Power, Reform, and Urban Regime Analysis

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Although "power over" and "power to" are conceptually distinct, in political reality they are intertwined. As forms of "power to," urban regimes are not neutral mechanisms, but are forms of empowerment. Still, they may come less out of a contest of wills around fixed preferences and more out of how preferences are shaped by relationships. Perceived feasibility plays a major part. Given bounded rationality, one alignment of relationships may crowd out others, facilitating the pursuit of some aims while hindering others. Reformers often face the handicap of being inattentive to the reality that some forms of interaction have higher opportunity costs than others and therefore are less sustainable. Reformers frequently see their task mainly in "power over" terms, that is, of ousting defenders of the status quo. But if reformers think about their task in terms of "power to," then they can see that a major obstacle is the difficulty of achieving a settlement with sustainable forms of interaction. Going beyond particular battles to win the war for reform calls for a regime-building effort that rests on viable forms of cooperation.

INTRODUCTION

The study of urban regimes brings to the center stage the issue of how to think about power. *Regime Politics* (1989) draws the distinction between "power over" and "power to" as a way of differentiating a social production model of power from a social control model.[1] Over the past few years, as I have sought to understand the politics of social reform in the United States, reform in urban education in particular, that distinction continues to strike me as critical. Yet, to make such a distinction is not a matter of endorsing one conception of power over the other, but of understanding how each fits into a larger political picture. It is important to see that in everyday political reality the two understandings of power are intertwined. Though conceptually different from "power over," for reasons spelled out below, "power to" has a domination or "over" aspect that should not be ignored in the study of urban regimes. After all, regimes are not neutral mechanisms through which policy is made. Instead, they are arrangements that facilitate action on some issues more readily than upon others.

Realists have long embraced the view that politics is about "who gets what." I shall argue below that there is another dimension that becomes increasingly distinguishable as we pursue the concept of "power to." Among other things, we need to move away from thinking about power exclusively as a contest of wills between actors with preset preferences.

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The social production model or "power to" provides an opportunity to consider how actors come to embrace *and stay with* some courses of action rather than others. Regardless of initial sentiments about the relative worthiness of various aims, some purposes seem to have a capacity to crowd out or even replace others. Why?

Preferences not only precede action, they can also be shaped by experience. And some courses of action may prove to be more sustainable and therefore more appealing than others. If so, we need to understand why that might be the case. Below I will use the example of social reform to suggest some possible answers to the question of sustainability. If some courses of action prove to be more enduring than others without regard to the initial intentions of actors, then we have ample ground for asking what makes some forms of interaction more viable than others.

As we consider the experience with social reform, perhaps we need to entertain the possibility that politics involves more than struggle between dominant and subordinate groups. This is not to deny that there are such groups—of course, there are; but reform calls for more than challenging a set of privileged actors. Unglamorous as it may be, reform needs to come to terms with the limitations imposed by bounded rationality as a central fact in human behavior. Otherwise, for reformers, even an initial set of impressive victories may prove not to be effective and lasting.

Though battles between powerful actors are dramatic and the struggle to oust entrenched interests may be morally appealing, political reality is more complicated than either of these two scenarios. One reason why reform is hard to achieve is that the pursuit of worthy goals is often hard to sustain on a day-to-day basis. The point is *not* that humankind is incapable of being socially minded—abundant evidence exists that, under the right conditions, people can be public-regarding in their actions. But what are these conditions? I shall argue below that the concept of bounded rationality (March and Simon, 1965; Jones, 2001) helps us to see why some courses of action might be more sustainable than others.

My argument has several steps. It starts with the distinction between "power over" and "power to." This distinction opens up the issue of preference formation and gives us a way to address the question of why some courses of action are more sustainable than others. Bounded rationality appears to be a significant part of the answer to that question. First we turn to power.

POWER: SELECTED ISSUES IN BRIEF

"POWER OVER"

"Power over" is perhaps the more widely understood of the two conceptions of power. It is the Weberian-based idea of A getting B to do what B would not otherwise do. This relationship is a contest of wills, in which the one who prevails is powerful. The powerful prevail either because they can mobilize more resources or use their resources with more skill. But, in any given situation, the capacity for A to prevail depends in part on the degree to which B is willing to resist and run up the cost to A of achieving compliance. This point has society-wide implications. As Dahl (1984) argues, over a large domain (many subjects) in a wide scope of activities (from, say, daycare to transportation policy) to a significant degree of intensity (being asked to pay a large tax as opposed to a small one, for example),

the cost of achieving compliance for a would-be dominant actor soon becomes enormous. Particularly under conditions of dispersed resources, pluralism is likely.

