book, the territorialities of smart growth in this particular city-region at this particular time cannot easily be mapped according to either progressive or regressive policies; to left, right, or even moderate politics; to spatialities of justice, retreat, diversity, or nostalgia. Like the other cases presented in this part of the book, Madison-Dane County exhibits what Ed Soja (2000) calls “both/also” geographies, wherein space reflects the imprint of each of the varied dynamics. This does not mean, of course, that these dynamics are imprinted in the same way in Madison as in Baltimore. Space, place, and scale always intersect in contingent ways. Nor does it mean that they benignly cancel each other out, pluralist and equal. As Amin and Thrift (2002: 106) might argue, urban plans shaped by spatial rationalities “never function in order to represent a persisting world.” Where New Urbanist ideals are at play, they act to unmake the present by pursuing a “new type of utopia, marked not by futuristic hopes but, rather, by nostalgic memories of a homogenous, urban America that no longer exists” (Sanyal, 2000: 319).

And yet, County planners and planning discourses place considerable optimism in a traditional kind of geography to resolve a predicable kind of politics. “Dane County has an ideal size and shape for a metropolitan approach to planning and plan implementation—while retaining local control,” one observer (Slavney, 2004: 3) notes. “Critical” geographical features include:
• “The central location of the main urban center within a large county that closely coincides with the primary commutershed.
• The number, diversity and generally even distribution of free-standing outlying communities within Dane County—each with its own identity.”

These and other main place-features, it is hypothesized, might actively help the city-region to overcome “unavoidable conflicts between conservative and liberal philosophies” in order to embrace a set of supra-philosophical values, such as “clean government” and “community character” (p. 4).

What is interesting here is, first and foremost, the way that extant functional and cultural geographies (of movement and identity) are given an active role in shaping the possibilities of growth politics. If the geography at issue here seems static and pre-given, something outside of politics, it is nonetheless integral to the production of the social, not merely its result (Massey, 1994). This place, in other words, is part and parcel of the “structuring or mediating context of social relations” (Agnew, 1989: 16). But what sorts of new social spaces—what sort of new politics—are now being produced through the conceptualized mobilization of these extant geographies?

The attention paid to “retaining local control” seems to reflect a deeper cultural concern that “metropolitan planning” represents more than a technical exercise in policy formulation. This arguably precludes the full rescaling of what is considered “common territory” (Davis, 1991), that is, the formation of “common territorial interests” (Tajbakhsh, 2001: xii) around the already shared politics of “clean government” and “community character.” At the same time, the new emphasis on progressive regionalism appears real, not only because the state government has insisted upon it but also because local political leadership—local agency—has pressed the issue in both Madison and Dane County. Richard Morrill (1999: 2) argues that higher scales of government in the United States “seem increasingly able to preempt local decision-making and to impose metropolitan values and preferences,” a geopolitical development that deeply concerns him and no doubt many residents in Dane County. Todd Swanstrom (1999) sees such metropolitan preemption as much more the exception than the rule, a condition that he thinks, in contrast to Morrill, reduces rather than enhances liberty and civil society. “It is wrong to think that civil society can only be built from below,” Swanstrom argues. “It can also be built from above by devising policies that give local governments the resources and tools to build
democratic civil societies based on diversity, toleration, and respect for all citizens.” (p. 32).

Such a development “from above” would truly represent a “new standard of city making,” but it also depends upon the ability of Madison-Dane County to regionalize more completely its progressive tradition, to manage its spatial politics in such a way that a new kind of polity might deliver a new kind of settlement space for a new kind of usable future. Locally, this is understood in practical terms as getting beyond the “mosaic” model of planning, where local interests are loosely stitched together rather than substantially re-thought and synthesized. A recent agreement illustrating this new effort is found between the Cities of Madison and Fitchburg and the Town of Madison (2007). This effort provides for revenue sharing between the City of Madison and Town of Madison. Moreover, it also strengthens efforts to overcome fragmented mosaic-style planning:

While, historically, the three communities have independently planned for the development of land within their communities, this Plan established extraterritorial zoning and the use of extraterritorial play review by the cities of Fitchburg and Madison in cooperation with the Town to manage land use and land development. This cooperative approach of land use decision making will help to reduce situations where developed seek siting and infrastructure concessions from one community by attempting to pit the Cities against the Towns or against each other. (p. 4)

At the same time, the elusive “city-region” imagined through smart growth simply does not evacuate space of the multiple rationalities at work, erasing the heterogeneity of real places through the shiny allure of a new functional scale. For the new territorialities of smart growth in Madison-Dane County are, like the new territorialities elsewhere, a product of social projects “only rarely in the hands of one network of association” (Thrift, 2001: 24).
CHAPTER 10

Conclusions: After the “Next Step”

I believe in [those] who take the next step; not those who theorize about the two-hundredth step.

Theodore Roosevelt

Introduction

The politics of the planning practices in Metropolitan Portland, Seattle-Tacoma, Greater Baltimore, and Madison-Dane County remind us that, in the end, the promises of our theories (and hopes) are like Roosevelt’s two-hundredth step: well beyond the everyday horizon of simply getting on with things. Despite his philosophical critique of America’s settlement spaces, Lewis Mumford too thought that everyday “life,” in the quote that began this book, “is more interesting than utopias.” Yet both men were committed reformers and, albeit in radically different ways, individuals of action who were guided by an overarching intellectual commitment to the possibilities of ideas.

