

For Gwen and Glenn

URBAN FORTUNES

THE POLITICAL
ECONOMY OF PLACE

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With a New Preface

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The City as a Growth Machine

Traditional urban research has had little relevance to the day-to-day activities of the place-based elites whose priorities affect patterns of land use, public budgets, and urban social life. It has not even been apparent from much of the scholarship of urban social science that place is a market commodity that can produce wealth and power for its owners, and that this might explain why certain people take a keen interest in the ordering of urban life.

Research on local elites has been preoccupied with the question "Who governs?" (or "Who rules?"). Are the politically active citizens of a city split into diverse and competing interest groups, or are they members of a coordinated oligarchy? Empirical evidence of visible cleavage, such as disputes on a public issue, has been accepted as evidence of pluralistic competition (Banfield, 1961; Dahl, 1961). Signs of cohesion, such as common membership in voluntary and policy groups, have been used to support the alternative view (see Domhoff, 1970).

We believe that the question of who governs or rules has to be asked in conjunction with the equally central question "For what?" With rare exceptions (see Smith and Keltner, 1983), one issue consistently generates consensus among local elite groups and separates them from people who use the city principally as a place to live and work: the issue of growth. For those who count, the city is a growth machine, one that can increase aggregate rents and trap related wealth for those in the right position to benefit. The desire for growth creates consensus among a wide range of

elite groups, no matter how split they might be on other issues. Thus the disagreement on some or even most public issues does not necessarily indicate any fundamental disunity, nor do changes in the number or variety of actors on the scene (what Clark [1968] calls "decentralization") affect the basic matter. It does not even matter that elites often fail to achieve their growth goal; with virtually all places in the same game, some elites will inevitably lose no matter how great their effort (Lyon et al., 1981; Kramlich and Humphrey, 1983).

Although they may differ on which particular strategy will best succeed, elites use their growth consensus to eliminate any alternative vision of the purpose of local government or the meaning of community. The issues that reach public agendas (and are therefore available for pluralists' investigations) do so precisely because they are matters on which elites have, in effect, agreed to disagree (Molotch and Lester, 1974, 1975; see Schattschneider, 1960). Only under rather extraordinary circumstances is this consensus endangered.

For all the pluralism Banfield (1961) uncovered in Chicago, he found no disagreement with the idea that growth was good. Indeed, much of the disension he did find, for example, on where to put the new convention center, was part of a dispute over how growth should be internally distributed. In his studies of cities on both sides of the southern U.S. border, D'Antonio found that when community "knowledgeables" were "asked to name the most pressing problems facing their respective cities," they cited finding sufficient water for both farming and urban growth (Form and D'Antonio, 1970:439). Whitt (1982) found that in formulating positions on California transportation policies, elites carefully coordinated not only the positions they would take but also the amount of money each would give toward winning relevant initiative campaigns. Thus on growth infrastructure, the elites were united.

Similarly, it was on the primacy of such growth and development issues that Hunter found Atlanta's elites to be most unified, both at the time of his first classic study and during its replication twenty years later (Hunter, 1953, 1980). Hunter (1953:214) reports, "They could speak of nothing else" (cited in Domhoff, 1983:169). In his historical profiles of Dallas and Fort Worth, Me-

Iosi (1983:175) concludes that "political power in Dallas and Fort Worth has typically been concentrated in the hands of those people most willing and able to sustain growth and expansion." Finally, even the ecologically oriented scholars with a different perspective, Berry and Kasarda (1977:371), have remarked, "If in the past urbanization has been governed by any conscious public objectives at all, these have been, on the one hand, to encourage growth, apparently for its own sake, and on the other hand, to provide public works and public welfare programs to support piecemeal, spontaneous development impelled primarily by private initiative." And even Hawley (1950:429) briefly departs from his tight ecological schema to remark that "competition is observable . . . in the struggle for transportation and communication advantages and superior services of all kinds; it also appears in efforts to accelerate rates of population growth."

All of this competition, in addition to its critical influence on what goes on *within* cities, also influences the distribution of populations throughout cities and regions, determining which ones grow and which do not. The incessant lobbying, manipulating, and cajoling can deliver the critical resources from which great cities are made. Although virtually all places are subject to the pervasive rule of growth boosters, places with more active and creative elites may have an edge over other areas. In a comparative study of forty-eight communities, Lyon et al. (1981) indeed found that cities with reputedly more powerful elites tended to have stronger growth rates. This may mean that active elites stimulate growth, or it may mean that strong growth emboldens elites to actively maintain their advantage. Although we suspect that both perspectives are valid, we stress that the activism of entrepreneurs is, and always has been, a critical force in shaping the urban system, including the rise and fall of given places.