The elitist counterpunch is that, if the would-be dominant group is able to manipulate the consciousness of their potential subjects and thereby lessen the will to resist, then the cost of achieving compliance is rendered manageable. Hence conflict theorists, like Gerhard Lenski (1984, p. 52), emphasize that consent is manipulable. They suggest the principle that: "those who seize power by force find it advantageous to legitimize their rule once effective organized opposition is eliminated." Applied to the problem of political change, conflict theory, like pluralism, treats the matter as an issue of resistance and the cost of compliance. According to conflict theory, overcoming domination calls for weakening legitimacy by heightening awareness of the conditions of exploitation and awakening those who are subordinated to strategies of opposition (see, for example, Gaventa, 1995).

We should not assume, however, that "power over" involves only relationships that are highly asymmetrical. Sometimes power is not one-sided and relationships may be somewhat balanced. When we consider bargaining and coalition building, for example, we see that there is often a high degree of mutual dependence. And as we think in complex terms about power and dependence, then we can see why bargaining rather than domination and subordination may be the order of the day (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1962).

Mutual dependence provides a segue to the alternative conception, "power to." Individual actors often find that they can accomplish little on their own. It is in concert with others that they enjoy a "power to" act that they would not otherwise have. To be part of the political community is, then, to have an enhanced capacity to pursue collective aims. This is a fundamental part of the political experience. It is the reason we talk about *community* power rather than confining ourselves to power as a relationship between individuals. Significantly, the preamble to the U.S. Constitution begins: "We the People of the United States, in Order to . . . ." The U.S. Founders recognized that forming a stronger basis for collective action among the states was an act of empowerment.

Such empowerment is, however, complicated. To become part of a political community or a coalition is also to take on certain responsibilities. These might include an obligation to refrain from harming other members of the community or to avoid raising divisive issues that weaken the solidarity of the community. Or the obligation might entail joining with other members of the community to meet some external threat or challenge. Membership in a political community thus has a dual character; as with any structure, it is both enabling and constraining.

The same might be said about membership in a profession or mastery of a discipline. It enables the actor to do things that otherwise would be unattainable, but the fact of membership in a profession or immersion in a discipline shapes how matters are seen and what one feels obligated to do about them.

POWER AND PREFERENCES

At this point, it appears that "power over" and "power to" are not radically distinct phenomena, but that one shades into the other. However, there is a point on which the two

seem sharply at odds, and that is over the place of preferences in a relationship. As a contest of wills, "power over" assumes that preferences are fixed; the contest is about the extent to which A's preference to impose a change on B will be accommodated, and the extent to which B's preference to resist this change will prevail.

"Power to" works from somewhat different premises. Though an actor may carry a set of strongly held preferences into the formation of a community or association or into the joining of one, preferences are most appropriately seen as work in progress. To some extent, "progress" is a matter of refinement. It may be a matter of discovering trade-offs. Pursuing a goal or forming an affiliation may, as it unfolds, involve sacrifices not foreseen. For instance, the joining of a group brings to the surface hidden costs in the form of obligations to others. Hence the joiner learns that membership in a community, association, or coalition provides a capacity to achieve ends that were not there before affiliation, but that capacity also involves responsibilities not fully anticipated.

Affiliating into a capacity to act jointly has as well the opening up of new possibilities. These can be thought of in two ways. One is the awakening of a preference kept dormant by the previous lack of feasibility. Awakening can occur as awareness grows that a goal becomes achievable as sufficient support and cooperation are brought together. Hence Dennis Chong (1991) talks about a social movement as a context in which preferences are dynamic. As the assurance of wider support for a movement grows, the attraction of a movement expands and does so for a variety of reasons.

One important reason support may increase is an enhanced sense of feasibility. In talking about the French Revolution, historian Robert Darnton suggests that there are events that release "utopian energy." Darnton uses the term "possibilism" to denote a "sense of boundless possibility." Darnton views the French Revolution as a succession of events in which there were "moments of madness, of suspended disbelief, when anything looked possible and the world appeared as a tabula rasa, wiped clean by a surge of popular emotion and ready to be redesigned" (1989, p. 10). Revolutionary moments are rare, of course, but times when credible choices simply widen are more common. They too awaken inert preferences.

Beyond the arousing of latent preferences lies the possibility of discarding old preferences for new ones or of simply discovering entirely new preferences. Cohen and March talk about two kinds of behavior involved in making choices. One is what they call "a theory of children," and the other "a theory of adults" (1986). They remind readers that, though the adult model is one of fixed preferences, there is a child in all of us. As the "child" is exposed to and drawn into activities—perhaps even activities initially resisted—s/he discovers and acts upon new preferences.[2] Thus in various ways "power to" relationships reshape an individual's preferences, and certainly modify them in significant ways.