Ideas in action have variegated empirical consequences—material, institutional, and cultural. What do we make, then, of the promises, practices, and geopolitics of urban growth management in the various city-regions explored in this book? In the most general sense, it is easy to conclude that all of them have taken “the next step.” If they are a long journey away from taking the two-hundredth step, it is not insignificant that they have set out to do so. But other than this simple insight, what have we learned about urban growth management in the United States as a territorial agenda and how might this inform comparative studies in the international literature on planning, space, and city-regions?
The Spatialities of Planning

While political communities living in shared spaces collectively take steps forward or backward, such as civil rights legislation or wars of aggression, city-regions are not actors; they are not “things” that move in the same direction, like bodies strolling down a road clearly delineated through technical planning exercises. Rather, following Amin and Graham (1997: 419), contemporary urban areas “tend to be concentrations of multiple rationalities.” In consequence, they are knotty, stringy, assemblages of diverse, contradictory, heterogeneous social processes operating at multiple spatial and temporal scales. This is a different way of thinking about the space of cities and city-regions—and it directly confronts the planning imagination with a series of profoundly difficult, indeed knotty, challenges (Healey, 1998). For as Mandani-Pour et al. (2001: 7) have powerfully observed, “The tradition in the planning field has been to treat space . . . as unproblematic, as part of an obvious reality.”

But as critical geographers (and many planners and other urbanists) have argued for decades (Harvey, 1973; Cooke, 1983; Gregory and Urry, 1985, Massey, 1984, 1994, 2005; Amin and Thrift, 2002), urban space is neither unproblematic nor obvious. It certainly is not a Euclidian plane upon which state-organized projects gently settle, like a nourishing rain falling upon a badly parched landscape. Accordingly, as Ali Mandani-Pour et al. (2001: 3) specifically argue, “New ways of doing governance need to be linked to new ways of thinking about space, place and territory, if spatial planning systems are really to be transformed into valuable governance activities in the next century.”

The Multiplicities of Smart Growth

Are the smart growth activities that are literally designed to manage contemporary urban growth in U.S. city-regions “valuable”? The way we answer this crucial question depends ultimately on how we feel about what planning actually does for spatial development processes, a question Philip Cooke (1983) posed a generation ago (cf. Forester, 1983). Cooke’s theoretical concerns, such as those of Ali Mandani-Pour et al. (2001), Margo Huxley (2006), and David Perry (1995) are to link planning practices to broader processes of socio-spatial development, something Patsy Healey (1998, 2004) has also considered in her recent attempts to forge an institutional theory of collaborative planning.
While the neo-Marxist approach Cooke mobilizes in his study successfully embeds urban planning dynamics in the broader production and reproduction of capitalist society, I have argued in this book for a post-structural approach to urban spatial theorization, one that sees urban space instead as “concentrations of multiple rationalities.” This approach accepts the structural power of (global) capital to shape space through planning systems, a power that many interpret (productively) through the new discourse of urban neoliberalism. But in the end, I am unprepared to map the U.S. smart growth experience as part and parcel of “the neoliberal city” (Hackworth, 2007), or at least not tout court. There is a postscript in post-structuralism, a nagging sense that economic structuralism is both empirically important and theoretically insufficient; that, as argued in chapter 3, “it is necessary to account for the aggregations of power in the state and the economy while the shifting mosaic of the everyday worlds in the city equally [require] the notion of hybridity” (Tajbakhsh, 2001: xiv).

Accordingly, I have highlighted the counterclaim (or perhaps the wider claim) that neither urban space nor urban planning is organized exclusively (or even mostly) around one putatively dominant discourse. Rather, I have theorized planning in general, and the smart growth paradigm, in particular, as crosscut by multiple spatial rationalities, both regressive and progressive, enabling and disabling, left-wing and right-wing. That makes for interesting geography, but not for easy planning. Throughout this book, I have tried to show that, in policy response to ongoing metropolitan growth trends, other rationalities and other spatial projects are constantly comingling with or working alongside of explicitly neoliberal efforts to improve “flexibility” or champion streamlined permitting or simply secure private accumulation in retreat around a new kind of spatial fix. Neoliberal space is indeed everywhere, then, but not totalizing or victorious or even the central story around which all geopolitical dynamics must always respond or “resist.” For neoliberalism cannot clamp down or fill up a restless urban landscape anymore than any other ideology can, summarily ending metropolitan history on the geographical shores of public-sector “business plans.”

Following Amin and Thrift (2002: 4), this hybrid approach to urban space nurtures a politics of hope because it is predicated the city’s “set of potentials,” on the ways that polities can sometimes slip around or through hegemonic projects such as neoliberalism that “seek to stamp a particular form of conduct on a human multiplicity” (p. 106). At the same time, we should not be unduly romantic about these potentials. “The city,” Amin and Thrift specifically warn, “needs to be seen as an
institutionalized practice, a systematized network” (p. 26). In so far as smart growth is also an ideology—indeed one partly informed by neoliberal rationalities—the exact same critique applies: It will not be able to stamp out its theoretical projects for empirical space anymore completely than neoliberalism.

