Reflections on Regime Politics: From Governing Coalition to Urban Political Order

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Abstract

With hindsight covering a quarter of a century of *Regime Politics*, this reflection calls for refashioning the concept of an urban regime into a more encompassing idea of a multitiered political order. As an approach to political change, cross-time comparisons suggest that periodization can highlight how forces conjoin in different ways as political development unfolds. From this perspective, there is little reason to expect to find in today's cities a stable and cohesive governing coalition held together around a high-priority agenda. Yet the need for resources to be commensurate with policy goals and the strength of purpose in the face of an established mind-set are key lessons to be retained from the past experiences of Atlanta and other cities. While systemic inequality continues as an overarching reality, mitigating responses can be worked out in the middle ground between structure and agency.

Keywords

urban regime, multitiered political order, periodization, political development, governing coalition, purpose, systemic inequality, structure and agency

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Regime Politics (1989)

Looking back on a quarter of a century of feedback and accumulated observations about the strengths and weaknesses of *Regime Politics* (Stone 1989), I offer here my thoughts about studying the politics of cities through a regime approach. Much from my original analysis I hold onto, but the passage of time, also calls for significant lines of fresh thought. In exploring some new avenues along with reviewing some familiar ground, I argue for a conception of city politics as encompassing multiple tiers formed and reshaped within a wider urban order.

As conceived of in *Regime Politics*, analysis has two major components. One is a more detailed, close-order form of analysis, concerned with how the internal features of a governing arrangement fit together in pursuit of a priority agenda. While by no means ignoring context, *Regime Politics* gave special attention to internal dynamics. Within a limited range of context variability, internal dynamics have a potential for wide applicability. However, the one-time high-cohesion regimes held together around a redevelopment agenda (federally funded in large measure) have given way to more diffuse governing arrangements and a less sharply defined agenda (Stone, Stoker, et al., forthcoming). Although the same inner-core elements can be usefully examined, their dynamic has altered as the urban context has changed over the years.

The other component of analysis is contextual and brings long-term political change to the fore. By its very nature, it has limited potential for generalizability over time (and across national settings). However, it has a capacity to shed light on a succession of historical junctures, each leaving a legacy for later junctures.[1] When the contextual component is viewed over a long stretch, it brings a distinct dimension of political change into view. Thus, it shows Atlanta's biracial governing coalition to be the product of a conjoining of forces no longer in full sway. In the years following the Second World War, governing arrangements prevalent then have now altered, more so in some places than others.

First let us look at the inner core of regime analysis as a lens that captured very well the politics of many cities during a particular period. Then we can turn to a view of urban political orders across a longer span of time, and how such a perspective can help illuminate the changing context of today's cities. The two components call for ways of thinking somewhat different from one another, a matter I take up later. The two also complement one another by providing in combination a more thorough understanding of city politics and the process of urban change that encases it.

The Inner Core of Regime Analysis

The guiding tenet in inner-core regime analysis (its "iron law") is that for any governing arrangement to sustain itself, resources must be commensurate with the agenda being pursued (Stoker 1995; Stone 1993). A companion proposition is that for any substantial and sustained agenda, a stable coalition is needed to provide the necessary resources. By itself government is rarely a sufficient base. Hence, as a source of investment, of electoral influence, of civic networking, of compliance and/or oversight, and so on, a nongovernmental element is highly likely to be part of the governing coalition. In addition, particularly over a long haul, a governing coalition has maintenance needs—needs typically met through a regularized form of consultation and negotiation.

A major research task is to understand how these various factors align. While in some sense these elements have independent existence, the argument holds that, as elements of a governing arrangement, they have force only to the degree that they form mutually supporting elements. As a particular policy aim is achieved, the arrangement dissolves if that goal is not subsumed into a broad purpose made tangible through a procession of goals in which a coalition is assembled and, in the process, devises an ongoing mode of communication and coordination. A slackening on any count—a weakened sense of shared purpose, an alteration in coalition membership, or a weak and unreliable system of communication and coordination—is likely to spill over into the other elements. If not adjusted, it will bring about dissolution or transformation of the governing arrangement.

The narrative of *Regime Politics* traces the development of Atlanta's biracial coalition as a governing arrangement and its adaptations in the face of crises faced at key points. The rise of a restive and more assertive younger generation of African-Americans was one such crisis requiring significant adjustment. Another came from a tilt in Atlanta's racial balance and the election of Maynard Jackson as mayor (the city's first black chief executive) with the backing of a neighborhood movement. In both cases, much friction surfaced but adaptations occurred without a fundamental alteration in the basic governing alignment. Although differentiating adaptation from regime change becomes at some point a judgment call, Atlanta's experience appears to be a clear case of adaptation.[2]

All of the above analysis is contained in *Regime Politics* and is further elaborated in other early work on the regime concept (Stone 1993, 2001). The inner core of regime analysis serves well to illuminate how Atlanta was governed in the decades following the Second World War, especially the city's ability to bring to fruition an ambitious agenda of policy change. Many other

cities pursued a parallel program of growth, sometimes less expansive but in a direction consistent with Atlanta's redevelopment agenda. Less visibly, Atlanta reshaped its pattern of civic life, away from its one-time attachment to racial separation and exclusion into one that built extensive bridges of business and civic interaction. A sturdy foundation of congruent interests held the city's biracial coalition together, not only reinforced by selective incentives but also facilitated by shifting *from* an initial channel of negotiation linking black political leaders with a white mayor (William Hartsfield) close to the city's white business elite *to* one in which a black mayor and white business leaders dealt more directly with one another. Note what was constant: a biracial governing coalition, built around support for a priority agenda serving the broad aims of both major partners, a wide array of complementary resources from the coalition partners, and a mode of cooperation that allowed negotiations even as huge changes swirled around.

The inner-core features of Atlanta's governing arrangements are notable for their adaptability to racial change. For example, Atlanta's experience stands out in sharp contrast to cities, such as Chicago and Oakland, in the process of the political incorporation of African-Americans. While these three cities shared a growth agenda, they differed sharply in how well each navigated the rapids of racial change. Civil rights policies and the reality of a large demographic shift played parts in widening opportunities for middle-class African-Americans, but a close examination of how Atlanta came to be known as the Black Mecca would surely reveal important and perhaps inadequately understood cross-city differences. Still there are questions remaining about how Atlanta's experience fits into a larger scene of political change over time. To understand better how continuity and stability in Atlanta's politics fit into a broad pattern of order and change, we need to view Atlanta and other cities in a longer historical span than is the focus in *Regime Politics*.

Macrocontext and a Historical Dimension

The macrocontext for the experiences of Atlanta and other cities takes us beyond inner-core analysis into historical explanation. The setting is that of the changing South, and the book offers an account of how, in interaction with redevelopment, the civil rights movement played out in one of the region's major cities. *Regime Politics* covers significant contextual factors of a middle-range, adding to explanations of how and why Atlanta differs from such other Deep South cities as Birmingham and New Orleans, but parallels the experience in a mid-South city like Charlotte.[3] Midrange contrasts in context are noteworthy. As far back as the Great Depression, Atlanta has had essentially a "good government" style of politics along with a weak union

presence, and, in contrast with, for example, Robert Dahl's (1961) New Haven and Edward Banfield's (1961) Chicago, Atlanta possessed little in the way of political party infrastructure.

There is, however, a still larger context to consider. One criticism of regime analysis is that the concept of an urban regime in itself embodies no broad explanation for political change. When we look over time, what accounts for distinct shifts in governing arrangements? *Regime Politics* explains stability in Atlanta's governing arrangements, but the analysis was not positioned in a broad flow of social and economic change.[4] The emergence of fresh schools of thought, such as American political development (APD), reminds us that there is little reason to privilege stability as the state to be explained when change is pervasive. From an APD perspective, because "change is something inherent in politics as such," the analytical task becomes one of understanding how change and order are interrelated (Orren and Skowronek 2004, pp. 14–15). Forces converge but with imperfect harmony, and then at some stage they cease to cohere with energy and may dissipate. Small steps may matter, but comparisons between places and over time enhance our ability to see less proximate forces at work. Robert Salisbury's (1964) classic article on the "new convergence of power" is one example of a broad view of historically grounded change, and Douglas Rae (2003) offered another in his examination of New Haven, with his close attention to the political ramifications of technological change and the social disruption that accompanies it.