THE PROBLEM OF INTENTION

Consideration of "power to" poses the issue of intention in a clear form. According to some conceptions of power, actor intention is a necessary component of a power relationship, even if it takes the form of an implicit intention, as in an anticipated reaction (Clegg, 1989; cf. Lukes, 1986; Wrong, 1980). But if preferences, and therefore intentions, are malleable, then intentions can no longer serve as a fixed point from which to assess a power relationship. The connection to other actors shapes intentions and can alter the

intentions of not just one actor in a relationship but both (and by extension all in a multi-person relationship). In other words, this is not a matter of a dominant actor lessening resistance to domination by manipulating the consciousness of the subordinate actor. Instead, it is a matter of some connections or shared capacities to act overriding others and altering the intention of actors in the process. "Domination" in this form is not of one will over another, but, in a sense, of one shared capacity to act over another.

URBAN REGIMES AND "POWER TO"

Let us now move from an abstract discussion of relationships to a more concrete level. An urban regime can be defined as a set of arrangements or relationships (informal as well as formal) by which a community is governed (Stone, 1989). We can think of this in terms of a governing coalition—a set of actors who come together to make governing decisions (Mollenkopf, 1992). Individual actors may have their private agendas, but their coming together involves opportunities and responsibilities to act that are greater than what any individual actor may have had in mind.

When is a coalition a governing coalition? What is it that brings a group across that threshold? "Power to" is the key, and it underscores why informal as well as formal ties may be important.

In very special circumstances, office holding could be the identifying factor in membership in a governing coalition. Members of a city council who consistently vote together and make policy decisions would constitute a governing coalition if governance involved only legislative enactments. But the resources to govern a community generally are more extensive than that, especially in the United States. Privately controlled resources and the cooperation of non-officials may be crucial; reciprocal obligations with such actors may be an integral part of the actual arrangements through which governance occurs.

Machine politics is an apt example. Obtaining an ample supply of resources and guarding the demands on those resources are one way that machine politics can be explained (Erie, 1988). And, as Shefter (1976) has shown, the mere presence of patronage is an insufficient attribute to understand the process of governance. The internal structure and discipline of the party organization, alliances with business elites (and which kind of elites), an ability to attract a dependable following at the ballot box, and a set of moves to prevent opposition from gaining too many adherents are all part of the construction and maintenance of a political machine capable of governing (Shefter, 1976). Not all governing arrangements are as tightly run as the Croker-led Tammany Hall machine described by Shefter, nor are all highly cohesive arrangements built around a political machine. Atlanta provides an example of a strong regime centered on a biracial coalition between the city's white business elite and the black middle class (Stone, 1989).[3]

"Governing coalition," one should bear in mind, is a simplification. It points mainly to the core actors who are highly conscious of their role at the center of governance and who may have a strong loyalty to the arrangements that put them and their allies in the position of making key decisions. Indeed, one of the marks of an insider is an inclination to defend the arrangements through which governing decisions are made and carried out. In examining Chicago's school politics in the era of Richard J. Daley, Paul Peterson captures the regime character of that city (1976). Daley's mode of operation was not simply pragmatic brokerage of various issues, but also involved a strong defense of

established ways of acting and the protection of favored interest "within the existing social and political order" (Peterson, 1976, p. 15).

The Richard J. Daley regime is a useful reminder that the governing arrangements are wider than any inner circle. Some elements of the community may be relatively passive supporters—aware of the inner core, but not actively involved most of the time and yet accommodated in various ways. Other elements of the community might be largely unaware as well as uninvolved, though perhaps they hold some vague sentiments such as "you can't fight City Hall." Some actors in the community may consciously be in opposition, while others may simply be pragmatic adherents to the view that it is unwise to "back losers" or "make waves" (Rakove, 1975).

The regime, then, is to be understood not only in terms of who the insiders are, but also in terms of a body of commitments as to how consultation will occur and decisions will be made and as to what considerations will be taken into account. That said, it is important to emphasize that arrangements are never totally fixed and understandings are always less than rock solid. Regimes should not be reified. Social relationships are always undergoing change to some extent. Philip Abrams suggests we talk about "structuring" rather than fixed structures (1982; see also Sewell, 1992).

It should also be borne in mind that urban regime arrangements, even within a single country, may differ sharply in character (Ferman, 1996; John and Cole, 1998). And communities may differ greatly in the extent to which governing arrangements bring major players together into a tightly cooperating alliance. Particularly at the metropolitan level, the arrangements are often a little more than "live and let live," if that.[4]

WHY BOTHER?

If urban regimes are such soft phenomena—neither firmly fixed over time nor possessing clearly demarcated boundaries at any given time, why bother? Why not study phenomena that are more easily measured? The response to these questions takes us back to the issue of power. Because "power over" involves an assumption of fixed preferences, it is easier to study. If power took only this form, a concept of regimes might be unnecessary in studying the governance of urban communities. But "power over" is only the most visible aspect of governance, and the concept of regime enables us to consider less visible aspects.

Regimes are a way of understanding how we act as political communities, and why some ways of acting tend to crowd out others. A regime thus does not represent a form of domination, "power over," as ordinarily understood, so much as one form of empowerment, "power to," crowding out others.