But neither will it be irrelevant. Instead, urban smart growth will be spatialized unevenly, with multiple, sometimes surprising results that demand more complex assessments than ones that locate this huge state territorial effort on one side of the theoretical ledger or the other. For this reason, the spatial promises and spatial practices of the smart growth paradigm of urban growth management invariably generate their own distinctive kinds of geopolitics, wherein advocacy and discontent cross over and wind through a diverse range of territorial projects.

In part, this finding relates to the essentially conflicted history that smart growth is trying to “solve.” As argued in chapter 2, this history now includes multiscaled, multijurisdictional, efforts both to promote and to control growth, a spatial paradox that the smart growth paradigm absorbs theoretically through a seductive meta-narrative about the appropriate geography of good versus bad space. As discussed at length in chapter 5, the urbanization of pro-growth techniques (TODs, UGBs, TDRs) is married in daily planning practice to the suburbanization of no- or slow-growth techniques (PDRs, critical areas ordinances, right-to-farm laws). In fact, such a geographical union, as originally discussed in chapter 1, is considered by many advocates to be a necessary institutional precondition to legitimately spawn aesthetically pleasing, fiscally responsible, socially just, and ecologically sustainable urban spaces in the coming decades. There is no alternative, one might say. City-regional growth in the global economy can lead to social development and “the good life” but also, if left uncontrolled, metropolitan cancer and ultimately a bad death.

Imagining social development rather than metropolitan cancer first requires a plausible set of spatial futures around which political communities can begin to gather. As demonstrated in chapter 4, political communities all across the United States have articulated a set of new goals for metropolitan space that, in effect, try to put smart growth’s geographical solution to work, moving from theory to rhetorical representation in order to start to “unmake” mentally present growth tendencies, linking pro-growth policies for urbanized areas with no-growth areas for rural, resource, and even suburban areas. These are not philosophical or even ideological efforts; they are applied ones, and they matter in many practical ways, as the variegated emplacement of these tools strongly sug-
gests (chapter 5). While setting goals is a far cry from both achieving and maintaining them, setting goals is a key “moment” in the social reproduction of urban space.

As one part of the territorial state, planning is now arguably the principle political and institutional mechanism through which this activity actually happens, especially where such futures are imagined to be more sustainable (or less unsustainable). In this specific sense, there is also some evidence to support Owens and Cowell’s (2002) thesis that local spatial planning systems, in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, are increasingly the arms and legs of the global sustainable development agenda. While sustainability discourses and practices are well documented in trendy places such as Portland (chapter 6) and Seattle (chapter 7) (e.g., Wheeler, 2003; Portney, 2004), they have also recently impacted upon communities such as Greater Baltimore (chapter 8), whose social, economic, and racial problems are much deeper and politically intense than either of these Northwest, mostly white, high-tech city-regions. That growth planning in both Portland and Baltimore is shaped by sustainability imperatives suggests something quite important is now at work, though more detailed case studies of “non-paradigmatic” places (such as Cincinnati, Cheyenne, or Baton Rouge, to say nothing of “ordinary cities” around the world) are desperately needed in the urban studies and planning for sustainability literatures (Robinson, 2005). Less studied places, such as Madison-Dane County, discussed in chapter 9, provide tantalizing if only initial evidence that, for all the talk of urban liberalism, metropolitan America is, as Kent Portney (2004) supposes, “taking sustainability seriously.”

Of course all this might be interpreted as yet more compelling evidence of neoliberalism’s newest spatial fix: Give the creative class their bike paths and built-green condos with solar-paneled parking bays only just big enough for their hybrid SUVs. Following this theoretical logic, the urban face of smart growth has simply delivered on the evolving spatial imperatives of the globalizing urban economy, which increasingly call for “habitats” that attract and keep the skilled, innovative, but ultimately mobile butterflies who flutter through the convention centers, boutique squares, experiential museums, and various other cultural assets.

Thus, in Harvey’s Baltimore story, the green turn confirms the neoliberal claim that “urban entrepreneurialism itself might [now] depend on the active remaking of urban environments and ecologies” (While et al., 2004: 550). The recent expansion in Baltimore of single-person homes, more than any other social change, therefore reflects and
demands a new spatial accumulation logic, one that will allow the city to pass from near-death to new-life, from industrial decline to reincarnation in the global world. But as I argued in chapter 8, crowding the totality of Baltimore’s smart growth efforts into a single spatial rationality seems overly forced, particularly where we observe the wider spatialities of hope and unity in multiple planning efforts both within and outside the city.