Growth Machines in U.S. History

The role of the growth machine as a driving force in U.S. urban development has long been a factor in U.S. history, and is nowhere more clearly documented than in the histories of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American cities. Indeed, although

historians have chronicled many types of mass opposition to capitalist organization (for example, labor unions and the Wobblie movement), there is precious little evidence of resistance to the dynamics of value-free city building characteristic of the American past. In looking back we thus have not only the benefit of hindsight but also the advantage of dealing with a time in which "the interfusing of public and private prosperity" (Boorstin, 1965:116) was proudly proclaimed by town boosters and their contemporary chroniclers. The creators of towns and the builders of cities strained to use all the resources at their disposal, including crude political clout, to make great fortunes out of place. The "lively competitive spirit" of the western regions was, in Boorstin's view (1965:123), more "a competition among communities" than among individuals. Sometimes, the "communities" were merely subdivided parcels with town names on them, what Wade (1959) has called "paper villages," on whose behalf governmental actions could nonetheless be taken.¹ The competition among them was primarily among growth elites.

These communities competed to attract federal land offices, colleges and academies, or installations such as arsenals and prisons as a means of stimulating development. These projects were, for many places, "the only factor that permitted them to outdistance less favored rivals with equivalent natural or geographic endowments" (Scheiber, 1962:136). The other important arena of competition was also dependent on government decision making and funding: the development of a transportation infrastructure that would give a locality better access to raw materials and markets. First came the myriad efforts to attract state and federal funds to link towns to waterways through canals. Then came efforts to subsidize and direct the paths of railroads (Glaab, 1962). Town leaders used their governmental authority to determine routes and subsidies, motivated by their private interest in rents.

The people who engaged in this city building have often been celebrated for their inspired vision and "absolute faith." One historian characterizes them as "ambitious, flamboyant, and imaginative" (Fuller, 1976:41). But more important than their person-

1. The same phenomenon is found today in Chicago suburbs formed principally to benefit from state fiscal codes.

alities, these urban founders were in the business of manipulating place for its exchange values. Their occupations most often were real estate or banking (Belcher, 1947). Even those who initially practiced law, medicine, or pharmacy were rentiers in the making. These professional roles became sidelines: "Physicians became merchants, clergymen became bankers, lawyers became manufacturers" (Boorstin, 1965:123). Especially when fortunes could be made from growth, the elite division of labor was overwhelmed and "specialized skills . . . had a new unimportance" (Boorstin, 1965:123). Speaking of the early settlers' acquisition of speculative lands through the preemption regulations of the 1862 Homestead Act, Leslie Decker remarks that "the early comers to any town—from lawyers to doctors to merchants, to just plain town developers—usually diversified in this fashion" (quoted in Wolf, 1981:52; see also Swierenga, 1966).

The city-building activities of these growth entrepreneurs in frontier towns became the springboard for the much celebrated taming of the American wilderness. As Wade (1959) has argued, the upstart western cities functioned as market, finance, and administrative outposts that made rural pioneering possible. This conquering of the West, accomplished through the machinations of "the urban frontier," was critically bound up with a coordinated effort to gain rents. In order for town leaders to achieve their goals, there was "ingenious employment of the instruments of political and economic leverage at [their] disposal" to build the cities and regions in which they had made investments (Scheiber, 1962:136).

Perhaps the most spectacular case of urban ingenuity was the Chicago of William Ogden. When Ogden came to Chicago in 1835, its population was under four thousand. He succeeded in becoming its mayor, its great railway developer, and the owner of much of its best real estate. As the organizer and first president of the Union Pacific (among other railroads) and in combination with his other business and civic roles, he was able to make Chicago (as a "public duty") the crossroads of America, and hence the dominant metropolis of the Midwest. Chicago became a crossroads not only because it was "central" (other places were also in the "middle") but because a small group of people (led by Ogden) had the power to literally have the roads cross in the spot they

chose. Ogden candidly reminisced about one of the real estate deals this made possible: "I purchased for \$8,000, what 8 years thereafter, sold for 3 millions of dollars" (Boorstin, 1965:117). The Ogden story, Boorstin says (p. 118), "was re-enacted a thousand times all over America."