Let me combine with the criticism that *Regime Politics* pays insufficient attention to the broad flow of social and economic change, an additional point that the scope of actors considered may be too confined. Gerry Stoker (2005, p. 60) charged that urban-regime analysis is overly concerned with elite actors and their relationships and too little concerned "with the wider relationship between government and its citizens." Useful counter examples reinforce the point. By giving close scrutiny to electoral alignments as elements in governing coalitions, John Mollenkopf (1992)[5] provided a helpful example of how to connect the elite and mass levels of politics. Urban historians have added as a factor the exit strategy, white fight, and federally enriched inducements to move to a privileged and protected suburbia (Freund 2007; Kruse 2005; Lassiter 2007; Self 2003).[6] Hence, there is no denying that mass-based behavior has a place in explaining the politics of governing cities.

Taking into account the multitiered scope of urban political activity—that is, mass level as well as elite interactions and relationships—together with responding to the challenge of incorporating macro change into regime analysis has led me to a periodization schema.[7] As a process by which one urban governing order gives way to another,[8] periodization reinforces the case for

broad, multicausal thinking. Looking across time and space, we can see the outlines of a post–World War II period in which a concern with saving the city core in the face of profound economic and technological change was an overriding consideration.[9] In recent research involving a team of urban scholars, we refer to this as the redevelopment period (Stone, Stoker, et al., forthcoming). This time was also interwoven with black political mobilization and a wide movement to bring about racial change. Atlanta's biracial governing arrangement took shape in that context. Particulars varied from locality to locality, but the redevelopment thread ran through city politics from coast to coast, and north to south.

Periodization has to be handled with caution. As APD scholars Orren and Skowronek (2004) reminded us, political arrangements are never static. In any given order, inner tensions are at work (see also Thelen and Steinmo 1992), and exogenous factors always pose an ongoing potential as an unsettling force. Furthermore, both endogenous and exogenous factors can unleash the creativity of political agency to add to the dynamism. That said, we can still see stretches of continuity with enough coherence to talk about periods of governance. Most of the years covered in *Regime Politics* are well captured by the label redevelopment period. Thus, "the city too busy to hate" was a city whose governing politics combined economic growth through redevelopment with a modest pace of racial change. Put in broad historical context reaching to the present time, the governing arrangements examined in *Regime Politics* are best seen as a phenomenon of a particular time, not a pattern universally valid. Especially by looking across cities, one can see that the engagement of business as a *collective* force is not a constant in the governance of cities (Hanson et al. 2010; Strom 2008).

Over recent decades, conditions have changed. While concerns with economic growth extend across time, the vast change in land use that redevelopment brought about in adjusting to the decline of the industrial city has given way to a more diffuse agenda and thereby a less cohesive form of governing the city.[10] City politics in the present time clearly represents a shift from the redevelopment period, and a major force behind this shift lies in the broad contextual change suggested by the descriptor "postindustrial," with its emphasis on knowledge-based services and the processing of information.

Challenges in the Contemporary Study of City Politics

How, then, to proceed to a contemporary study of city politics that is context-aware in a broad way? Two challenges are woven into the various debates surrounding a regime approach. One concerns the autonomy of *local* politics

and how to go about characterizing it. The other involves the treatment of structural explanation. The two challenges are related.

With globalization rising to enormous importance, some scholars call for a "rescaling" of governmental and political relationships (see, for example, Brenner 2004). In a vocabulary now enjoying currency, Neil Brenner (2009, p. 134) saw "the urban" as "a key moment within broader, multiscalar processes of capitalist development and state regulation." He expressed special concern about a "methodological trap of localism" in which it is assumed that the urban scale is "a pregiven, relatively discrete container of political-economic processes" (Brenner 2009, p. 121). Brenner's charge is double-barreled. Neglecting capitalist development is only one—more on this barrel below. Brenner (2009, p. 124) also saw *Regime Politics* as excessively localistic, as assuming that cities are largely self-contained.

How telling is this line of argument? While I have acknowledged above that my study of Atlanta could have done more to characterize the broad socioeconomic flow of change within which Atlanta's governing coalition operated, *Regime Politics* did place redevelopment in Atlanta as occurring in a context of the city's move from being rail-centered to becoming automotive-centered. This placement was not framed directly as a change in capitalist development. My Atlanta work has nonetheless been explicit about the limits of a strictly local approach.

In one article, for example, I went to some length to frame regime analysis within a wider context:

> I contend that regime analysis is not purely localistic. Though not a comprehensive explanation (i.e., it is "middle-range"), regime analysis provides a way of relating local and extra-local forces. For example, a regime approach posits that the impact of the global economy on the local community is *mediated* through local governing arrangements. (Stone 1998, p. 250, emphasis in original)

This same article goes on to say,

> At the same time, another important process is taking place, and this has to do with the shaping of the regime . . . This shaping is an ongoing process. We can think of the larger world—with its economic structures, policies from the central government, and social movements—as a fount of resources and incentives for local actors as they go about altering or bolstering an urban regime. It is important to remember that two processes [mediating and reshaping] are going on concurrently, and both involve *links* between the larger world and the local regime. (Stone 1998, p. 251, emphasis in original).[11]

The reverse of Brenner's concern with the methodological trap of localism is obliviousness to the importance of the local. Thus, while acknowledging the immense growth of federal power, urban historian Thomas Sugrue (2003, p. 302) laments scholarly neglect of "the implications of localism for the history of the modern American state." He observed,

> Twentieth-century American state building rested on an uneasy tension between center and locality. The fates of the New Deal and the Great Society were to a great extent determined by local public officials and their constituents. To understand the peculiarities of America's liberal state requires that we bring the local back in. The politics of liberalism was ineluctably a politics of place. States and localities became battlegrounds over the meaning and implementation of federal policies (Sugrue 2003, p. 302).

Social policy in the United States can hardly be understood without taking into account the many local adjustments made to accommodate the place of race in American society, from the initial concession to slave-holding in the South through the Jim Crow era and on to the present condition of massive incarceration (Alexander 2012). Whether the Supreme Court's privileging of local control in education in the *Milliken* case, the separation of municipal annexation from the drawing of school district lines under Texas law, or deference to prosecutorial discretion in drug cases, the full scope of racial inequality in the United States can be adequately understood only by looking through a local lens. From another angle, consider how local coalitions take shape and can differ fundamentally from national political alignments (Self 2003).

The critique of localism appears to be embedded in a fixation with capitalist development. Accordingly, neoliberalism is seen as the latest stage in an ongoing trajectory of capitalism. In Brenner's analysis, a neoliberal mind-set guides policy making at the national level, and the resulting policies structure city politics (hence, it is best viewed top down). Jason Hackworth (2007, p. 68, emphasis in original) offered the observation that while regime analysis was conceived within a political economy framework, it devotes excessive attention "to *extra-economic* concerns like race and culture to demonstrate why local coalitions matter." He added, "Because of this extra-economic bias, we still know little about how regimes behave as capitalist agents" (Hackworth 2007, p. 68).

There we have it. Localism is in this view a regrettable diversion from an economy-based explanation of city politics. Although there may be some agency within a dominant capitalist structure, the analytical game is to explain how capitalism in its various stages of development works out in the local context.

My contrasting position is a Tillian (Tilly 1984) view of society in which there is no "single fulcrum of control," but instead "many activities are autonomous and many middle-range accommodations are worked out" (Stone 1989, p. 227). Thus, my work is very much in line with that of Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek (2004) and the historical sociology of Philip Abrams (1982) and William Sewell (2005). As Sewell underscores, the structure-and-agency puzzle does not consist in working out the logic of a single dominant structure, but of understanding how multiple structures, varying in depth and scope, are interrelated, each with its own logic and limitations. As Orren and Skowronek argued, it is out of such a mélange that a political order is constructed but is imperfectly synthesized and thus harbors inner tensions or, in their term, "intercurrence." In this way, they derive their theoretical precept that "politics is historically constituted" (Orren and Skowronek 2004, p. 174). Political change therefore does not follow a single logic but consists of a succession of configurations.