The case for this thesis is even stronger in Portland, whose own green turn preceded the so-called neoliberal fix by many years and furthermore reflects, as suggested on the very first page of this book, a remarkable recovery of Mumford’s ecological and cultural regionalism as much as anything else. “Automobile traffic is noisy, smelly, and dangerous,” the 1972 downtown plan complained, and thus needs to be contained in order to return the urban world to “the man on foot.” Portland ripped out a downtown highway and put in a waterfront park where, every spring, the city’s multitudes gather to celebrate Cinco de Mayo, a holiday-in-place that blends (and remakes) both Mexican and American cultures. The money diverted from highway-building was used for public transit systems, which now link city and suburbs together and are characterized by free-ride zones and TODs that, if not a perfect spatialization of Mumfordian regionalism, hardly represent the triumphal march of neoliberal rollback. For such systems were (and are) conceptualized by the local state as “a viable alternative to the private vehicle [ . . . ] particularly for the handicapped, children, the elderly, the poor.”

Are these not state-organized spaces of diversity and engagement rather than geographies of retreat? If they are not, what are? If we are willing to dismiss clean, efficient, region-wide public transit systems and accessible public parks that benefit and bring together different kinds of people—“strangers,” as Richard Sennett (1971) would likely put it—what do we have left except a cynical ability to belittle actually existing urban political agency “tinged” by the capitalist state (the only one we currently have, it should be said)? At the very end of her very long life, Jane Jacobs, the U.S. planning profession’s most devastatingly effective and consistently brilliant critic, was not willing to wave away the local recovery and accomplishments of Mumfordian regionalism. Should we?

No, we should not. Planning for growth has mattered in Greater Portland as nowhere else in the United States (De Grove, 1984; Weitz and Morre, 1998). But neither can we believe that Portland has somehow “stopped time” by reaching the end of geographical thinking in the manner that, it seems, too much New Urbanist design often seeks to do (or assumes can be done). Measure 37 presents America’s Copenhagen
with the cold, hard reality that, as just argued, no ideological paradigm for space, certainly not one as heterogeneous as smart growth, can stamp its theoretical dreams upon the restless, always changing urban landscape, particularly as this landscape is shaped by supra-local forces at supra-metropolitan scales.

In the case of “Portlandia,” the institutional (and material) landscape has started to reveal a wider political chasm stretching across the “Nine States of Oregon” (Maples et al., 2003), a chasm originally opened by the dénouement of a “rural-urban” entente that long defined the resource-based economy. For however globalized city-regions might now be (Scott, 2001a, b), they are far from free-floating archipelagoes disembedded from their national and subnational regulatory spaces. If Portlandia is obsessed more with what’s happening in rival cities like Austin or Seattle than in the rest of Oregon (Maples, 2003), the rest of Oregon is changing in ways that will make a profound metropolitan difference, particularly in terms of what looks like a new statewide resistance to state-level planning authority and thus greater pressure to retreat rather than to engage with strangers through pro-planning systems (Anderson, 2006).

But just to the north, in Seattle-Tacoma, the home of what some planners similarly call the “Third Washington,” a Measure 37-inspired citizen’s initiative, called I-933, actually failed to gain political traction in late 2006. To be sure, I-933 today represents, like Measure 37, an important liberal revolt against state authority over local (and individual) land-use decisions. Drafted by the Washington Farm Bureau and financed by an Illinois-based libertarian group, Americans for Limited Government, the central theme of I-933 was didactic: no regulation without compensation (Pryne, 2006; Northwest Center for Livable Communities, 2006). But I-933 does not necessarily offer proof of expanding neoliberal rationalities. In fact, if anything, it represents a political reaction to the expanding territoriality of the multiscaled state concerned mostly with protecting fragile wetlands and endangered species through the more aggressive use by urban counties of critical areas ordinances (Associated Press, 2006b). The failure of I-933 therefore suggests, it might be reasonably argued, the ever-growing importance of ecological values in Washington State (Associated Press, 2006a, c), a conclusion that again challenges us to think more carefully about the material, institutional, and geopolitical dimensions of urban growth management in U.S. city-regions.

Back in central cities such as Tacoma, which seeks the creative class no less than Baltimore, Portland, Madison, or Seattle, the neoliberal mantra

Conclusions
of flexibility, efficiency, streamlining, and customer satisfaction is easy to locate but also hard to isolate from parallel evidence of other rationalities, including those that champion spaces of tradition and nostalgia that require state power. As one Tacoma planner noted, “the New Urbanism ideas—they want that,” but at the same time, residents worry about regulatory flexibility and radical changes to familiar codes that might loosen the state’s capacity to control private design decisions. “How do you mitigate those types of fears out there in the community,” this same planner asked, “when you’re always trying to “streamline” your regulations to make them more flexible?”

Out on the suburban periphery, where residential growth is slowly being corralled by the state-imposed, regionally coordinated, and locally implemented UGB (Carlson and Dierwechter, 2007), the Master Builders Association (2007) complains of “the ever-growing labyrinth of development regulations and the need to simplify them.” More “prosaic” state presence, that is, not less (Painter, 2006). Yet the MBA has also paradoxically come to embrace Pierce County’s “community planning” strategy because it formally ties local citizens to higher-scale regulatory regimes that mandate, for example, greater spatial density and administrative predictability: “Hey look, you’ve got to implement the GMA now. You can’t do whatever you want.”