This tendency to use land and government activity to make money was not invented in nineteenth-century America, nor did it end then. The development of the American Midwest was only one particularly noticed (and celebrated) moment in the total process. One of the more fascinating instances, farther to the West and later in history, was the rapid development of Los Angeles, an anomaly to many because it had none of the "natural" features that are thought to support urban growth: no centrality, no harbor, no transportation crossroads, not even a water supply. Indeed, the rise of Los Angeles as the preeminent city of the West, eclipsing its rivals San Diego and San Francisco, can only be explained as a remarkable victory of human cunning over the so-called limits of nature. Much of the development of western cities hinged on access to a railroad; the termination of the first continental railroad at San Francisco, therefore, secured that city's early lead over other western towns. The railroad was thus crucial to the fortunes of the barons with extensive real estate and commercial interests in San Francisco—Stanford, Crocker, Huntington, and Hopkins. These men feared the coming of a second cross-country railroad (the southern route), for its urban terminus might threaten the San Francisco investments. San Diego, with its natural port, could become a rival to San Francisco, but Los Angeles, which had no comparable advantage, would remain forever in its shadow. Hence, the San Francisco elites used their economic and political power to keep San Diego from becoming the terminus of the southern route. As Fogelson (1967:51, 55) remarks, "San Diego's supreme asset, the bay, was actually its fatal liability," whereas the disadvantage of Los Angeles—"its inadequate and unprotected port—was its saving grace." Of course, Los Angeles won in the end, but here again the wiles of boosters were crucial: the Los Angeles interests managed to secure millions in federal funds to construct a port—today the world's largest artificial harbor—as well as federal backing to gain water (Clark, 1983:273, 274).

The same dynamic accounts for the other great harbor in the

Southwest. Houston beat out Galveston as the major port of Texas (ranked third in the country in 1979) only when Congressman Tom Ball of Houston successfully won, at the beginning of this century, a million-dollar federal appropriation to construct a canal linking landlocked Houston to the Gulf of Mexico (Kaplan, 1983:196). That was the crucial event that, capitalizing on Galveston's susceptibility to hurricanes, put Houston permanently in the lead.

In more recent times, the mammoth federal interstate highway system, hammered out by "a horde of special interests representing towns and cities" (Judd, 1983:173), has similarly made and unmade urban fortunes. To use one clear case, Colorado's leaders made Denver a highway crossroads by convincing President Eisenhower in 1956 to add three hundred miles to the system to link Denver to Salt Lake City by an expensive mountain route. A presidential stroke of the pen removed the prospects of Cheyenne, Wyoming, of replacing Denver as a major western transportation center (Judd, 1983:173). In a case reminiscent of the nineteenth-century canal era, the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway opened in 1985, dramatically altering the shipping distances to the Gulf of Mexico for many inland cities. The largest project ever built by the U.S. Corps of Engineers, the \$2 billion project was questioned as a boondoggle in Baltimore, which will lose port business because of it (Maguire, 1985), but praised in Decatur, Alabama, and Knoxville, Tennessee, which expect to profit from it. The opening of the canal cut by four-fifths the distance from Chattanooga, Tennessee, to the Gulf, but did almost nothing for places like Minneapolis and Pittsburgh, which were previously about the same nautical distance from the Gulf as Chattanooga.

Despite the general hometown hoopla of boosters who have won infrastructural victories, not everyone gains when the structural speculators of a city defeat their competition. It is too easy, and misleading, to say that "the public benefits . . . because it got the railroads" (Grodinsky, as cited in Klein, 1970:294).² Given

2. We were struck by the naive wording used by one historian in commenting upon the life of an urban booster-lawyer: "despite [our emphasis] his extensive business career, Brice delved deeply into politics as well. His devotion to the State [Ohio] and its economic interests won him wide popularity there" (Klein, 1970:110).

the stakes, the rentier elites would obviously become engulfed by the "booster spirit." But despite the long-held supposition of an American "antiturban bias" (White and White, 1962), researchers have made little effort to question the linkage between public betterment and growth, even when they could see that specific social groups were being hurt. Zunz reports that in industrializing Detroit, city authorities extended utility service into uninhabited areas to help development rather than into existing residential zones, whose working-class residents went without service even as they bore the costs (through taxes) of the new installations. There was a "bias in favor of speculators and against the working class" (Zunz, 1982:116). Even the great urban reformers, such as Detroit's Mayor Hazen Pingree, while working to change this "standard practice" for financing growth (Zunz, 1983:118), were doing so in order to increase the overall efficiencies of urban services and hence "engineer growth better" (Zunz, 1983:111). "Real estate specialists and builders were more involved in the city-building process," Zunz (1982:162) says, "than anybody else." Reviewing urbanization from 1850 to 1930, Lewis Mumford observed: "That a city had any other purpose than to attract trade, to increase land values, and to grow is something, if it un- easily entered the mind of an occasional Whitman, never exercised any hold on the minds of our countrymen" (quoted in Mollenkopf, 1983:14).