Urban Political Order as a Needed Refinement to Regime Analysis

Although there is much in the original regime analysis to hold onto—multi-causation (which calls for studying the conjunction of factors rather than attempting to isolate a key variable), the central place of resources, the necessity of coalition-building, and a major role for purpose and agenda—I acknowledge that something more is needed. The concept of an urban regime today seems insufficiently expansive to capture all that is important. In particular, any expectation that inquiry will likely find a stable and cohesive governing coalition is outdated.

Governing has become more diffuse and fragmented than was common in the period of redevelopment with its clear priority backed by ample federal funding. With political change in mind, I have turned to the idea of an urban political order—not as a static arrangement but as a cluster of evolving relationships anchored in the city and extending into an intergovernmental dimension and reflecting an ongoing process of globalization. Like regime analysis, the concept of an urban political order retains the idea of a political whole and focuses on the way it holds together and how its tensions are manifested. As a concept, urban political order is intended to have room for cross-time comparisons as well as those across cities.

An urban political order is especially useful for thinking about governing in the city as a *multitiered* process.[12] The term "multitiered" calls attention to the significantly different layers of concurrent activity in the governance of

cities[13]: (1) setting a priority agenda, dominated by elite actors with substantial resources; (2) making minor adjustments in established policies and practices, typically the scope of activity that is engaged by a city's broad middle strata, who control modest resources—modest but also adequate to encompass a capacity to exit by moving to a different location within the metropolitan region; and (3) confronting circumstances of pronounced disadvantage by marginal populations, who have command of only meager resources far short of what is needed to alter the conditions that disadvantage them.[14] These three tiers of activity impinge on one another, but only rarely is impingement a matter of making an intentional effort to reshape cross-sector relationships. While separate tiers provide a way of tracing a trajectory over time, for understanding the full scope of change in an urban political order it is necessary to first look very broadly at the city's social–economic context. We can do that best not by listing particulars but by observing how the earlier period of redevelopment differs from the current time in *the underlying character of urban transition in process*. In short, how has the basic context shifted? After answering this question, we can consider the way such a change gives rise to far-reaching political and policy consequences.

Let us begin with what earlier became the conventional understanding of the urban crisis. Coming out of Second World War, city leaders faced the challenge of coping with the decline of the industrial city and to respond to massive suburban growth. A shift from rail- to automotive-centered transportation fundamentally altered land use, and through expressway construction and urban renewal, redevelopment became the priority agenda promoted by a business–city hall alliance and heavily funded by federal grants. Combined with the Great Migration (in which African-Americans were excluded from the suburbs), displacement profoundly affected both middle- and lower-class neighborhoods, and reinforced a federally subsidized exit to the suburbs by the white middle class.

By the time that weak, federal antidiscrimination legislation on housing was enacted in 1968, a pattern of affluent white suburbs and black poverty concentrated in the city was already firmly in place. Widespread outbreaks of civil disorder deepened the pattern. Redlining, predatory lending, and blockbusting fed widespread disinvestment in city neighborhoods. A scattering of voluntary efforts sought to counter the emerging pattern, but in the absence of governmental action at all levels, they proved ineffective. City services, especially education, failed to adjust and fed a broad process of decline and social damage. Redevelopment thus yielded a priority agenda of economic restructuring, a middle-class response centered in exit, and a lower-strata population essentially neglected and disregarded. A shifting racial demography and a brief flurry of Great Society initiatives opened the way to a modest

policy adjustment, namely, public employment for African-Americans, which provided a foothold for a growing black middle class.

As the redevelopment period ended (ca. 1980), city decline and suburban growth had turned national policy and politics rightward. City problems faded from the limelight in presidential campaigns, and the suburban middle class became the gravitational center of American politics. Except for a racially tilted War on Drugs (Alexander 2012), city-oriented programs funded by the federal government found themselves in decline and antitax forces were on the rise.[15] In brief, this sketch first identifies the context within which Atlanta's biracial coalition became that city's governing arrangement, and with significant local variations on this major theme,[16] it formed the broad context for the construction and operation of urban regimes in Atlanta and elsewhere. Second, the sketch points to an eventual shift in the national political context with profound intergovernmental implications.

Over time, with an evolving global economy, a significant shift has occurred in what faces urban America. Whereas the overriding consideration in the redevelopment period was land use as a mode of bringing about economic restructuring, the postindustrial city has moved human capital into prominence. The underlying character of urban change has become less a matter of physical reconstruction and more a matter of people considerations. In a knowledge and information age, both school reform and the cultivation and attraction of what has become known as the creative class (Florida 2003) have assumed center stage. Land use remains a major factor, but now the question is the extent to which cities are experiencing "the great inversion"—the gravitation of a younger and more affluent population to the city.[17]

As the collective corporate stake in the economic vitality of downtown has weakened with the transition away from the industrial city now an accomplished fact and the global mobility of business executives a reality, Salisbury's "new convergence of power" has aged and eroded. In many cities, the upper tier of movers and shakers has become less engaged and civic leadership has become more diffuse. Priority setting is now rarely a matter of fixing a strategic direction backed by a stable circle of top leaders; it seems more often a matter of ad hoc initiatives based on opportunistic assemblages of resources (Stone, Stoker, et al., forthcoming).

For many cities, with collective business leadership now largely in remission, long-term strategic planning by the business sector has given way to piecemeal, short-term pursuits of profit.[18] The "ed and med" sector is in ascendance, but not typically as a collective force. Philanthropic foundations have become more substantial players in larger cities, but collaboration within this sector is highly uneven. Nationally, a few billionaire philanthropists have deployed their wealth strategically to promote a corporate version

of urban school reform (Reckhow 2013).[19] Local leaders in several cities have given priority to education, but federal and state initiatives are the primary source of the high level of attention urban school reform now enjoys.

Overall, though the composition of local elites has undergone change, they remain a significant if less constant force. Priority setting lacks the clear and consistent character it had during the redevelopment period. With seldom a fixed "go to" body in place, the exercise of power has become less steady, and its institutional base lacks the kind of convergence that Salisbury identified in the redevelopment period.

Below the top tier change is also substantial. With the "great inversion" in operation, portions of the middle strata have forsaken relentless sprawl for gentrification.[20] Whereas the redevelopment era conflicts featured battles between middle-strata whites in retreat and a unified (sometimes uneasily so) black community asserting its claims with demography at its back, the present time sees the newly enlarged black middle class (itself now increasingly suburban but its own return to the city also in evidence) defending its tenuous hold without demography on its side and with public-sector employment under multiple pressures. Immigration is the dominant demographic factor.

For the lower class, where disinvestment and abandonment in housing were once an overarching threat, now we see the rise of a movement claiming a "right to the city" to counter the threat of displacement (Leavitt, Samara, and Brady 2009; Purcell 2014). Immigration and multiethnicity pose major challenges to any cohesive force from the lower ranks of the social order.[21] Yet, spearheaded by foundation-supported organizations like LAANE (Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy), locally based coalitions have achieved some remarkable concession and community benefits agreements (Jones-Correa and Wong, forthcoming; Meyerson 2013; Stuart 2010). With pressure from community- and labor-based organizations, several cities have enacted living-wage ordinances (Milkman, Bloom, and Narro 2010). Aided by highly sympathetic coverage from local newspapers in Los Angeles, SEIU (Service Employees International Union) conducted a successful campaign, Justice for Janitors, to organize workers in the city's hotel industry and reverse a decline in wages (Bridges 2011).[22] In contrast with the disregard urban neighborhoods once experienced, cities as diverse as Seattle, Phoenix, and Nashville have established robust departments of neighborhood affairs.[23]

With universities, medical schools, and their hospitals assuming a large place in many cities, university–community relationships are undergoing changes. Although significant points of friction remain, several universities have made efforts to establish a constructive relationship with lower-income residents in surrounding neighborhoods.[24] In some cities, foundations have also become important backers of community development in disadvantaged

neighborhoods.[25] The conclusion to be drawn from the various instances cited above is not that lower-strata groups have emerged as a major power in the governance of cities. They remain politically marginal, but less unremittingly so than was the case in the redevelopment era. Partly this is a matter that elite-tier players are more diverse than in past times. For instance, as in the case of the Dudley Street Initiative in Boston, the philanthropic sector can give otherwise disadvantaged groups a heightened presence in a city's political milieu. The more fluid structure of power makes possible alliances and a level of negotiations rarely found in the years following the Second World War (Stone, Stoker, et al., forthcoming).