Is crowding out anything more than domination under another name? I think so, but I also acknowledge that the difference is not immediately apparent, in part because "power over" and "power to" do not exist in isolation from one another. They are intertwined. Take two cases of strong urban regimes: postwar Atlanta and Chicago during the mayoralty of Richard J. Daley. Opponents of the Daley machine were subject to minor sanctions, and major instances of racial repression occurred. In Atlanta, as in Chicago, rewards were withheld from those who didn't "go along." And during the planning for Atlanta's school desegregation in the 1960s, fringe white groups that might endanger the city's image of moderation came under close surveillance. Thus, in neither city was "power over" an absent factor.

PREFERENCE FORMATION

Why, then, resist the idea that Atlanta and Chicago were essentially instances of domination? Viewing power as domination assumes, as indicated above, fixed preferences in a struggle of wills. That view misses the dynamics in a full set of power relationships. It does not take into account how preferences alter in accordance with changes in the structure of the situation. This is not to argue that preferences are socially determined, but it is to insist that they are not formed independent of social relationships. In my treatment, "power to" rests on an assumption that political actors are purposive but that purposes change as experiences, relationships, and opportunities change.

We need therefore to understand how purposes are related to human agency. How choice enters the picture? Because there are multiple structures somewhat loosely connected, agents are not captives of any one structure. Agency is a matter of seeing, at crucial moments, multiple possibilities and making a reasoned choice to pursue one over others. Choices about purposes are not made by isolated individuals, but by people in relationships with one another.

A key choice about purpose is whether to pursue a broad aim with substantial community-wide consequences or a more narrow aim of concern primarily to a small group. Building a governing coalition is a means for pursuing broad aims, and, as the label "coalition" indicates, the process brings actors together who have somewhat different particular goals. The task of coalition building thus involves blending purposes so that they are largely consistent (though negotiation and compromise are also ongoing parts of the process by which consistency of purpose is maintained). Putting together a governing coalition involves more than identifying compatible partners; it also means working out the terms on which cooperation can occur, including the resources that each partner brings to the relationship. Governing means also attracting passive allies and taking into account potential sources of opposition and how to keep them at a minimum.

As these activities take shape, the coalition partners cannot restrict their attention to the major purpose that may have attracted their involvement in the first place. They are drawn toward a *political understanding*, an awareness of the need to address an array of concerns in order to sustain the governing arrangements with a sufficient base of support to keep opposition to a manageable level. The full set of arrangements through which the governing coalition operates is the urban regime, and being a central part of these arrangements ordinarily involves responsibilities for maintaining those arrangements as well as opportunities to use them for various purposes. A regime thus illustrates the dual character of a structure, both enabling and constraining at the same time. "Power over" does not capture this aspect of the regime phenomenon.

Purposes can be viewed in another way. Any given actor has multiple purposes that might be pursued, but choices must be made and opportunity costs paid. Devoting energy and resources to one purpose means that they are not available for others. And because of the means involved, some purposes conflict with one another. The effort to pursue one may preclude pursuit of another. For example, being an ideological crusader may make it less likely that an actor can play a deal-making game with City Hall, and *vice versa*.

One consideration in deciding whether or not to pursue the purpose is the likelihood of its being realized (Chong, 1991; Jones, 2001). This means, then, that the selection of a purpose may be greatly influenced by the anticipated or actual choices of others. Perceived feasibility plays a major role. *A central feature of "power to" has, then, to do with other actors, their*

inclinations, and the resources they can bring to an undertaking. Far from the test of conflicting wills around fixed preferences associated with "power over," we are now talking about a dimension of power in which preferences are somewhat malleable. Their malleability has to do with both scope—a narrow versus a broad purpose—and with the content—for instance a mayor deciding whether to back building a new stadium or launch a program of neighborhood conservation (Stone, 2003).

Those actively involved in politics may find another trade-off. Holding an elected position may mean that an officeholder is expected to facilitate the policy aims of others rather than pursue a personally held policy aim. Even though many officeholders may have entered politics originally as issue advocates, some may discover that the process of facilitation is itself fulfilling and, accordingly, they may shift conception of the role they play (Kayden, 1990).

REGIMES AND POWER

The pursuit of purposes, it should be emphasized, is not a matter of choice made in isolation. It is a matter of anticipating (sometimes actively consulting about) the inclinations of others. A number of considerations come into play—the resources that others can provide and the extent to which those resources might be complementary in useful ways; reputations of other actors, particularly on issues of dependability; the demonstrated workability of existing arrangements versus the uncertainty surrounding proposed but untried relationships; the risks attached to leaving some group, institution, or individual figure out of a proposed arrangement; and many more.