In this sense, we also observe a complex rescaling of (planning) spaces in otherwise socially and politically fragmented places, a process that, as Murdoch and Abrams (2002: 13) have argued in the British context, “is leading to the assertion of a new spatial sensitivity, one that seeks to ensure that, within given territories, plans take into account of rich mixtures of the natural, social and the economic.” Yet “rich mixtures” of such diverse ingredients can also be explosive. One example discussed in chapter 7 is the ongoing tensions pervading the Alderton-McMillin community plan in Pierce County. Central to these tensions are classic socioeconomic categories in land-use politics at the same scale, such as new developers versus old residents (Rudel, 1989). But new scale conflicts have also brought different kinds of planners and rationalities into conflict, complicating the easy conclusion that, for example, planners as a professional class uniformly protect residents from developers, or in turn help developers overcome residential parochialism and fear of change.

Rather, multiple spatial rationalities intertwining at multiple spatial scales over the use of a diverse range of spatial tools are all working together, if antagonistically, to figure and refigure particular places in particular ways. While some groups are trying to localize the debate,
others are trying to “jump scale,” evoking not only county and state law but also global ecological responsibilities as well as more nostalgic claims that interpret the metropolitan present principally in terms of how well it preserves the (fast-disappearing) past: “At stake is whether the past and current agriculture-base community will have a fighting chance or if it will succumb to urban development pressures to convert farmland into houses and shopping and industrial centers” (Kyer and Putney, 2007: B3).

While nothing as strong as Portland Metro exists in Seattle-Tacoma, the PSRC is busy constructing new governance concepts such as “Regional Geographies” even as it doles out federal money (carrying its own spatial logic) in ways that partly snap these new geographies into place. Building on the spatial policy foundation laid down by UGBs, the PSRC now seeks actively to confect a hierarchy of new growth nodes around the city-region, all the while tying them together with major transit investments. As in Madison-Dane County, residents of Seattle-Tacoma are now being asked to go beyond a “mosaic model” of regionalism and to build instead a new kind of regional consciousness and citizen identity in order to face a new economic and ecological world. It may fail; but it may also succeed.

Political initiatives such as I-933 and Measure 37—as well as the “Republican revolt” in Wisconsin—suggest just how difficult this geopolitical project is going to be, for jumping scale is also about jumping culture, about getting the people who drive Volvo stations wagons (with bike racks) to engage in collaborative regional planning with the people who drive pickup trucks (with gun racks). Indeed, these extant identities and the landscapes that help to shape them also push back at the grand promises of the smart growth paradigm (Agnew, 1989), even as this paradigm experiences growing discursive and material “presence” in the planning systems of many states whose legislatures are now strongly committed to urban growth management goals.

**Researching “the Next Step”**

By any measure, the United States of America is currently the most consequential society in the world. Someday that status will end. Either the Westphalian system of nation-states will disintegrate and re-form into something unanticipated or, much more likely, the growing demographic, economic, and military power of China will rival and then surpass what has now become, in many people’s minds, a tragic imperial project (Murphy, 2007). That project started, of course, with Theodore
Roosevelt, a “can-do” politician of practical action who nonetheless also placed great faith in the idealistic promises of progressive government, where state power at various scales was central to societal evolution. An acquisitive imperialist, Roosevelt was also a successful conservationist; a liberal champion of free enterprise and individual ambition, he also busted up corporate monopolies and worried about the safety of ordinary factory workers.

Researching the American spatial planning system for managing urban growth is much like researching Theodore Roosevelt: One is simultaneously impressed and repulsed; inspired and demoralized; and hopeful and resigned. Many of the stories reported here are “next step” stories. In the structural face of urban decay and regional sprawl, the smallest projects and initiatives qualify as evidence of smart growth, the new urban, or metropolitan sustainability, even when we know they are not working as they might. Our solace in foreword movement is checked by our rage at the backward incompleteness of it all. A state legislature imposes the regional use of UGBs or requires local governments to engage in intergovernmental collaboration or prioritizes funding for certain areas and not others; a county implements a TDR ordinance or puts together an affordable housing toolkit or aggressively promotes urban infill; a city lays down a light-rail system or makes it easier for prospective developers to assemble vacant land or strengthens its regulatory control on cutting down trees that sequester carbon and reduce the urban heat island. But these spatial practices always fall short of their spatial promises, mediated as they are by the politics of space and place. So do we believe in all these “next steps” —or do we fret about the two-hundredth one that seems so very far away? Are the smart growth activities to manage contemporary urban growth valuable to us?

Researching all the “next steps” now being taken around the United States presents a formidable urban research agenda. For many researchers, it must be said, thinking about planning spatially will not be all that important. Various growth management efforts will be evaluated quantitatively and qualitatively for their various policy effects, projected though a space that is “unproblematic,” part of an “obvious reality.” And much will be learned of great value, such as whether critical areas actually protect endangered species or whether TODs change travel behaviors and housing choices or indeed whether state growth management programs curb sprawl (Yin and Sun, 2007). We need to know these things, and there is room for multiple methodologies and approaches. But we are still left with Ali Mandani-Pour et al.’s (2001) abiding concern that progress beyond the next few steps of spatial planning depends
in no small measure upon new ways of doing governance that, in the end, must be linked to new ways of thinking about space, place, and territory.