This is the consensus that must be examined, particularly in light of recent urban development. Let us turn now to a description of the ingenious modern incarnations of the growth machines and to an analysis of how they function, a task made more difficult for modern times because the crucial participants seldom speak so openly as did Mr. Ogden.

The Modern-day Good Business Climate

The jockeying for canals, railroads, and arsenals of the previous century has given way in this one to more complex and subtle efforts to manipulate space and redistribute rents. The fixing of public duty and private gain has become much less acceptable (both in public opinion and in the criminal courts); the replacing of frontiers by complex cities has given important roles to

mass media, urban professionals, and skilled political entrepreneurs. The growth machine is less personalized, with fewer local heroes, and has become instead a multifaceted matrix of important social institutions pressing along complementary lines.

With a transportation and communication grid already in place, modern cities typically seek growth in basic economic functions, particularly job intensive ones. Economic growth sets in motion the migration of labor and a demand for ancillary production services, housing, retailing, and wholesaling ("multiplier effects"). Contemporary places differ in the type of economic base they strive to build (for example, manufacturing, research and development, information processing, or tourism). But any one of the rainbows leads to the same pot of gold: more intense land use and thus higher rent collections, with associated professional fees and locally based profits.

Cities are in a position to affect the "factors of production" that are widely believed to channel the capital investments that drive local growth (Hawley, 1950; Summers et al., 1976). They can, for example, lower access costs of raw materials and markets through the creation of shipping ports and airfields (either by using local subsidies or by facilitating state and federal support). Localities can decrease corporate overhead costs through sympathetic policies on pollution abatement, employee health standards, and taxes. Labor costs can be indirectly lowered by pushing welfare recipients into low-paying jobs and through the use of police to constrain union organizing. Moral laws can be changed; for example, drinking alcohol can be legalized (as in Ann Arbor, Mich., and Evanston, Ill.) or gambling can be promoted (as in Atlantic City, N.J.) to build tourism and convention business. Increased utility costs caused by new development can be borne, as they usually are (see, for an example, Ann Arbor, Michigan, Planning Department, 1972), by the public at large rather than by those responsible for the "excess" demand they generate. Federally financed programs can be harnessed to provide cheap water supplies; state agencies can be manipulated to subsidize insurance rates; local political units can forgive business property taxes. Government installations of various sorts (universities, military bases) can be used to leverage additional development by guaranteeing the presence of skilled labor, retailing customers, or

proximate markets for subcontractors. For some analytical purposes, it doesn't even matter that a number of these factors have little bearing on corporate locational decisions (some certainly do, others are debated); just the possibility that they might matter in-^{fulbarment} ~~spulative~~ ^{activity} ~~activates~~ local growth activism (Swanstrom, 1985) and dominates policy agendas.

Following the lead of St. Petersburg, Florida, the first city to hire a press agent (in 1918) to boost growth (Mormino, 1983: 150), virtually all major urban areas now use experts to attract outside investment. One city, Dixon, Illinois, has gone so far as to systematically contact former residents who might be in a position to help (as many as twenty thousand people) and offer them a finder's fee up to \$10,000 for directing corporate investment toward their old home town (*San Francisco Chronicle*, May 10, 1984). More pervasively, each city tries to create a "good business climate." The ingredients are well known in city-building circles and have even been codified and turned into "official" lists for each regional area. The much-used Fantus rankings of business climates are based on factors like taxation, labor legislation, unemployment compensation, scale of government, and public indebtedness (Fantus ranks Texas as number one and New York as number forty-eight). In 1975, the Industrial Development Research Council, made up of corporate executives responsible for site selection decisions, conducted a survey of its members. In that survey, states were rated more simply as "cooperative," "indifferent," or "antigrowth"; the results closely paralleled the Fantus rankings of the same year (Weinstein and Firestone, 1978: 134-44).

Any issue of a major business magazine is replete with advertisements from localities of all types (including whole countries) striving to portray themselves in a manner attractive to business. Consider these claims culled from one issue of *Business Week* (February 12, 1979):

New York City is open for business. No other city in America offers more financial incentives to expand or relocate. . . .

The state of Louisiana advertises

Nature made it perfect. We made it profitable.

On another page we find the claim that "Northern Ireland works" and has a work force with "positive attitudes toward company loyalty, productivity and labor relations." Georgia asserts, "Government should strive to improve business conditions, not hinder them." Atlanta headlines that as "A City Without Limits" it "has ways of getting people like you out of town" and then details its transportation advantages to business. Some places describe attributes that would enhance the life style of executives and professional employees (not a dimension of Fantus rankings); thus a number of cities push an image of artistic refinement. No advertisements in this issue (or in any other, we suspect) show city workers living in nice homes or influencing their working conditions.