From this brief list, we can see that an existing regime often enjoys an advantage, and that advantage grows as the regime demonstrates its capacity to achieve results over time and across a range of issues. For a proven set of relationships, there is a kind of gravitational pull that increases as demonstrated capacity increases. An existing regime is, of course, not suitable for all purposes. But any given actor is likely to weigh the risk and cost involved in creating a new regime versus the risk and cost of adjusting the pursuit of purposes to that which can be accommodated by the existing regime. In this way an established regime can preempt the governing role, making it difficult to put together a rival regime arrangement. From the above line of argument, we can see why "power to" functions in a different way from "power over." With "power over," the exercise is costly or power depleting, whereas "power to" can be power reinforcing (March, 1966). Like social capital, use of a governing capacity can be strengthening.

Another aspect of "power to" and regime creation has to do with the nature of the basic building blocks. Compared to European cities, American localities start from a much more fragmented political base. European cities have established political organizations, stronger unions, and a permanent career service seen as professionally appropriate for a wide range of policy tasks. In addition, governmental authority enjoys a deeper level of legitimacy. Large and durable building blocks are available for relatively easier assembly of effective governing arrangements. In the United States, a less esteemed and more segmented civil service, weaker public authority, and more anemic political organization make the task of regime building more formidable and less government-centered. As Robert Crain once observed, "one of the most complex issues in the study of American local government [is] the phenomenon of the businessmen and others who, without

holding formal office, make up a civic elite that influences the government's actions" (1968, p. 356). Of course, in the United States there are significant variations, depending on the mix of organized entities in place and in operation. Barbara Ferman's (1996) comparison of Chicago and Pittsburgh, for example, is highly informative about how a few key decisions can move cities along quite different paths. "Power to" is not, then, a noncompetitive process in which there are only gainers and no losers. (Pareto-optimality, in this case, can be left to the economists.) Some groups are more attractive as allies than others (Stone, 1980), and the presence of an established set of arrangements facilitates some purposes at the expense of others.

"Power to" also has implications for strategies of political change. An understanding of power as "power over" points to a strategy of change by means of opposition, of raising the cost to a dominant actor for gaining compliance. Seen from a perspective of "power to," a strategy of noncooperation or opposition fits into the picture in a different way. It entails the risk of political isolation. In turn, political isolation means that engagement in the formation of a new regime becomes less likely. Simple resistance may be counterproductive; as a form of withdrawal, it may mean that the central operations of an established regime are left unhampered.

The above discussion enables us to see why the concept of urban regime is useful in understanding power in operation and in seeing its implications for various political strategies. Though the *precise* boundaries of a given regime may be somewhat fuzzy to a researcher, the boundaries may nevertheless be clear enough to provide a framework for examining the behavior of various actors, particularly core actors. For example, who is involved in making governing decisions and on what terms? More specifically, who is reinforcing established arrangements and how? Peterson's (1976) examination of education politics in Richard J. Daley's Chicago illuminates reinforcing behavior.

Or who is trying to change or replace existing arrangements and with what consequences? The initial Maynard Jackson administration in Atlanta (Stone, 1989) and the Harold Washington administration in Chicago (Ferman, 1996) provide informative case studies. Simply winning an intensely contested election is not enough to put new regime arrangements in place. The question of political change pushes us to think about the dynamics of regime construction in somewhat different ways. If we keep an eye on "power to" and its implications, we have reason to think beyond questions about who is powerful to the issue of whether some lines of action are easier to follow than others. Reverting to the question of purposeful intentions and how they take shape, we can ask whether politics is only to be understood as a contest between powerful actors or also as a matter of what makes some forms of interaction more compelling than others. Through the concept of an urban regime, we can see that politics involves people working together purposefully. But we can also see that purposeful interactions vary in sustainability. Some courses of cooperative action appear highly workable, others less so.

SUSTAINABLE INTERACTIONS

One of the continuing puzzles in politics is why seemingly popular ideas sometimes have little lasting impact. Reformers win elections but falter in their efforts to bring about change. Typically they are, as Plunkitt of Tammany Hall observed, "mornin' glories"— they tend to wilt as the political day wears on (Riordan, 1963, p. 17).

The Plunkitt perspective invites us to think about political change in a particular way. How does reform become institutionalized? Once we ask this question, we are no longer concerned only with how reformers mobilize opposition to an existing order. We shift attention to the question of how a reform agenda plays out in practice. Even if a challenge is victorious, the challenge itself is not the end of the process. A successful challenge is followed by some form of political settlement. The *lasting* terms of a settlement may differ from the counterpart elements of a political challenge. Why? That is a question well worth pondering. It may help us understand why reformers are so often "mornin' glories."

One explanation for the weak staying power of reform is that while reformers may capture high-visibility offices, other strategically important positions are outside their control. But, on close examination, this argument begs the question. If reformers have popular backing, why don't the high visibility offices become beachheads for long campaigns to bring about reform? What is it that works against extended efforts?