Neglect in addressing burgeoning problems and the social damage that redevelopment bequeathed to cities means that the task of social reconstruction is enormous, and no Salisbury-type body of convergent power wielders is in place or even in prospect to take on such an effort. Nor, except in small bits and pieces, is federal funding for such an undertaking in the offing. Local action is thus potentially the main determinant of whatever social reconstructions takes shape. Comparison with the redevelopment period tells us that governing the city today has greater fluidity than in the past. Nevertheless, while local action can claim significance, it takes place within a context of structural inequality and highly scarce resources.

Urban Political Order as a Framework for Cross-Time Comparison

What to make of the above sketch of changes? The cross-time comparison described above does two things. As already indicated, it shows first that expectations of finding a governing coalition stable and cohesive enough to pursue an ambitious agenda are outdated. We are in a different era. Today's top elites lack the drive to come together behind a high-priority program of action, and there is sparse federal money for backing anything on the scale of a campaign for the social reconstruction of the city. Second, the cross-time comparison shows that despite various changes, structural inequality extends from the previous period to the present time. What are the implications of these two points?

A major challenge to regime analysis has come from scholars who see capitalist development as the defining context for city politics. With its own treatment of local activity, how well can the concept of an urban political order hold up against insistence that capitalism is the central fact of modern life? After all is said and done, is structural inequality under capitalism the final word? It is no doubt a very large consideration, but is a top-down view of an unfolding capitalism all that is needed? I think not, and, in any case, I

do not confine structural inequality to economic class and exclude race and other noneconomic factors.[26]

To move away from a deterministic view, think of structural inequality as a prevailing wind. Such a wind has profound consequences, but it is possible to build shelters and plant trees as a windbreak. With this analogy in mind, the authors of the forthcoming *In a New Era* offer an alternative to structural determinism (Stone, Stoker, et al., forthcoming). Designed to stress the importance of intermediate factors, this view draws inspiration from works by Cathy J. Cohen (1999) and Mario Luis Small (2004), with collateral support from Mary Pattillo's (2007) focus on racial brokers and middle-range players. These works highlight space within which adjustments can take place.

In an examination of urban poverty, Small (2004) made a case for paying attention to variable outcomes even under the shadow of a potent structural force. Specifically he called for a conditional approach with an emphasis on intermediate factors.[27] C. J. Cohen (1999) wrote about marginal groups and the agency they can develop even when a dominant stratum is in place. C. J. Cohen rejected a simple dichotomy between powerful and powerless, and she reminded us that the borders between mainstream and marginality can be malleable. In talking about varying capacities to challenge exclusion and gain access to resources, C. J. Cohen gave special attention to intragroup relationships and how they might vary in degree of cohesion, level of organization, presence of leadership aptitudes, quality of information possessed, and scope of communication channels. Because the character and cohesion of dominant strata also vary, differences in sites across time and geography can bear significantly on how marginal groups fare. As C. J. Cohen (1999, p. 25) reminded us, given that marginal groups are not without agency, "strategies of marginalization are not static but evolve over time, responding in part dialectically to the resistance of marginal group members."

As the capacity to define and pursue a broad redevelopment agenda once accorded high priority has ebbed into a more diffuse pattern of power, does this trend mean that pluralism is vindicated after all? Two considerations militate against any such conclusion. One is that systemic factors stand in the way of level ground for the formation of coalitions. A stratified distribution of resources makes the construction of some alignments more difficult than others (Stone 1980). In this way, market inequalities and social hierarchies penetrate political relationships, and they work against a level playing field.[28]

The second consideration revolves around a point about power made in *Regime Politics*. A capacity to govern by pursuing a broad, priority-accorded agenda has to be constructed and maintained; it is never a given. The decline of one such capacity does not mean that another of comparable strength will

take its place. Moreover, while diffusion of power makes for a more fluid situation, players with substantial resources find it easier to navigate those waters than do players with few resources. Just as marginal groups found themselves with little governing voice in the redevelopment era, they face that possibility as well in the current postindustrial time.

A position set forth in *Regime Politics* that I maintain with undiminished force is this: "The power struggle concerns, not control and resistance, but gaining and fusing a capacity to act—*power to*, not *power over*" (Stone 1989, p. 229, emphasis in original). If anything, the weakening of the convergence of power characteristic of the redevelopment era has made what I term the social-production view of power more compelling.

The multitiered conception of a city's political order thus does not carry with it an assumption that position within this order is locked into place, a conclusion that might follow from structural determinism. Instead, the logic employed here is that as adjustments to an ongoing process of change are made, a capacity to act can be strengthened or weakened. In many places, as the transition to a decentralized, automotive transportation became an accomplished fact, as globalization loosened the connections of corporate business leaders to any given place, and as diminishing federal money left city halls with less wherewithal, the convergence of power characteristic of the redevelopment period weakened. It was not deposed by a grassroots mobilization, but its supporting conditions changed. Significantly, the preemptive reach of the top tier (based around the redevelopment agenda) has become less consequential. The capacity to pursue an agenda of social reconstruction remains to be built, but the room within which it could be built appears more available than it was in the era of redevelopment.

With increased emphasis on human capital, the heightened importance of the "ed and med" sector, changing community–police relations, and the "great inversion" underway in many places, old patterns of power have limited footing in the postindustrial city of today. New and more diverse players with their own particular store of resources have entered the scene[29] but have done so without a broad, coalescing agenda. The top tier has thus become a less substantial force, and also one with a less coherent focus. Meanwhile, the incentives for the middle-strata population have tilted less toward exit and, in many places, more toward securing the benefits of the city. Furthermore, there is room now both for building fresh grassroots coalitions and for forming top-bottom alliances. None of these activities replicate the convergence of power characteristic of the redevelopment period, but with faith communities sometimes as a base for action and with foundation funding a source of support in many instances, marginal populations find themselves with enhanced opportunities for mobilization. Particularly if they are able to

overcome internal divisions of race and other social identities, they can "build shelters" against the winds of structural disadvantage (Thompson 2006, p. 250). As Jones-Correa and Wong argue in this colloquy, possibilities of bringing together appreciable initiatives of social reconstruction are feasible. Nevertheless, resource scarcity remains as an ongoing constraint.

A few years back, Sapotichne, Jones, and Wolfe (2007) called for moving on from the study of urban regimes as then understood. My response to that call is to update elements of the regime approach by refashioning it around the concept of an urban political order and keeping an eye on issues related to governing the whole polity (cf. Peterson 1981) while continuing to view a city's governing arrangements as the product of a configuration. In addition, I hold firm to multicausality as a form of explanation. In that way, the "iron law" that resources must be commensurate with the agenda being pursued stays in place even as the structuring of power and the setting of local agendas have become a more diffuse process.

Afterword

The accompanying essays in this colloquy along with the feedback from anonymous reviews have raised some broad issues about my approach to political change, especially the role of ideas in that process. As the above discussion of a shift in analysis from regime to political order in itself may respond insufficiently to this bundle of questions, I am using this Afterword to clarify my position in an expanded way. In *Regime Politics*, the change covered empirically includes the conjoining of forces that yielded the city's biracial coalition as an emergent governing arrangement. It also covers internal challenges in the coalition, but with its emphasis on coalition adaptability and stability, the book does not extend to some big questions of change of the kind that might arise from cross-time comparison of the inner features of one period with its successor.

On big questions of change, the following essays by Joel Rast and Kathryn Hankins make a sharp contrast. Hankins focuses on change in capitalism as the fundamental force at work; Rast calls for looking beyond "seismic shifts" in the global economy and reminds us that change can take place cumulatively, not just by decisive punctuation. Although they differ, both authors put forward perspectives on political change that warrant careful consideration. I turn to capitalism in later discussion below. On cumulative change, I begin by offering the reminder that while Atlanta's biracial coalition did not spring up immediately as a governing entity, it did develop rapidly and constituted a sharp shift from the past. Change, however, continued, and the city's biracial governing order faced two crises—one intergenerational within the

African-American community and the other in the partnership relationship at the heart of the governing coalition. That the biracial coalition survived these crises does not mean that governing came through unchanged—quite the contrary. In addition, as the analysis by Jones-Correa and Wong shows, significant (but nonseismic) events can also take place in a city's middle and lower tiers.[30] All in all, cumulative change is clearly a feature of Atlanta politics.