When we think about space, place, and territory as produced by multiple, contending, even contradictory rationalities—from neoliberal to neoprogressive—we invariably anticipate that urban growth management will produce a range of landscapes that both impress and repulse; inspire and demoralize; and inform hope and generate resignation. For that is what mapping the “full world” is all about (Bingham and Thrift, 2000, p. 289). In the context of planning, such mapping means seeing cities as more than neoliberal “waystations for dominant organisational forces” (Thrift, 2001: 27). Specifically, it means mapping the spatial projects of a diversity of local actors [who] are now interacting in *ad hoc* networks both to promote the marketable qualities of local places which can be commodified and to protect and enhance the qualities of these same places as “lived-in” environments for local people. The process by which these two objectives and the claims of different communities of interest can be reconciled has yet to be determined. (Mandani-Pour et al., 2001: 5)

Smart growth is therefore a paradigm worth fighting for; but it is also a paradigm we must fight about, not only as practitioners but also as theoreticians.

What makes this fight even more pressing is that, while new movements to manage growth at multiple scales increasingly characterize the governance agenda of the “consequential” United States, there also seems to be considerable policy convergence around managing urban growth in societies as different as the United Kingdom, Holland, South Africa, New Zealand, and Canada, particularly where this involves planning for sustainability in the global economy. These societies have a great deal to teach the United States. While “regionalism” made a strong American comeback during the 1990s, South Africa, for example, was busy building brand new “uni-city” governments in its major urban centers. These new entities were charged with addressing the deleterious spatial and social legacies of apartheid spatial planning (Cameron, 2000). This political reform should be watched closely by American advocates of smart growth because it may well represent the most important regionalist effort of its kind anywhere in the world.

For its part, the United Kingdom has reimagined the possibilities of its relatively strong spatial planning system for managing new growth to
deliver an “urban renaissance,” where homologous discourses around brownfields, urban containment, city-regions, open space preservation, and regulatory flexibility can also be found (Urban Task Force, 1999). Finally, new growth pressures around Holland’s famous “green heart” are causing concerns over that country’s territorial strategies, concerns shaped by a changing politics of homeownership, environment, transportation, and immigration (van der Waals, 2002).

Researching the next steps associated with U.S. urban growth management programs, especially in terms of its new discontents, therefore means deepening our understanding of its various spatialities not only within the United States but also in a comparative international context (e.g., Evers et al., 2000). Ultimately, such scholarship should make it easier not only to assess what Americans living in states such as Oregon, Washington, Maryland, and Wisconsin have (or have not) accomplished, but also to size up much better than we have so far just how much difficult work still lies ahead.
Notes

Chapter 1

1. In more complex terms, neoliberalism is defined as a normative and applied commitment to freeing up now overly regulated economic forces that, when fully liberated, more efficiently allocate goods, services, and capital for broadly shared material growth, if not necessarily improved social equity. The politics of neoliberalism thus focus on pushing back the scope (if not the strength) of the contemporary state at various levels of governance. For its detractors and critics—most geographers, it seems, but not all social scientists—this involves the unwarranted marketization or “de-statization” of public policy arenas like health care, educational administration, infrastructure development, environmental regulation, and family income support (Fukuyama, 2004). In contrast, those who sympathize intellectually with neoliberal objectives and policy values seek to scale back to what they believe is the overly ambitious, and incompetently administered, scope of state activities (while tending to downplay the history of state successes, such as social security provisions or public health campaigns).

In recent years, geographers and other urbanists have effectively rescaled neoliberalism, charting the location and nature of “neoliberal space” in the complex meshwork of the metropolitan landscape (e.g., Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Jessop, 2002; Peck and Tickell, 2002; Swyngedouw et al., 2002; Newman and Ashton, 2004; Dierwechter, 2006). In his seminal work on the impact of Thatcherism on urban planning in the United Kingdom, Andy Thornley (1991) analyzed the ways in which classical liberal ideology, the kind we associate with Friederich Hayek, was often contradicted by the Conservative Party’s centralization of power away from local authorities, suggesting, it could be argued, that Thatcherism was not a pure example of neoliberalism but a hybrid spatial program in its own right (partly inspired by Jane Jacobs, in Thornley’s view). In the end, the British planning system and urban environment ultimately survived this program, notwithstanding a series of regulatory modifications meant to facilitate private sector power over metropolitan space.
Chapter 2

1. As the City of Missoula discusses it: “The City Council created the Missoula Redevelopment Agency to encourage new development and redevelopment in Missoula pursuant to its three adopted Urban Renewal District Plans. MRA reclaims blighted urban renewal areas by preserving existing public investment, enhancing the tax base, generating employment, and stimulating private investment. MRA encourages infill development and the adaptive reuse of the built environment. State law and local ordinance empower MRA to respond aggressively and with flexibility to redevelopment problems and opportunities within the three Urban Renewal Districts (URD). Through redevelopment programs and projects, MRA provides alternatives to urban sprawl outside the existing municipal service boundaries.” As discussed in chapter 3, this sort of discourse reflects a range of rationalities, from the neoliberal mantra of flexibility to the ecological and New Urbanist–inspired imperatives of infill alternatives to urban sprawl (http://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/mra/).