Education historians make the telling point that Edward Thorndike proved to have greater influence over education practice than did John Dewey because Dewey's ideas, though intellectually more appealing, were harder to implement. Thorndike's ideas translated into practice easily and met practical everyday needs (Lagemann, 1989; cf. Tyack and Cuban, 1995). Mark Moore makes a parallel point about why some ideas carry more weight than others. It is not, Moore argues, the intellectual properties that carry the day. Instead, "contextual properties" provide a guide in organizing activities. He notes:

> Thus, to the extent that ideas distinguish heroes from villains, and those who must act from those who need not, and to the extent that these distinctions fit with the aspirations of the parties so identified, the ideas will become powerful. If powerful people are made heroes and weaker ones villains, and if work is allocated to people who want it and away from people who do not, an idea has a greater chance of becoming powerful (Moore, 1988, p. 80).

Let us be clear about what is being said. The connection of an idea to a socially worthy purpose, the novelty of an idea, its catchiness, or its internal logic may give it appeal as a topic for discussion and even promote popular approval, but such an idea may still fail to become a framework for action. That role may fall to ideas with less glitter, but greater ease of execution.

BOUNDED RATIONALITY AND THE PROBLEM OF CHANGE

What is it, then, that makes an idea or a policy goal sustainable as an organizing factor? There is almost certainly no single answer to this question, but there are several possibilities worth considering.

Moore argues that *consistency with established practices* should receive major attention. What is already in place has passed a test of workability. Certainly Moore's reminder about the test of experience predicts the low batting average for reforms. By its very nature, reform calls for overturning existing practices and putting in place new ones. Reform, then, always operates at a disadvantage in competition with the status quo. And bounded rationality helps account for this pattern. The limited capacity of human beings to envisage new relationships in new modes of operation serves to advantage established ways of doing things.

The point can be elaborated. *Purposes that are consistent with established lines of cooperation* are easier to pursue than those that cut across deeply felt lines of cleavage. Not only do past antagonisms not die easily, but past relationships of cooperations contribute to social capital and facilitate future cooperation.

Consistency with what is in place has yet another dimension. Brief reference was made above to *building blocks in place*. Hence, to offer one example, the programmatic parties (and their group allies) that operate in European cities provide more substantial building blocks than the candidate-centered politics characteristic of U.S. cities. In the case of European cities, one can also add as an available player a well-established civil service, less fragmented and more highly regarded than its American local government counterpart. The construction of arrangements around a policy goal might, thus, be a less formidable task in Europe than in the United States—except the business sector in American cities is often more tightly organized for involvement in local affairs than is the case in Europe. As a general rule, then, we would expect to see urban regimes in Europe more government-centered whereas those in the United States would display a more business-centered character (Digaetano and Klemanski, 1999; Harding, 1995; Stoker, 1995).

At an even more general level, the point appears to be that assembling a few already established entities into a cooperative arrangement is easier than building such an arrangement from a zero base. Thus, one student of neighborhood organization advocates what he terms a federation strategy (O'Brien, 1975).

Yet another elaboration of the original point is that redistributive measures are a more formidable challenge than those that simply allocate a limited amount of new costs and benefits. Because redistribution is unsettling to a higher degree and involves more players, it is a more difficult process to bring off. In short, putting a redistributive policy into place represents a huge organizational challenge.

The first principle offered is, then, that (other things being equal) change, as Moore suggested, is more difficult than working with established arrangements. The greater the change, the more difficult it is. As the amount of change required decreases, the task becomes more manageable. Change versus the status quo is, however, only one dimension.

ADVANCING LARGE-SCALE CHANGE

Since policy change does occur, we can probe further about what makes some changes easier than others. Following the guidance of Herbert Simon once again, as in the case of bounded rationality, we can distinguish between different versions of large-scale change. Simon reminds us through the parable of the two watchmakers that equally large and complex entities can be constituted in alternative ways (1969, pp. 90–93). An entity can be composed of a single set of interlocking parts or of an assemblage of subsets. In Simon's fable, the two watchmakers both assemble watches of 1,000 pieces each. In the case of the watchmaker proceeding by a process of single interlocked assembly, every time there was an interruption the whole effort came apart. For the other watchmaker, who made use of subassemblies that could stand alone, an interruption only set back the operation to the beginning of the subassembly in process. Hence an interruption did not mean that the whole effort of watchmaking had to begin from scratch. Simon thus offers the lesson that in a complex task an assemblage of subsets is easier to work with than a single interlocked set.

Though Simon's argument is at a high level of generality, it can be applied to policy change. Like the watches in Simon's parable, policy efforts can take the form of interconnection without benefit of subtasks that can be handled independently of one another or they can take the form of independently viable subtasks. In a study of the civil rights movement, Dennis Chong considers problem solution over time, and argues that a sustained effort is more likely if it can be made piece by piece. Chong elaborates the point by saying: "problems with long-term solutions do not lend themselves to the short-term reinforcement schedule that is often required to nurture large-scale political activism" (1991, p. 240).