Rast's question about the economy as the main source of regime change merits special attention. Although the Preface to *Regime Politics* acknowledges various changes, including those societal in nature and a number of key federal actions, *Regime Politics* began as a political economy study. The concentration of investment in private hands is widely recognized as a central feature in the governance of American cities. Moreover, the transition away from a rail-centered city of the industrial era was a guarantee that land use would undergo profound change—though federal policy and private real estate practice were huge influences on the form this change took. Along with many other cities, Atlanta as a research site also assured that race would be an essential consideration. It is not the economy standing alone but *racial change interacting with economic change* that was the fundamental driver of political change in Atlanta.

There is a further caution I would add in regard to Rast's point about friction (intercurrence) among the formal institutions of government. In striving to understand urban political change, I cannot overemphasize that cities are not the nation state writ small. For cities, formal institutions of government are less significant than is the case at the federal level, where a constitutional structure embeds competing channels of representation and sites of authority as a setting for struggle and conflict. In the case of cities, socioeconomic setting assumes great importance. Much more so than the nation state, cities are subject to severe shocks both rapid and profound that flow from demographic and technological changes. As local decision makers are keenly aware of city vulnerability, patterns of response to external forces occupy a particularly important place in any overall analysis of local politics. As a source of political change, *within* the local context friction between formal institutions of government assumes less import. However, in the intergovernmental arena, where race and tensions around it have so often been an integral factor in federal–city relations, the intergovernmental channel has often served as a prompter of political change (see, for example, Reed 2014).

Let us turn next to what enters into the construction of a fresh governing arrangement, specifically to the role of ideas in such change. Ideas come in many sizes and shapes. My doubts about ideas as principal driver of change have mainly to do with big ideas, ideology, and particularly the notion of

ideological hegemony. Skepticism on my part begins with the caution that because ideas are the tools of trade for academicians, we may have a tendency to overrate them as a causal force. In addition, that giant of political analysis, Charles Tilly (1984, pp. 26–33), identified as one of the "pernicious postulates" of social science that mental events cause social behavior. He suggested in its stead that we look for social relationships, social ties, social networks, and how they facilitate collective actions. Mark Moore (1988) added the useful reminder that ideas have contextual as well as intellectual properties and that the contextual typically carries the greater weight. *Regime Politics* quotes Russell Hardin: "Social states of affairs are often much more to be explained by what can be coordinated than by what anyone's preferences or reasoned outcomes might be" (Stone 1989, p. 160). Hence, for several prominent scholars, relationships more so than ideas occupy center stage.

Dennis Chong (1991) explored in depth a kindred argument in his work on the civil rights movement. Chong used the concept of an assurance game to show how calculations about feasibility affect willingness to support a social cause and can even alter preferences. Furthermore, as Charles Perrow (1986, p. 116) contended, arguments about the power of ideas may have it backward; it could be most often that the "thought is not father to the deed; in fact the deed may be father to the thought."[31]

With regard to ideological hegemony,[32] I acknowledge that in Atlanta and other cities, there is little challenge to the capitalist system. Instead, one finds wide acceptance of a need to promote economic growth through encouraging business investment. Yet, while the idea of the private ownership of capital is largely uncontested, there are diverse views about how economic growth should be promoted and about trade-offs against other considerations, especially investment in human capital.

Is this secondary level of diverse views trivial? After all, it could be argued that as long as a community is committed to a capitalist system, this commitment will override positions on lesser issues. From such a perspective, a search for change might lead to directly taking on the legitimacy of a capitalist political economy. Such a strategy would, however, entail all of the obstacles that attach to building broad support for a complicated body of abstract ideas. Putting together a set of counter ideas may appeal to many academicians, but the prospects of successfully bringing together mass support behind such an oppositional ideology hold dim prospects (Smock 2004).

As argued in *Regime Politics*, one can view the process of change in a different way:

> Change may come about, not through the alteration of basic commitments, but through the piecemeal evolution of new practices and patterns of cooperation

and exchange. If, as often claimed, life is in the details, then we should be more attentive to details—how they can come to matter and how they can cumulate into new but perhaps unintended patterns. In a sense, power may also lie in the details; that is, in the capacity to guide the piecemeal evolution of new practices and make marginal adjustments in prevailing patterns of cooperation and exchange. (Stone 1989, p. 221)

Still there is a counter position that ideology is a vital tool in political mobilization, and big ideas are the way actors imagine a reality different from the prevailing one.[33] Yet, as *Regime Politics* contends, it may be that "basic commitments" are not tightly controlling, that in the pressures of circumstance they "are little more than crude rationalizations, subject to reinterpretation as practice changes" (Stone 1989, p. 221). If big "mental events" are not an especially helpful lens for viewing the role of ideas in political change, what is the alternative?

Let us start at a different place and come back to ideology. March and Olsen (1989) made a convincing argument that behavior reflects two different logics, a logic of appropriateness and a logic of consequentiality. Without dismissing either, it is important to consider what happens when they interact. Often no sharp clash is in evidence, but clashes can tell us much about the process of political change. The civil rights movement displays a pattern in which for African-Americans, defiance of the tenets of Jim Crow could be costly (the logic of consequentiality), but the long-term benefits of change could be immense (thereby linking consequence with an ideal long part of a logic of appropriateness within the African-American community). Observe, then, that consequences have both a short- and long-term dimension. Ideas are a way of connecting the two, but context comes into play. As Jack Walker (1963) once pointed out, the short-term consequences of protests through direct action were less costly to the student generation because they had a less established position of accommodation with the status quo. For students, there was more room for a freshly renewed logic of appropriateness to move to the fore and a long-term view of consequentiality to take shape.

Intergenerational tension within the black community was evidence of how shifting logics played out in relation to one another. Competing views were negotiated within a context of contending versions of consequences. The renewed logic of appropriateness opened the door to a fresh look at consequentiality. Change occurred not through one broad ideology replacing another but through something more adaptable—namely, a purpose as a phenomenon closer to everyday experience and as something interwoven with social relationships (on purpose, see Wilson 1973).[34] In the 1960s, Atlanta's pursuit of purpose involved for each generation its own distinct

view of the clash between appropriateness and consequentiality. Reconciliation came through negotiations that did not put either side of the generational divide into being "the other" in a matter of appropriateness. The conflict never cumulated into an ideological battle.

Consider now the white side of Atlanta's biracial governing coalition. Here, there is direct conflict between appropriateness and consequentiality. Mayor Hartsfield and his business allies came into the post–World War II period with a strong attachment to the maintenance of Jim Crow and a segregated way of life. In their scheme of preferences, the logic of appropriateness was on the side of maintaining the racial status quo. Jim Crow was culturally hegemonic. How did it come to be punctured by the business elite and then pushed aside by other considerations? Not by frontal assault. A hegemonic logic of appropriateness (Jim Crow) thus proved not to be an invincible barrier. Calculations about specific consequences can, as they did with Atlanta's business elite, take a toll on a broad code of appropriateness, not through wholesale transformation but bit by bit. Logical consistency with a broad commitment turns out to be a weak guide to behavior. Without a doubt, the logic of consequentiality (downtown redevelopment being the large consideration at issue) opened a door and step by step (Rast's cumulative change) made increasingly attractive an alliance with the city's black political leaders. The clash of logics saw consequentiality trump appropriateness, but the story does not end there. In Hartsfield's farewell address as mayor and in Ivan Allen's reflections on his career as civic leader and mayor, both came to embrace racial change as a matter in which Atlantans should take pride. Bolstered by a sense of accomplishment, experience shifted the logic of appropriateness from its original position to its opposite.

The move was away from a clash of logics toward a position of consonance. Observe, however, that neither the original formation of the biracial coalition nor its maintenance rested on an ideology of racial harmony. The biracial coalition was not ideologically driven by either partner. Through a pragmatic beginning, it rose from the logic of consequentiality and grew into something different.