While a good opera or ballet company may subtly enhance the growth potential of some cities, other cultural ingredients are crucial for a good business climate. There should be no violent class or ethnic conflict (Agger, Goldrich, and Swanson, 1964:649; Johnson, 1983:250-51). Rubin (1972:123) reports that racial confrontation over school busing was sometimes seen as a threat to urban economic development. Racial violence in South Africa is finally leading to the disinvestment that reformers could not bring about through moral suasion. In the good business climate, the work force should be sufficiently quiescent and healthy to be productive; this was the rationale originally behind many programs in work place relations and public health. Labor must, in other words, be "reproduced," but only under conditions that least interfere with local growth trajectories.

Perhaps most important of all, local publics should favor growth and support the ideology of value-free development. This public attitude reassures investors that the concrete enticements of a locality will be upheld by future politicians. The challenge is to connect civic pride to the growth goal, tying the presumed economic and social benefits of growth in general (Wolfe, 1981) to growth in the local area. Probably only partly aware of this, elites generate and sustain the place patriotism of the masses. According to Boorstin, the competition among cities "helped create the booster spirit" as much as the booster spirit helped create the cities (1965:123). In the nineteenth-century cities, the great rivalries over canal and railway installations were the political spectacles

of the day, with attention devoted to their public, not private, benefits. With the drama of the new railway technology, ordinary people were swept into the competition among places, rooting for their own town to become the new "crossroads" or at least a way station. "The debates over transportation," writes Scheiber (1962:143), "heightened urban community consciousness and sharpened local pride in many western towns."

The celebration of local growth continues to be a theme in the culture of localities. Schoolchildren are taught to view local history as a series of breakthroughs in the expansion of the economic base of their city and region, celebrating its numerical leadership in one sort of production or another; more generally, increases in population tend to be equated with local progress. Civic organizations sponsor essay contests on the topic of local greatness. They encourage public celebrations and spectacles in which the locality name can be proudly advanced for the benefit of both locals and outsiders. They subsidize soapbox debates, parade floats, and beauty contests to "spread around" the locality's name in the media and at distant competitive sites.

One case can illustrate the link between growth goals and cultural institutions. In the Los Angeles area, St. Patrick's Day parades are held at four different locales, because the city's Irish leaders can't agree on the venue for a joint celebration. The source of the difficulty (and much acrimony) is that these parades march down the main business streets in each locale, thereby making them a symbol of the life of the city. Business groups associated with each of the strips want to claim the parade as exclusively their own, leading to charges by still a fifth parade organization that the other groups are only out to "make money" (McGarry, 1985:II:1). The countercharge, vehemently denied, was that the leader of the challenging business street was not even Irish. Thus even an ethnic celebration can receive its special form from the machinations of growth interests and the competitions among them.

The growth machine avidly supports whatever cultural institutions can play a role in building locality. Always ready to oppose cultural and political developments contrary to their interests (for example, black nationalism and communal cults), renters and their associates encourage activities that will connect feelings of

community ("we feelings" [McKenzie, 1922]) to the goal of local growth. The overall ideological thrust is to deemphasize the connection between growth and exchange values and to reinforce the link between growth goals and better lives for the majority. We do not mean to suggest that the only source of civic pride is the desire to collect rents; certainly the cultural pride of tribal groups predates growth machines. Nevertheless, the growth machine coalition mobilizes these cultural motivations, legitimizes them, and channels them into activities that are consistent with growth goals.

The Organization of the Growth Coalition

The people who use their time and money to participate in local affairs are the ones who—in vast disproportion to their representation in the population—have the most to gain or lose in land-use decisions. Local business people are the major participants in urban politics (Walton, 1970), particularly business people in property investing, development, and real estate financing (Spaulding, 1951; Mumford, 1961). Peterson (1981:132), who applauds growth boosterism, acknowledges that "such policies are often promulgated through a highly centralized decision-making process involving prestigious businessmen and professionals. Conflict within the city tends to be minimal, decision-making processes tend to be closed." Elected officials, says Stone (1984:292), find themselves confronted by "a business community that is well-organized, amply supplied with a number of deployable resources, and inclined to act on behalf of tangle and ambitious plans that are mutually beneficial to its own members."