2. Despite these rulings, uncoordinated local-growth control strategies persist everywhere and largely, it seems, to negative effect. California’s local-growth control programs, in particular, have displaced new construction, particularly rental stock, to adjacent communities who did not adopt such measures or had weaker policies in place (Levine, 1999). Paradoxically, then, successful growth control in one community, absent regional coordination in economically shared territories, typically leads to what Levine feels is the expansion of metropolitan areas into the interiors of the state—facilitating rather than blocking sprawl by adopting policies that especially impact low-income households and minority populations (see also Bruegmann, 2000).

Chapter 3

1. “Theory,” it will be recalled, explains, frames, and/or guides. Following Francis Bacon, who championed the role of explanation 400 years ago, theory tells people why things happen (why planets orbit, why planes crash, why cities have downtowns, why certain policies are pursued). But theory also tells people what to do, as Vladimir Lenin, Saul Alinsky, and many others have suggested, in part by telling them what is important to consider through models or frames that sometimes intersect with ideological commitments. Planning theory per se tends to follow the normative tradition (if not the substance) championed by Lenin, Alinsky, and other advocates of prescribed actions for preferred futures. Planning theory answers the geopolitical question: What is to be done about space? But a critical-geographical theorization of planning practice, something still rare in academic literature (see Perry, 1995; Brenner, 1997; Huxley, 1999, 2006; Mandani-Pour et al., 2001; Yiftachel 1998, 2000), requires us to adopt Bacon’s more distance
approach as well: What drives polities to attempt to (re)organize space through urban planning in the way they do—and to what political ends?

2. In what Joe Painter (2006) has recently identified as the phenomenal proliferation and consolidation of the “prosaic geographies of stateness,” even the most mundane social and cultural pressures placed on local governments can teach us about the abstract concept of state territorialities. One example is from a suburban community in Washington State: “Council member Noble referenced a complaint she had received regarding the espresso stand at the 76 station on Old Sumner-Buckley Hwy. The baristas are wearing only bikinis in an effort to increase sales. She acknowledged the City could probably not do anything about it, but asked what Council can tell citizens who complain. City Attorney Dionne said he would have to look into it and report back” (City of Bonney Lake, 2007, no page number). The idea that the local state should regulate what women where within otherwise “private-sector” space is not simply political, it is also fundamentally territorial. It is about projecting (or blocking) the state’s historic responsibility to organize collective values about space into a very precise place on the surface of the earth: an espresso stand. Libertarians on both the Left and Right frequently complain about the prosaic qualities of such “state presence,” albeit for radically different reasons.

3. The development of effective TDR programs is a good example of what Alexander (2000) calls “institutional design.” Following this analysis, land markets per se cannot be understood without constant reference to the structuring effects of the capitalist economy, especially individual plans for present and future uses. But neither can land markets be discussed as if the economy were or should be the only force in society; “markets,” as Lemke (2001, p. 193) writes, “can be constituted and kept alive only by political interventions.” Successful TDR programs, such as those in Montgomery or Baltimore County, Maryland, are not the easy by-product of “markets,” as too many proponents argue: Rather, they are the products and a “new institutional design” that restructure how the state manages and shapes land markets across space and time. TDRs are, in a word, programs not the “spontaneous order” of “voluntary economic exchange.”

Chapter 4

1. Codes such as “R-1, R-2” are commonly used by planning authorities in the United States of America to designate both the accepted local use and the density of particular parcels of land. For example, R1 is usually designated for a single-family home only; R2 typically refers to two-dwelling units whereas R3 may refer to an apartment complex.

2. Extraterritorial planning is the authority granted by state legislatures to plan and regulate development in unincorporated areas immediately outside a city’s corporate limits. According to David Owen (2006: 8), one of the earliest examples of extraterritorial planning is “an 1825 Georgia statute allowing the city of
Savannah to prohibit rice farms within one mile of the city limits.” Extraterritorial planning is frequently used instead of much stronger forms of regionalism, such as directly elected regional government with authority to plan and regulate development on a broad metropolitan basis (ibid).

Chapter 6


2. This project is predicated on a series of claims or beliefs about the role of urban design in managing new urban growth that resonate with the discussion developed in chapter 3. As stated in the project report (City of Portland, 2005, Appendix I. p. 04): “Attention to design can lessen the negative impact of multi-family infill development. Important elements for the design of multifamily infill can be grouped into three categories: (1) those that are internal, called private realm elements, (2) those that are external, called public realm elements, and (3) contextual elements, those that define the relationship of buildings to adjacent properties and the surrounding neighborhood. [ . . . ] Public realm elements include architectural design (including the placement of entryways and windows), building color, placement of components of the development (such as parking, open space, recreational amenities and pathways), and landscaping. Elements that define the contextual relationship of buildings to adjacent properties and the surrounding neighborhood include building height and bulk, building setbacks, the location of windows, and the amount of landscaping.”