Consider now a later phase of Atlanta politics, roughly a quarter of a century after the biracial coalition took hold. The election of Maynard Jackson as mayor, backed by a progressive coalition with a large neighborhood presence, indicated a likely shift in the governing arrangement for the city. A new city charter made formal governmental alterations part of the situation as well. Significant policy changes did occur, but in the main, the progressive agenda gave way to an update of economic growth. An anonymous reviewer of this colloquy posed an important set of questions about

why the majority of Atlanta voters who backed Jackson were not angry when he abandoned his progressive agenda in favor of a renewed emphasis on downtown redevelopment. Why was there no popular rebellion? Why no grassroots mobilization on behalf of neighborhood revitalization?

The reviewer poses the possibility that there was a consensus around the notion that only a business-led agenda was feasible, that, in effect, the third face of power controlled the situation. Without dismissing beliefs about feasibility as unimportant, I want to suggest a foundation different from the third face of power as the basis for the absence of a popular revolt. As argued in *Regime Politics*, the third face of power seemingly poses the initial stage of activity as the tallest peak to surmount in mobilizing an opposition force. However, Atlanta's progressive coalition backing Jackson for mayor went well past that threshold. "The striking feature of the Atlanta experience is the inclination of those in positions of responsibility to pull back from conflict with the business elite and seek accommodation" (Stone 1989, p. 222). Tilly would explain this through the far-reaching civic network that Atlanta's elite assembled. If so, what was the underlying structure of the situation that made it so hard to build and maintain an alternative network able to govern through a progressive agenda?

The answer I offer has to do with the scope of capacities required to assemble and maintain a political/civic network. Even where a city's business elite may prove less skillful and less ardent in preemptively putting together its network, the task of building an alternative is formidable. Aside from the realm of ideas, the structure of authority under capitalism is not level playing ground. Private control of investment puts important decision-making authority in a position separate from the governmental sector and therefore less directly accessible to the public at large. That separate position carries with it not simply an abstract capacity to make investment decisions in a narrow form but also considerable organizational and financial resources. Atlanta shows how, if the motivation is present, business can use its resources to expand its presence in the civic sector of the community and in its politics. Atlanta's business elite insulated this base of power and maintained its autonomy at a high level by collectively backing the norm of investor prerogative. Particularly in the United States with its absence of a strong labor-based party, the local political and civic milieu is skewed toward business.[35] Today's age of candidate-centered responsibility for raising campaign funds biases the process even further, perhaps favoring even more what, in their San Diego study, Erie, Kogan, and MacKenzie (2011, p. 15) called "roving bandits." Hence, even when not organized collectively for a broad policy agenda, important civic turf is held by business corporations.

No other group has a comparable starting place. Yet it can be altered bit by bit. The most feasible way to bring about change is not through pushing a different ideology; it is to alter cumulatively the organizational character of the "playing field." From the perspective I am posing, the battle is not an ideational one; it is one of using resources to construct a different network, to bring about a different civic and political milieu.[36]

The political weight of corporate business in Atlanta might have been lessened by putting into place a diminished form of investor prerogative, as can be seen in Boston (Clavel 2010; Medoff and Sklar 1994), Santa Cruz (Gendron and Domhoff 2008), and other places. As some have argued, developing alternative pathways of investment offers some possible leverage (Alperovitz 2013; Imbroscio 1997; see also Imbroscio 2010), but so far the scale of this pathway has remained miniscule and therefore has demonstrated minimal leverage. The redevelopment period shows that, across cities, to the extent that the city economy faces a challenge, then such a shared concern can throw business and political leaders together in an ongoing pattern of interaction. Past experience indicates that when a common concern rises, such an alliance has a high probability of coming together (Salisbury 1964; Teaford 1990).

That, however, was the past. Could the underlying structure of the situation be changing? Possibly, but corporate business remains a force. Even in San Diego, where the *collective* voice of business has faded to be replaced by "roving bandits," business remains a significant force with ready resources to initiate projects on its terms. Can an alternative form of urban civic and political life be organized? Political imagination and creativity could begin with something other than a broad ideological challenge. They could start and build from concrete purposes. The combination of the engagement of a capable and policy-oriented local government, with an expanded "ed and med" sector, mixed with local labor and immigrant activism, and backed by strategic funding from foundations might indeed create a different kind of civic and political milieu. Thus, as argued here, the challenge might best be seen as network construction. Ideas could play a part, especially in framing purposes, but the main challenge is likely to be organizational.

The role of ideas in political change need not be conceived as a grand battle between an emancipatory ideology and the confining character of a hegemonic ideology or culture. When Atlanta's biracial governing coalition assumed the top spot in the city's governing order, it was not by means of an ideological showdown. The displacement of the Jim Crow mind-set was piecemeal, and it occurred cumulatively (and, no doubt, incompletely). My position is to view ideas (culture, values, etc.) in less grand terms—instead to see them as a way of defining concrete purposes. A mind-set may often

embody a specific logic of appropriateness and as such constitute a significant phenomenon. Any such logic is not immune to a clash with the logic of consequentiality. Strategic thinking about how to achieve a desired aim is not precluded by an opposing logic of appropriateness. Consequential purposes can sometimes maneuver around such a code.

In Atlanta, the white partners in the city's biracial coalition came to that position and acted accordingly by making what had been the prevailing racial code into something increasingly penetrable—external forces played a part as well. However unevenly, a fresh code succeeded Jim Crow. Seemingly in line with Perrow's argument, "deeds" (actions) produced new thoughts rather than thoughts controlling deeds. As Charles Tilly might remind us, all of this occurred at an intermediate level (see also Small 2004). There one finds a rich mixture of thoughts and deeds. The ones that prevail do so because they are bolstered by social contacts, networks, and the way relationships guard against a wandering focus of attention. None of this comes without resources, and little is built from scratch. Federating with existing organizations and associations provides a large leap ahead of operating from an empty slate. Instead of starting with big ideas, it may be better to begin with the realization that much of political life lies in the details.

Closing Words on Theory, Method, and Political Change

The term "regime theory" has always left me a bit uncomfortable. Consequently, I have leaned toward the alternative wording of "urban regime analysis." I never regarded my work on Atlanta as laying out a broad theoretical canvas but as more a matter of bringing analytical concepts to bear on an especially illuminating set of political conditions. I see my approach as eclectic. Structure and agency served as one pillar of *Regime Politics*, mainly in the form of Philip Abrams' (1982)[37] concept "structuring." I also gave weight to Arthur Stinchcombe's (1978) caution against excessive reliance on structure and his call to bring analysis down to personal terms. As much of the above discussion indicates, the work of Charles Tilly (1981, 1984) has had a major influence on how I approach the study of city politics. Historical sociology thus holds a prominent place in my thinking, as does APD, particularly in the form advocated by Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek (2004). At the same time, APD gives me a kindred sense with the Moliere character's comment about speaking prose. APD offers a form of "prose" with which I have long been comfortable, even before I realized it was APD. A perspective based in political history in my case dates back to Key's (1949)[38] work on southern politics.

Along with an indebtedness to the historical perspective, my eclecticism includes a long-standing appreciation that game theory can offer valuable insights. Rational choice, however, has never been theoretical home-place for me. It seems to me to harbor an anemic understanding of human nature. Furthermore, I find the hard-line, positive-science version of rational choice sometimes too little cognizant of Thorngate's postulate "that it is impossible for a theory of social behavior to be simultaneously general, accurate, and simple" (Weick 1979, p. 35).[39]

The school of historical sociology I have cited here (and drew on in *Regime Politics*) differs from standard social science in part in the importance it attaches to detail. Thus, the aim of the historical approach is not to cut through detail in search of a key variable or two, but to use detail to refine analysis. Abrams (1982), for example, talked about an ongoing tension between explanation in detail and explanation in principle. Stinchcombe (1978, p. 22) argued that downplaying the importance of detail is a theoretical misstep, and called for penetrating "the deeper analogies between cases." He looked to "the use of facts to *improve* ideas, to make them richer, more flexible, more powerful" (Stinchcombe 1978, p. 24, emphasis in original). Tilly might add that detail is important not only in analysis but in political action as well. Stinchcombe (1978) viewed details as best not defined and bounded in advance but as open-ended in an ongoing search for patterns. Detail, then, is not to be dismissed as mere description but rather seen as something necessary in efforts to refine understanding.