The degree of change enters the picture again. Consistent with the contemporary concept of bounded rationality, Machiavelli (1985) argues:

> nothing is more difficult to handle, more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to manage, than to put oneself at the head of introducing new orders. For the introducer has all those who benefit from the old orders as enemies, and he has lukewarm defenders in all those who might benefit from the new orders. This lukewarmness arises . . . partly from the incredulity of men, who do not truly believe in new things unless they come to have a firm experience of them (pp. 23–24).

Seemingly, the possibility of a broad and long-term change has less capacity to engage human motivation than smaller and more immediate steps. If so, large-scale change can be built more readily on a foundation of assembled parts than on a foundation of one grand action. Cumulative small opportunities sustain political activity more readily than a single grand opportunity. One might argue, of course, that best of all is a grand opportunity built of many small opportunities.

If we apply this argument about segmented tasks to the urban policy experience, we can see it supported in the pattern that planned physical change is easier to promote than planned social change. Physical change lends itself more readily to a step-by-step process. Hence the "unheralded triumph" of an earlier era, celebrated by Jon Teaford (1984), was largely an engineering triumph, a triumph wrought project by project—projects that themselves could be advanced step-by-visible-step. Planned social change was thus not part of the urban achievement Teaford highlighted.

For more recent times, we can compare efforts to redevelop the city physically with efforts to reconstruct the city socially. Physical redevelopment wins going away as a sustained policy effort, and this is *not* because the physical reconstruction of the city has been uncontroversial. Whether in the form of urban renewal, expressway development, or the building of large sports facilities and convention centers, redevelopment has encountered enormous opposition (Altshuler and Luberoff, 2003). Changing land use, providing relocation, and committing big tax dollars are all matters that have generated intense community conflict, while, by contrast, improving schools and fighting crime are highly popular, at least as broad policy aims to pursue. Yet physical redevelopment has been at the top of the action agenda for cities throughout the postwar decades. Hence, as we look at the policies around which sustained efforts have been made, we do not see policies that enjoyed wide popular support, but policies that could be divided into small segments for piece-by-piece action and the kind of short-term reinforcement highlighted by Chong.

MARKET EXCHANGE

As we take stock of the argument presented above, we can see that some kinds of inter-actions (hence the courses of action compatible with them) might be more potent than others. Specifically, market exchanges seem to have strong capacities for establishing and maintaining relationships. At first glance this may seem counterintuitive. On the surface markets are impersonal forms of interaction that seem to provide only limited bonds between parties to a transaction. But that is only part of the story.

Consider two starkly different processes. One is typified by a market transaction. Two parties engage in a very narrow exchange. No broad area of agreement is needed, and the behavior of third parties typically has small, if any, relevance. The transaction may require little trust between the two parties; but, when such a transaction is repeated many times between the same parties, a relationship of trust can grow. Repeated transactions appear to facilitate a relationship of cooperation (Axelrod, 1984).

The contrasting process is that of generating agreement to act on behalf of a social purpose. Two parties may cooperate because they agree on the purpose to be furthered. Shared purpose seemingly provides a common bond. But any broad purpose has built into it numerous sub-issues about the nuances of the purpose, the level of priority it holds, acceptable trade-offs, and particulars of implementation (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984). Therefore mutual acceptance of a social purpose as a basis for cooperative action requires broad agreement not only on the purpose itself but also on a number of sub-issues as well. As a basis for action, it may also involve the issue of the level of concurrence among additional parties (Chong, 1991). In sum, acting on a social purpose can be very cumbersome compared to a simple market exchange. Transaction costs surrounding the pursuit of social purposes are often quite high.

The contrast between market transactions and social purpose mobilization enables us to see why market-like relationships might take hold readily and flourish widely—especially where programmatic political organizations occupy very little of the civic landscape. This contrast also suggests that the durability of capitalism may be less a matter of a hegemonic ideology and more a matter of transaction-cost efficiency. Capitalism may hold sway, not because people believe markets serve their needs better, but because markets have a flexible capacity to organize and sustain cooperative relationships. Here I am not talking about society-wide cooperation, but rather small and autonomous yet interconnecting nodes of cooperation. Market transactions and social-purpose mobilizations resemble the contrasting approaches of Herbert Simon's two watchmakers.

TAKING STOCK

Conventionally we think about policies and practices in "power over" terms. We assume that what is in place was put there and is maintained by some powerful group or collection of groups. In the pluralist version, these policies and practices enjoy broad public support. In the conflict theory version, elites manipulate the public into supporting policies and practices they would reject if they saw the big picture clearly. For adherents of the school of thought based in conflict theory, bringing about change is first and foremost a matter of educating people to get a better grasp of the situation (Gaventa, 1995).