3. In 2005, the Portland City Council passed a resolution that raised existing thresholds in the green-building policy and also added new sustainability directives, such as facilitated permitting for LEED certification. “Green building,” the resolution reads, “complements existing policies related to development and natural resource conservation; including solid waste and recycling policies, the Local Action Plan on Global Warming, Comprehensive Plan, and Metro 2040 Framework Plan” (City of Portland, 2005).

4. The following Measure 37 text was added to ORS chapter 197: “(1) If a public entity enacts or enforces a new land use regulation or enforces a land use regulation enacted prior to the effective date of this amendment that restricts the use of private real property or any interest therein and has the effect of reducing the fair market value of the property, or any interest therein, then the owner of the property shall be paid just compensation. (2) Just compensation shall be equal to the reduction in the fair market value of the affected property interest resulting from enactment or enforcement of the land use regulation as of the date the owner makes written demand for compensation under this act.” See http://www.sos.state.or.us/elections/nov2004/guide/meas/m37_text.html.
Chapter 7

1. TIFs are now used in most states of the United States of America to finance public infrastructure. A TIF is, in essence, a special regulatory space in the politico-economic landscape of the city or region. Local governments designate a specific area; usually one suffering from blight or past divestment, and then “freeze” assessed property valuation for a specified period of time. The frozen rate continues to be collected by the taxing authority; however, new taxes derived from the increased valuation in the TIF area are used to finance onsite infrastructure improvements. In this way, a TIF district attempts to link the property taxes of private investment directly to on-site or nearby infrastructure and service rather than to go into the general revenue stream of local government expenditures.

2. Pierce County policies adopted in 2004 to protect remaining farmland included the designation of Agricultural Resources Lands (ARL), which, under any TDR scheme, would be “sending” areas. Other policies refined at the time included “reserve” growth areas on the edges of cities, outside the UGBs. Some local farmers worried in 2004 that the reserve areas, while seemingly good growth policy, might simply act as loopholes, too weak to hold off future pressures from adjacent cities to “spread out rather than promote density within their current boundaries” (Corvin, 2004: B1).

Chapter 8

1. In 2006, to take another example, Baltimore’s youth homicide rate doubled, yet 100 out of 146 youth recreational facilities had been closed by this time (BUILD, 2007).

2. The Baltimore MSA of 2.6 million and the Washington MSA of 5 million are together part of the larger Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical area of 8.8 million that covers three states (Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia) plus the District of Columbia.

3. All the commuting figures reported in the next few paragraphs are available from the Baltimore Metropolitan Council's synthesis of the 2000 Transportation Census Transportation Planning Package; http://www.baltometro.org/content/view/404/315/.

4. “Preexisting” programs include, for instance, the federal government’s urban enterprise zone initiative dating from the 1980s and a Maryland conservation initiative, Program Open Space, which was created in 1969 as a parkland acquisition program. For their part, farmland protection efforts have included the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation, which was established in 1977. Though successful in many ways, such conservation and protection measures did not always involve large, contiguous tracts of undeveloped or relatively undeveloped land, a deficiency that stimulated the Rural Legacy Program in 1997 (see Knaap and Frece, 2007: 465–466).
5. Neighborhood plans also reflect the complex multiplicity of the contending, spatial rationalities that define the paradigm. For example, the neighborhood plan for Park Heights, whose residents are 98 percent African American, calls not only for aesthetic and design innovation but also for using the planning process to strengthen local, social, and institutional cohesion and political support and for more aggressive “code enforcement” and public safety rather than market flexibility per se. In this sense, it is the absence of the local state, not necessarily its presence that is the real problem (See City of Baltimore, 2006f: 7–8).

6. ISTEA stands for the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act, which was passed during the first Bush Administration in 1991. ISTEA was replaced by Transportation Efficiency Act (TEA-21) in 1997, under the Clinton administration. Both acts strengthened metropolitan planning organizations and regional transportation planning and both represented a turn away from federal policy focused principally on interstate rollout to a more balanced strategy that considers transportation as intermodal, better integrated with land-use decisions, linked more directly to broader policies on water and air pollution and, especially under TEA-21, global economic competitiveness.

Chapter 9

1. Political subdivisions within the State of Wisconsin are unusually complex, even for the United States of America, and include counties, towns, villages, and cities, all of which can be constituted legally as general-purpose local governments, albeit with different powers and resources. In particular, 36-square mile township ranges based originally on the Land Ordinance of 1785 are, in Wisconsin, often spatially and functionally coterminous with “towns.” However, townships may also be unincorporated and serviced directly by counties. See Anderson (2005).

2. The average new home in the United States of America as a whole was about 1,500 square feet in 1970, a figure that increased to 2,400 square feet by the mid-2000s; only fifty years ago, it should be recalled, the average new American home had only about 1,000 square feet. See http://www.cnu.org/node/835.

3. A PUD is a land-use tool that combines zoning and subdivision regulations into a permitting process that allow for mixed-use projects (including single-family, multifamily, commercial, and institutional uses). PUDs are typically developed as single master plans. The use of PUDs in the United States of America actually goes back to the late 1940s, reflecting the relatively early dissatisfaction with traditional zoning tools by many private developers and local governments.
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