Business people's continuous interaction with public officials (including supporting them through substantial campaign contributions) gives them systemic power (Alford and Friedland, 1975; Stone, 1981, 1982). Once organized, they stay organized. They are "mobilized interests" (Fainstein, Fainstein, and Armistead, 1983:214). Rentiers need local government in their daily money-making routines, especially when structural speculations are involved. They are assisted by lawyers, syndicators, and property

brokers (Bouma, 1962), who prosper as long as they can win decisions favoring their clients. Finally, there are monopolistic business enterprises (such as the local newspaper) whose futures are tied to the growth of the metropolis as a whole, although they are not directly involved in land use. When the local market is saturated with their product, they have few ways to increase profits, beyond expansion of their surrounding area. As in the proverbial Springdale, site of the classic Vidich and Bensman (1960:216) ethnography of a generation ago, there is a strong tendency in most cities for "the professionals (doctors, teachers, dentists, etc.), the industrial workers, the shack people and the lower middle-class groups [to be] for all intents and purposes disenfranchised except in terms of temporary issues."

Because so much of the growth mobilization effort involves government, local growth elites play a major role in electing local politicians, "watchdogging" their activities, and scrutinizing administrative detail. Whether in generating infrastructural resources, keeping peace on the home front, or using the city mayor as an "ambassador to industry" (Wyrner, 1967), local government is primarily concerned with increasing growth. Again, it is not the only function of local government, but it is the key one.

In contrast to our position, urban social scientists have often ignored the politics of growth in their work, even when debates over growth infrastructures were the topic of their analyses (see Banfield, 1961; Dahl, 1961). Williams and Adrian (1963) at least treat growth as an important part of the local political process, but give it no priority over other government issues. There are a number of reasons why growth politics is consistently undervalued. The clue can be found in Edelman's (1964) distinction between two kinds of politics.

The first is the "symbolic" politics of public morality and most of the other "big issues" featured in the headlines and editorials of the daily press: school prayer, wars on crime, standing up to communism, and child pornography, for example. News coverage of these issues may have little to do with any underlying reality, much less a reality in which significant local actors have major stakes. Fishman (1978) shows, for example, that reports of a major crime wave against the elderly in New York City appeared just

at a time when most crimes against the elderly were actually on the decline. The public "crime wave" was created by police officials who, in responding to reporters' interest in the topic, provided "juicy" instances that would make good copy. The "crime wave" was sustained by politicians eager to denounce the perpetrators, and these politicians' pronouncements became the basis for still more coverage and expressions of authoritative police concern. Once this symbiotic "dance" (Molotch, 1980) is in motion, the story takes on a life of its own, and fills the pages and airwaves of news media. Such symbolic crusades provide the "easy news" (Gordon, Heath, and LeBally, 1979) needed by reporters pressed for time, just as these crusades satisfy the "news needs" (Molotch and Lester, 1974) of politicians happy to stay away from issues that might offend growth machine interests. The resulting hubbubs often mislead the general public as well as the academic investigator about what the real stuff of community cleavage and political process might be. To the degree that rentier elites keep growth issues on a symbolic level (for example, urban "greenness"), they prevail as the "second face of power" (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962), the face that determines the public agenda (McCombs and Shaw, 1972).

Edelman's second kind of politics, which does not provide easy news, involves the government actions that affect the distribution of important goods and services. Much less visible to publics, often relegated to back rooms or negotiations within insulated authorities and agencies (Caro, 1974; Friedland, Piven, and Alford, 1978), this is the politics that determines who, in material terms, gets what, where, and how (cf. Lasswell, 1936). The media tend to cover it as the dull round of meetings of water and sewer districts, bridge authorities, and industrial development bonding agencies. The media attitude serves to keep interesting issues away from the public and blunt widespread interest in local politics generally. As Vidich and Bensman (1960:217) remark about Springdale, "business control rests upon a dull but unanimous political facade," at least on certain key issues.

Although there are certainly elite organizational mechanisms to inhibit them (Domhoff, 1971, 1983; Whit, 1982), cleavages within the growth machine can nevertheless develop, and internal disagreements sometimes break into the open. But even then, be-

cause of the hegemony of the growth machine, its disagreements are allowable and do not challenge the belief in growth itself. Unacceptable are public attacks on the pursuit of exchange values over citizens' search for use value. An internal quarrel over where a convention center is to be built, Banfield (1961) shows us, becomes the public issue for Chicago; but Banfield didn't notice that there was no question about whether there should be a convention center at all.