Robert Salisbury's "new convergence" analysis of city politics shows us how comparing the features of one-time period with those in another can reveal much about how factors that fail to conjoin in one period conjoin in a subsequent time, and so on.[40] Although different from standard social science, such cross-time comparison amounts to a great deal more than simple description.

> There is a drive toward parsimony, toward identifying key variables and formulating general propositions. But, if the focus of the study is the *conjunction* of factors—and the mix of factors is always changing over time—then the analysis can never produce a neat formula of explanation to apply universally. Universality assumes a degree of constancy that history does not provide. [Of course] there are regularities in human behavior; I only assert that something as complex as the shaping of an urban regime must be understood as a confluence that itself is not permanent. (Stone 1989, p. 257, emphasis in original)

It is quite possible to determine when a given governing arrangement has reached an end. However, it is more challenging to say when an era of urban

regimes has come to a close. Yet, better to carve the flow of time into identifiable periods, leaving the cause of a shift from one period to another as an irregular process stubbornly historical in its defiance of universality. Note a parallel. Baumgartner and Jones (1993) posited punctuated equilibria as a pattern; wisely they did not try to manufacture a formula for predicting when and where punctuations occur.

Periodization is a way of marking the boundary between eras, but there is no theory for the succession of periods—nor is there likely to be one. At some point, the levels of historical complexity overrun our capacity to disentangle and systematize all of the causes. History defies taming and over a significant flow of time poses challenges not easily foreseen by either political leaders or scholars. To a degree, historical causation yields to analytical hindsight but not in a form that is susceptible to standard social science theorizing. Recognizing the limits of grand theorizing is not an indulgence in description; it is a sign of wisdom. As C. Wright Mills (1959, p. 150) once observed,

> We do not know any universal principles of historical change; the mechanisms of change we do know vary with the social structures we are examining. For historical change is change of social structures, of the relations among their component parts. Just as there is a variety of social structures, there is a variety of principles of historical change.

It seems that the age of urban regimes, as once understood, has now yielded to freshly reconfigured ways of how cities are governed. If so, this is not a matter of regret but simply a new chapter in a continuing effort to understand the ever-changing intricacies of how local political orders take shape and continue to change.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

Notes

1. Some may prefer the term path dependence over legacy. In employing it, Paul Pierson (2004) cautioned against assuming that it locks in any particular alternative. Future action is dependent on the past, except to the degree and in the particulars it is not. Path dependence leaves important issues unresolved. Feedback

provides positive reinforcement, so the explanation goes. The positive-feedback explanation does not in itself ask and answer the question of feedback positive for whom and why and how positive feedback for some overrides negative feedback from others. Much is explained by random happenstance, but in a world of structural inequalities how far does such an explanation reach? Not all feedbacks are equal. This is not to deny that path dependence has some explanatory capacity, but it should be accompanied by attention to the condition that some actors are better positioned than others to provide feedback.

2. Covering much the same time span as *Regime Politics*, Tomiko Brown-Nagin's (2011) splendid narrative account of Atlanta centers on the interaction of legal and political advocacy within a biracial alignment.

3. Because *Regime Politics* did not employ an explicit comparative framework, my claim is only that it helps shed light on how Southern cities differ or resemble one another. It reinforces the analysis in Robert Crain's (1968) comparative examination of the politics of school desegregation and brings into the spotlight differences in business engagement between, for instance, Atlanta and Charlotte on one side and Birmingham and New Orleans on the other—on Charlotte, see Hanchett (1998) and Smith (2004); on Birmingham, Hemphill (1993); and on New Orleans, Whelan (1987) and Burns and Thomas (forthcoming 2015). A crucial point is that Atlanta's highly engaged business elite (like Charlotte's) operated from an economic base quite different from that of the region's agrarian elite. Black leaders in Atlanta, such as Morehouse President Benjamin Mays and "Daddy" King (Martin Luther King Senior), had grown up in the rural, small-town South, and they understood how entrenched resistance to change was in those places. They also understood that, particularly with Coca-Cola in the lead, corporate Atlanta was more attuned to a cosmopolitan view of the world and not irrevocably tied to an agrarian past (Stone 1990).

4. In *Regime Politics*, the broad historical context of Atlanta's biracial coalition is most developed in the formative stage with the shift from rail-centered to automotive-centered transportation in the spotlight. Racial change dovetailed with the intentional adjustment by city policy makers to technological change and its implications for the business district and related shifts in land use. The book treats later phases in the city's political development primarily in terms of adjustments in the inner core. Ending in 1988 while Atlanta's hosting of the 1996 Summer Olympics, for instance, was still in the future, *Regime Politics* faced no ending punctuation. On the Atlanta Olympics and the biracial coalition, see Keating (2001).

5. It is important to appreciate that Mollenkopf is not simply analyzing voting patterns, but is connecting electoral politics to the process of governing.

6. Note, however, that recent demographic trends display a shifting suburban pattern. See Reckhow and Weir (2012), Gallagher (2013), and Kneebone and Berube (2013).

7. On cross-time comparison, see Salisbury (1964).

8. It is important to bear in mind the reminder by Amy Bridges (1997) that region matters, and a profound difference separates younger cities of the southwest

from older cities to the east. In development, for example, whereas older cities seized on federal urban renewal monies to remake land use within the center city, business and political leadership in the Sunbelt directed growth around the edges, often through aggressive annexation along the periphery. In a recent work, Bridges (2011, p. 98) observed of the Sunbelt: "Their governments were developers' regimes, and developers' fortunes were made in the communities that ringed the downtown."

9. Champions of a globalized economy as the central force at work tend to see the 1970s with the emergence of neoliberalism as the crucial turning point (see, for example, Hackworth 2007), whereas the more historically minded look at the immediate postwar years as the time when a fundamental shift takes hold and race plays a huge role (Freund 2007; Katz 2011; Self 2003). As I argue below, more than timing is involved. The nature of causation is at issue.

10. Land use continues to change, of course, as evidenced by HOPE VI, light-rail construction, and postindustrial forms of centralizing activity now at work (see, for example, Ehrenhalt 2013; Hyra 2008). Yet the vast scale of change in land use and the huge backing of federal dollars involved in redevelopment are missing from the current scene.

11. The article's elaboration of the point is as follows: "Critics are, of course, right to emphasize that local regimes do not take shape in isolation from national and international forces. The civil rights movement was not only a stimulus for policy actions to which the governing coalition in Atlanta responded, but the movement also set in motion local efforts to alter the city's governing coalition. However, the civil rights movement did not hold the political stage alone. Without delving into all of the facets of post-Fordism, one can still appreciate that capitalism is not only a source of policy challenges . . . but, like the civil rights movement, a factor in the very shaping of the Atlanta regime. Put another way, capitalism is the extra-local structure from which Atlanta's business community springs, and Atlanta business has proven to be active and astute player on the city's political stage" (Stone 1998, p. 251).

   As indicated above in Note 3, Atlanta's black leadership coming out of the Second World War understood the leverage that was available through the fact that Coca-Cola, in particular, understood itself to be operating in an international context.

12. The term, multitiered, is used here to be distinct from the term, multilevel, often used to refer to the multiple levels of an intergovernmental system.

13. Parallel processing is a familiar term in addressing decision making in distinct policy domains (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). Parallel processing is a term to recognize that policy communities have a degree of autonomy from one another. However, particularly in the urban arena, such autonomy is often quite limited; such policy concerns as economic restructuring, housing, transportation, law enforcement, and education tend to variously spill over into one another, thereby making the term parallel processing less useful than it is in the study of congressional policy making, for example. However, as does parallel processing, the

concept of a multitier process recognizes that decision making is not a comprehensive matter. This point is strongly suggested in Norton Long's (1958) classic article on "the local community as an ecology of games." Policy activity can occur in various tiers often with players in one tier little mindful of action as by players in other tiers. While there are occasional instances of intentional interaction across tiers, such interaction is not the common pattern.