Pluralism versus elite manipulation is at the heart of the conventional debate about power. What I suggest here is that there is an additional dimension of power, different

from and sometimes outweighing the ongoing struggle between competing actors. To understand fully the "power to" dimension, we must move away from the assumption that preferences are fixed. Cohen and March reject the notion that people have preferences first and then act to satisfy those preferences. As they put it, "human choice behavior is at least as much a process for discovering goals as for acting on them" (1986, p. 220). As Chong says, people want what they get as well as get what they want (1991, p. 143).

What I have added to this line of thought is that some courses of action are more compelling than others. For that reason, they give rise to policies and practices that tend to prevail. They represent purposes that are achievable. In short, prior preference does not necessarily guide everyday behavior; sustainable interactions may carry that behavior in an alternative direction, and different purposes may gather support.

We have now left the realm of A getting B to do what B would not otherwise do because the preferences of A and B have both given way to involvement in activity X. What carried the day was not that one actor prevailed in a contest of wills through superior resources or, alternatively, greater skill and shrewdness. Instead, actors were drawn into noncumbersome interactions around practicable purposes. In this scenario, powerful actors explain less than sustainable interactions. Initial intention, then, is not the guide to action; indeed, it gives way to subsequent intentions that are discovered in the activity. Hence we can no longer characterize the prevailing activity in terms of "power over." As presented here it is not, then, a matter of one side prevailing over another, but one course of action proving to be more viable than others because cooperation developed along a path strewn with fewer obstacles.

IMPLICATIONS

Now we have an additional insight into the weakness of social reform and we can see why, for example, winning an election is no guarantee that reformers will carry the day. Reform not only has to have popular appeal, but it also has to be transferable into sustainable interactions.

Like the glitzy but contextually weak ideas identified by Moore, reform programs may have popular appeal but lack durability. Election campaigns, after all, are not tests of sustainable interactions. Because campaign rhetoric is largely ungrounded in concrete experience, it is not a reliable guide to what is capable of keeping people involved in an activity.

CONCLUSION

At one level, conflict between powerful actors is a central part of the political process. But, if we think in terms of "power to" and acknowledge that intentions are not always fixed, then we are led to think about politics in a different way. Thus Cohen and March invite us to be attentive to goal-finding behavior, what they term "sensible foolishness" or "playfulness" (1986, pp. 223, 225). Rightly so, they call for greater attention to openness to discovery.

The consideration I want to offer is, however, a different one from that. Too little reflection on direction may mean that we become prisoners of what Hannah Arendt calls "natural" or "automatic" processes, some of which have damaging social consequences (1968, p. 168). Because intentions are susceptible to shifting winds of experience, it is

easy for social reforms to be blown off course. Despite widespread popular support, they may nevertheless yield to seemingly discredited policies and practices. Even reforms that have strong electoral backing may prove to be short-lived. "Power to" provides a reminder that because some kinds of interactions are more sustainable than others, we may drift away from a desirable course of action.

As we think through the implications of bounded rationality we can see that planned change (reform) may be inherently disadvantaged. Machiavelli cautioned that people are reluctant to embrace a new order because they have difficulty envisaging how it would operate. The more fundamental and far-reaching the change, the harder it is to envisage.

Bounded rationality means that we are in some sense captives of immediate considerations—of what it is easy for us to grasp, especially as we engage in everyday routines. But we are not totally captive. Following Herbert Simon's parable of the two watchmakers, we can devise a strategy for increasing the viability of social reform. The watchmaker lesson is to design ways to subdivide broad reform into components, *each* of which has interactive characteristics that can be readily sustained.

Herbert Simon's parable does not teach us to go it alone. After all, "power to" means that we gain a greater capacity to act by coming together in ways that make collective action possible. That is what an urban regime is about, coming together to achieve problem-solving capacities. The dismal record of social reform is a reminder that regime building is a difficult exercise. Because some forms of interaction are more sustainable than others, reform efforts do not succeed merely because they represent popular ideas or worthy social aims. Successful reform must rest on a foundation of sustainable interactions.

If we think only in terms of "power over" we will see reform as overcoming an opposition group—an entrenched set of interests defending their stake in the status quo. If we think in terms of "power to," we can see that a major obstacle to reform is the difficulty of creating sustainable forms of interaction. For reformers, the "enemies" to be subdued include bounded rationality, and that subduing involves a more extensive regime-building strategy than simply "throwing the rascals out." If a challenge to an established order is to be more than a pyrrhic victory, a settlement based on viable forms of cooperation must also be devised.

Notes

[1] The distinction can be found in several places, including: Pitkin, 1972; Hartsock, 1983; Arendt, 1986; Parsons, 1986; and Clegg, 1989.

[2] One could always argue that behind any newly expressed choice there is an underlying structure of preferences, but this line of argument seems to lead only to a pointless game of infinite regress.

[3] For a case of a coalition built around blocking a business-based development agenda, see Deleon, 1992.

[4] On metropolitan areas, see Orfield, 1997, and Savitch and Vogel, 1996.

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