When elites come to see, for example, that inadequate public services are repelling capital investment, they can put the issue of raising taxes on the public agenda. Trillin (1976:154) reports on Rockford, Illinois, a city whose school system was bankrupted by an antitax ideology. Initially, local elites opposed taxes as part of their efforts to lure industry through a low tax rate. As a result, taxes, and therefore tax money for schools, declined. Eventually, the growth coalition saw the educational decline, not the tax rate, as the greatest danger to the "economic vitality of the community." But ironically, elites are not able to change overnight the ideologies they have put in place over decades, even when it is in their best interests to do so.³ Unfortunately, neither can the potential opponents of growth. As the example of Rockford shows, even such issues as public school spending can become subject to the growth maximization needs of locality. The appropriate level of a social service often depends, not on an abstract model of efficiency or on "public demand" (cf. Tiebout, 1956), but on whether the cost of that service fits the local growth strategy (past and present).

By now it should be clear how political structures are mobilized to intensify land uses for private gain of many sorts. Let us look more closely, therefore, at the various local actors, besides those directly involved in generating rents, who participate in the growth machine.

3. Trillin remarks that rejection of high taxes by the citizens of Rockford is "consistent with what the business and industrial leadership of Rockford has traditionally preached. For years, the industrialists were considered to be in complete control of the sort of local government industrialists traditionally favor—a conservative, relatively clean administration committed to the proposition that the highest principle of government is the lowest property tax rate" (Trillin, 1976:150).

Politicians

The growth machine will sustain only certain persons as politicians. The campaign contributions and public celebrations that build political careers do not ordinarily come about because of a person's desire to save or destroy the environment, to repress or liberate the blacks or other disadvantaged groups, to eliminate civil liberties or enhance them. Given their legislative power, politicians may end up doing any of these things. But the underlying politics that gives rise to such opportunities is a person's participation in the growth consensus. That is why we so often see politicians springing into action to attract new capital and to sustain old investments. Even the pluralist scholar Robert Dahl observed in his New Haven study that if an employer seriously threatened to leave the community, "political leaders are likely to make frantic attempts to make the local situation more attractive" (quoted in Swanstrom, 1981:50).

Certainly, politicians differ in a number of ways. Like Mayor Ogdén of Chicago, some are trying to create vast fortunes for themselves as they go about their civic duties on behalf of the growth machine. Robert Folsom, the mayor of Dallas, has direct interests in over fifty local businesses, many of which have stakes in local growth outcomes. When the annexation of an adjacent town came up for a vote, he had to abstain because he owned 20 percent of it (Fullinwider, 1980). Another Texan, former governor John Connally, has among his holdings more than \$50 million in Austin-area real estate, property slated to become its county's largest residential and commercial development ("Austin Boom," *Santa Barbara News Press*, June 24, 1984, p. B-8). According to Robert Caro (1974), Commissioner Robert Mosses was able to overcome opposition to his vast highway and bridge building in the New York City area in part because the region's politicians were themselves buying up land adjacent to parkway exits, setting themselves up for huge rent gains. Most of Hawaii's major Democratic politicians, after winning election on a reform platform in 1954, directly profited as developers, lawyers, contractors, and investors through the zoning and related land-use decisions they and their colleagues were to make over the next thirty years of intensive growth and speculation (Daws and Cooper, 1984). Ma-

chine politics never insulated candidates from the development process; builders, railroaders, and other growth activists have long played crucial roles in boss politics, both in immigrant wards (Bell, 1961) and in WASP suburbs (Fogelson, 1967:207). All this is, as George Washington Plunkitt said in 1905, "honest graft" as opposed to "dishonest graft" (quoted in Swanstrom, 1985:25).⁴

Although a little grease always helps a wheel to turn, a system can run well with no graft at all—unless using campaign contributions to influence elections is considered graft. Virtually all politicians are dependent on private campaign financing (Alexander, 1972, 1980, 1983; Boyarsky and Gilliam, 1982; Smith, 1984), and it is the real estate entrepreneurs—particularly the large-scale structural speculators—who are particularly active in supporting candidates (see chapter 6 for additional documentation). The result is that candidates of both parties, of whatever ideological stripe, have to garner the favor of such persons, and this puts them squarely into the hands of growth machine coalitions. Thus many officeholders use their authority, not to enrich themselves, but to benefit the "whole community"—that is, to increase aggregate rents. Again, this does not preclude politicians' direct participation in property dealing on occasion and it certainly does not preclude giving a special hand to particular place entrepreneurs with whom a politician has a special relationship.

