

Governance, Contestation, and Social Justice

Making Policy in the Streets

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The function of jurisdictional boundaries in an era of global urbanization is particularly challenging for distressed cities in the United States, impoverished by a half century of capital abandonment and governmental neglect, and left to fend for themselves against the ravages of globalization. Political boundaries that coincide with patterns of urban disinvestment circumscribe the allocation of traditional political resources for both city dwellers and cities, creating a double bind. As individual citizens, residents of poor cities exercise influence over ever shrinking city budgets; collectively, at the national level where cities have little leverage with federal policymakers, urban voters have even fewer traditional political resources with which to pursue policy solutions to their problems. These long-term secular developments in the political exclusion of the urban working class are nowhere more apparent than in the absence of a coherent urban policy under the Obama Administration, which bailed out the banks while allowing the City of Detroit to go bankrupt. Are electoral politics at an end for distressed cities? What is needed to overcome the institutionalized disadvantages of an American constitutional and political order which strips low income city dwellers of resources while keeping them locked in place? This paper explores the capacity of social movements to overcome institutional atrophy and failure and argues for new strategies to leverage new capacities for organizing in the global age of Obama.

Urban political theory: representation, governance, and contestation

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A central concern of urban geography is finding ways to abstract the city and its attendant political phenomenon. Theorizing to arrive at generalizations and analytical models remains an integral part of scholarly work on the city. Yet, the rich theoretical contributions to urban theorization remain cluttered in that they are presented and studied in textbooks, journals, and review pieces in isolation from one another, which obscures the breadth of commonalities between them. This piece surveys the literature on urban political theory using an amended version of the framework proposed by Rossi and Vanolo (2012), whose “triad of urban politics:” representation, government, and contestation is deployed to better understand cities on a global scale. This exercise arrays urban theories according to representation, contestation, and governance, in lieu of government, with the objective of thematically organizing the multitude of

theoretical contributions that spans economics, sociology, planning theory, and urban studies, among others. The article concludes with two questions that urban political theorists are or would eventually be confronted with. First, would the transdisciplinary nature of urban theory, which highlights the dearth in theorizing unique to urban politics, prove detrimental to the study of urban politics, given the fluidity that characterizes urban political processes and the wider city? Second, is there a need for urban theory to be more normative? Responses to these questions necessitates both an acknowledgment of the richness of contemporary urban theory, as well as a reimagination of these contributions to better adapt to the pace of changes that marks cities the world over.

A New Mode of Urban Governance: The Effects of Community Participation in Brownfield Redevelopment

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Recent scholarship has suggested that we are witnessing the end of an era of U.S. municipal governance characterized by a redevelopment-focused urban regime or growth machine (Stone 2013; Sapotichne, Jones, and Wolfe 2007). This post-war convergence of corporate and city hall power is arguably being replaced by new forms of “piecemeal” governance that have to draw from a broader variety of sources (Stone 2013). Uncertainties created by these fissures in the established order of urban governance represent opportunities for new actors to influence policymaking. We argue that these opportunities are best characterized as “moments of heterarchy” in the otherwise hierarchically organized system of land use policymaking (McQuarrie 2010). The participation of new actors can provide legitimacy and resources that simply perpetuate essentially the same hierarchy or it can restructure the institutional networks on which governance relies, altering power dynamics in an enduring manner. We draw on sociological and political theory in order to develop the concept of heterarchic governance within urban land use politics. We ground our argument in an examination of the Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) program in New York State. A product of extensive organizing by environmental justice groups to increase grassroots influence over the remediation and redevelopment of local environmental hazards, the BOA program has allocated funds and created a structure for community organizations to engage in long-term planning for their neighborhoods. Through interviews with leaders in BOA organizations and data about organizational networks, we examine whether the program has led to an enduring shift in organizational relationships and influence.

What Does Social Justice in the City Require?

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The issue of social justice in the city has reemerged in recent years, especially with the

publication of Clarissa Rile Hayward and Todd Swanstrom's (2012) edited volume on the subject. While the renewed interest on social justice in the city is welcome, the analysis provided by many scholars is limited in two crucial ways. First, they tend to ground their analysis in a liberal conception of justice, flowing from the political philosophy of John Rawls, which does not grapple sufficiently with issues of power, political economy, or citizenship. Second, the prescriptions that emerge, perhaps as a result of this grounding, promise to do little more than make modest improvements to a profoundly unjust set of arrangements. This paper seeks to tackle the question of social justice from a different direction. Instead of using Rawls's ideas as the place of departure, it instead draws on T.H. Marshall's notion of social citizenship. It argues that social justice in the city is achieved to the extent that its inhabitants achieve the status of full social citizens. In so doing, this paper will consider what this implies about the domains of health, housing, and economic security and will examine how various cities have attempted to promote social justice in these areas.

Governance and legitimacy of the Political System in Venezuela: Perspectives.

Presenter: María Elena Ludena Parjan, Universidad Simon Bolivar, Caracas – Venezuela

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This research work claims to review the perspectives of the Venezuelan political system, through two very important concepts: governance and legitimacy which are the base of the stability of Hugo Chavez government on the last 15 years, in order to give a key to approximate to understand Venezuela's political system situation and how this situation has affected the understanding of citizenship and urban behaviors. Now days in Venezuela there are at least 3 or 4 protest in Caracas, which mean that the citizens involved in the protest close the entrance and exits of the city, and collapsing everything, since public transportation until getting access to workplaces. In this sense, the questions I made for this paper are, on first place: Has the new political system changed citizens way of understand public places? On second place: Has these movements enough power to affect governability and legitimacy? On third place: Are these urban behaviors something planned or just instant mob actuations?

This paper examines those questions through qualitative analysis of data and information gathered mostly through primary sources including: newspapers, research articles, and online documents from Venezuela's government.

On the first part of this work, I'll introduce the main concepts of governance and legitimacy in order to go in the second part to briefly explain the Venezuelan political system and how its changes has had influence in citizens behavior in public places, and I will close my research with the perspectives for the governance and legitimacy of Venezuelan political system to finish making some considerations about citizenship and its close relation with urban affairs and its influence on the political system.