14. The three tiers are not characterized by sharply drawn boundaries. They are best thought of as clusters along a spectrum of differences in resource capacity in relation to *ability and incentive* to bring about change (this is essentially a restatement of the "iron law"). Hence, the top tier is composed of high-resource actors engaged in the demanding task of pursuing a sustained, priority agenda. Thus, Salisbury's (1964) "new convergence of power" was about governmental and business elites with command of substantial resources pursuing a big, far-reaching agenda of change. The present time has witnessed decline in cohesion and a more selective engagement among high-resource players. Hence, their situation and scope of activity constitute a step between the top and middle tiers. Resources are adequate to pursue narrow aims, but aims short of a high-priority agenda of broad change. Similarly, there is a space between the middle and lower tier where a few mitigating steps against disadvantage are possible, especially if allies can be enlisted and collective action facilitated (cf. the treatment of marginality in C. J. Cohen 1999). On the importance of variations in access to resources, particularly in the lower tiers of the political order, see Marwell (2007) and DeFilippis (2001).

15. In various sterling studies, urban historians have captured this broad picture. See, for example, McGirr (2001), Self (2003), Kruse (2005), Lassiter (2007), Kruse and Sugrue (2006), and Freund (2007).

16. See the point by Amy Bridges that the alliance in Sunbelt cities focused on annexation and growth on the periphery and thus had little interest in urban renewal but keen interest in expressway construction. Atlanta pursued urban renewal and annexation (see Bayor 2000).

17. The term "the great inversion" is the title of an important book by Alan Ehrenhalt (2013) offering evidence that suburban appeal has peaked and that many central cities are experiencing growth through the attraction of a younger and more affluent population. A "back to the city" movement is widely regarded as underway. See, for example, Hyra (2012) and his earlier *The New Urban Renewal* (Hyra 2008) as works exploring forces at play in the postindustrial city. Older industrial cities and many small urban places outside the globalization wave find themselves without an inversion trend and continuing to lose population.

18. See, for example, the analysis of San Diego's evolution in Erie, Kogan, and MacKenzie (2011).

19. See contrasting views of the merits of this practice in Brill (2011) and Ravitch (2010).

20. Gentrification is a complicated arena of struggle. The literature is vast, but something of the complexity of its dynamics can be seen in the mix of benefits and

costs (Freeman 2006), the class tensions within the black community (Pattillo 2007), in the political turbulence surrounding race as a factor in inversion (Hyra 2012), and in the involvement of the faith community (Hankins and Walter 2012). Note also that something as large as the "great inversion" is a mix of changing middle-class tastes and elite actions to encourage a middle-strata return to the city (Ehrenhalt 2013).

21. For a positive outlook, see Rogers (2009), but in education, for example, see the less optimistic findings of Clarke et al. (2006).

22. See as well Gottlieb et al. (2005) and Milkman, Bloom, and Narro (2010). On organizing for immigrant labor rights, see also Gleeson (2008). Much scholarly work on Justice for Janitors and related topics is underway and will populate the urban literature in coming years.

23. See Diers (2004), Sirianni (2009), Dantico and Svara (forthcoming), and Winders (2012).

24. On the University of Pennsylvania, see Rodin (2007) and Etienne (2013); and on Johns Hopkins University and its East Baltimore neighbors, see Stone (2013). More generally, see Perry and Wiewel (2005) and Hodges and Dubb (2012).

25. Although far from widespread practice, there nevertheless are telling examples of how foundation backing can energize community organizing and greatly strengthen the hand of a neighborhood in its relations with city government. Perhaps the best known example is the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (Clavel 2010; Medoff and Sklar 1994).

26. On the importance of race and how, in the important case of housing, it came to be wrapped in market terms, see Freund (2007). On the use of race-neutral terms but with pronounced racial consequences, see Alexander (2012) and Hayward (2013).

27. By intermediate factors, he means such things as organizations, coalitions, and enabling institutions.

28. As the deep source of inequality, historian Robert Halpern (1995, pp. 228–29) pointed to "the primacy of the marketplace in defining people's worth," in "creating and defending boundaries," and thereby "shaping social relations" in such a way as to weaken "a larger frame of mutual interest." He elaborates on the lack of an encompassing responsibility, adding that the problem stems from the denial of interdependence between social strata (Halpern 1995, p. 231). Halpern's work centers on community development. For an illustration of this pattern in operation in the field of education, see Cucchiara (2013).

29. Universities are not new players, but, as eleemosynary institutions, they are complex entities with multiple aims, not a monolithic organization guided by a single overriding aim. As experience indicates, the roles played by an eleemosynary institution can vary over time and, for that matter, from one of its components to another.

30. Their article focuses on events of the kind represented in south-side Atlanta by the launching of Emmaus House. I add that at these lower tiers the white exodus (Kruse 2005).

31. This is to say that the pressures of the situation can give rise to action, and then the rationale to justify the action subsequently assumes a place in the realm of ideas. In Atlanta, the white business elite did not come up with the idea that racial moderation was a worthy goal and then acted on that idea by forming a biracial coalition. The functional advantage of a biracial coalition came first and it was followed by racial moderation gaining recognition as a worthy aim. As put by M. D. Cohen and March (1986, p. 220) in a discussion of goal development and choice, "a description that assumes that goals come first and action comes later is frequently radically wrong."

32. My argument on this issue is laid out in *Regime Politics* (Stone 1989).

33. The case for an imaginative liberation as a promising path to basic social change was made by an anonymous reviewer for this symposium, and can also be found in two recent articles in *Urban Affairs Review*: McGovern (2009) and Camou (2014).

34. The argument about immediate context and purpose is spelled out in Stone, Orr, and Worgs (2006). It corresponds closely with Tilly's emphasis on networks as a more potent causal force than the "mental states" of individuals (ideas). To wit: "While the substance of ideas plays a part, we direct attention to networks attached to purposes, the needs they meet, and the contextual forces they supply. Purposes are, of course, central to what social movements are about, and they pose sharply the problem of acting collectively, especially without much reliance on selective material incentives" (Stone, Orr, and Worgs 2006, p. 531). This article poses issue displacement as the special challenge facing pursuit of a purpose. While purpose played a part in the analysis in *Regime Politics*, in retrospect I believe that the book underplayed its role. By contrast, selective incentives held a very prominent place in the 1989 book, in part, because Atlanta's business elite consistently sought to minimize control of potential selective incentives in the government sector, as a potentially rival center of power. The business sector was then in a position to maximize its use of selective incentives, including through the (for many years) business-dominated Atlanta Housing Authority—the city agency through which most of the early redevelopment was executed. Consequently, I perhaps underplayed "the city too busy to hate" as an umbrella purpose under which negotiations could take place and differences accommodated. While a purpose is not an ideology, it can be an important form for ideas to take and to help shape governing arrangements. Purpose can provide a more compelling way to frame an issue than can a broad ideology. It is simply more immediate and more tangible.

35. After Georgia's white primary met its judicial end, the initial demonstration of black electoral strength was in a successful congressional campaign by Helen Douglas Mankin, a white woman backed by a coalition that included the Congress of Industrial Organizations as well as black political leaders (Spritzer 1982). The Talmadge wing of the state Democratic party quickly maneuvered the electoral rules to prevent a repeat. With Mankin being only a one-term member of Congress, Atlanta's black political leaders could see that a business-opposed coalition was not a promising path to electoral influence.

36. This is the reform strategy laid out in the book on urban neighborhoods by Stone, Stoker, et al. (forthcoming).

37. Closely related is the work of William Sewell (2005).

38. Without using the term "polity," Key had an understanding of the South as a configuration of a semifeudal agrarian economy, the systematic social subordination of the region's African-American population, and a one-party politics that conjoined these three elements in a mutually interdependent way that was highly dysfunctional for the principles of representative democracy. Although tacitly so, Key's iconic work was highly and unapologetically normative. He asked of the South as a region the question parallel to Orren and Skowronek's (2004, p. 185) query "what-kind-of-country-is-this-anyway?"

39. One of my rational-choice colleagues once insisted to me that only the testing of deductively derived hypotheses qualifies as science; the rest is poetry (mostly bad). As indicated in *Regime Politics*, I pose against such a position the work of Thomas Kuhn (1989, pp. 254–55) and his views on "normal science." On my position more generally in matters of approach, see Appendix C in *Regime Politics*. Deductively derived hypotheses have a place, of course, but on their inadequacy, see Arthur Stinchcombe's (1978) *Theoretical Methods in Social History*.

40. Douglas Rae's (2003) study of New Haven employs the same approach and sheds much light on the way context can constraint mayoral leadership.

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