Elected officials also vary in their perception of how their authority can best be used to maximize growth. After his thorough study of the Cleveland growth machine, Swanstrom (1985) concluded that there are two types of growth strategists: the "conservative" and the "liberal." The former, paramount during the city's age of steel, favor unbridled exploitation of the city and its labor force, generally following the "free economy" political model. Programs of overt government intervention, for purposes of planning, public education, or employee welfare, are all highly suspect. The liberal growth machine strategy, in contrast, acknowledges that longer-term growth can be facilitated by overt

4. Local planning officials' also sometimes get in on some of the corruption; they may make real estate investments of their own. Los Angeles Planning Director Calvin Hamilton was pressured to resign after twenty years on the job in part because of revelations that he accepted free rent from developers for a side business and had other conflicts of interest (Clifford, 1985d).

government planning and by programs that pacify, co-opt, and placate opponents. This is a more modern form of growth ideology. Some politicians, depending on place and time, tend to favor the hard-line "unfettered capitalism" (Wolfe, 1981); others prefer the liberal version, analogous to what is called, in a broader context, "pragmatic state capitalism" (Wolfe, 1981; see also Weinstein, 1968). These positions became more obvious in many regions when urban renewal and other federal programs began penetrating cities in the postwar period. Especially in conservative areas such as Texas (Melosi, 1983:185), elites long debated among themselves whether or not the newfangled growth schemes would do more harm than good.

On the symbolic issues, politicians may also differ, on both the content of their positions and the degree to which they actually care about the issues. Some are no doubt sincere in pushing their "causes"; others may cynically manipulate them to obscure the distributional consequences of their own actions in other matters. Sometimes the results are positive, for example, when Oklahoma City and Dallas leaders made deliberate efforts to prevent racist elements from scaring off development with "another Little Rock." Liberal growth machine goals may thus help reform reactionary social patterns (Bernard, 1983:225; Melosi, 1983:188). But despite these variations, there appears to be a "tilt" to the whole system, regardless of time and place. Growth coalition activists and campaign contributors are not a culturally, racially, or economically diverse cross section of the urban population. They tend to give a reactionary texture to local government, in which the cultural crusades, like the material ones, are chosen for their acceptability to the rentier groups. Politicians adept in both spheres (material and symbolic) are the most valued, and most likely to have successful careers. A skilled politician delivers growth while giving a good circus.

The symbolic political skills are particularly crucial when unforeseen circumstances create use value crises, which can potentially stymie a locality's basic growth strategy. The 1978 Love Canal toxic waste emergency at Niagara Falls, New York, reveals how local officials use their positions to reassure the citizens and mold local agendas to handle disruptive "emotional" issues. In her

detailed ethnographic account, Levine (1982:59) reports that "the city's chief executives, led by the mayor, minimized the Love Canal problem in all public statements for two years no matter how much personal sympathy they felt for the affected people whose health was threatened by the poisons leaking into their homes" (see also Fowlkes and Miller, 1985). Lester (1971) reports a similar stance taken by the Utah civic leadership in response to the escape of nerve gas from the U.S. military's Dugway Proving Grounds in 1969 (see also Hirsch, 1969). The conduct of politicians in the face of accidents like the leakage of poison into schoolyards and homes in Niagara Falls or the sheep deaths in Utah reveal this "backup" function of local leaders (Molotch and Lester, 1974, 1975).

Still another critical use of local politicians is their ability to influence higher-level political actors in their growth distribution decisions. Although capital has direct links to national politicians (particularly in the executive office and Senate, see Donohoff [1967, 1970, 1983]), rentier groups are more parochial in their ties, although they may have contact with congressional representatives. Hence, rentiers need local politicians to lobby national officials. The national politicians, in turn, are responsive because they depend on local political operators (including party figures) for their own power base. The local politicians symbiotically need their national counterparts to generate the goods that keep them viable at home.

The goods that benefit the local leaders and growth interests are not trivial. The development of the Midwest was, as the historical anecdotes make clear, dependent on national decisions affecting canal and railroad lines. The Southwest and most of California could be developed only with federal subsidies and capital investments in water projects. The profound significance of government capital spending can be grasped by considering one statistic: Direct government outlays (at all levels) in 1983 accounted for nearly 27 percent of all construction in the United States (Mollenkopf, 1983:43). The figure was even higher, of course, during World War II, when federal construction expenditures laid the basis for much of the infrastructural and defense spending that was to follow.

Local Media

One local business takes a broad responsibility for general growth machine goals—the metropolitan newspaper. Most newspapers (small, suburban papers are occasionally an exception) profit primarily from increasing their circulation and therefore have a direct interest in growth.⁵ As the metropolis expands, the newspaper can sell a larger number of ad lines (at higher per line cost), on the basis of a rising circulation base; TV and radio stations are in a similar situation. In explaining why his newspaper had supported the urbanization of orchards that used to cover what is now the city of San Jose, the publisher of the *San Jose Mercury News* said, "Trees do not read newspapers" (Downie, 1974:112, as cited in Dornhoff, 1983:168). Just as newspaper boosterism was important in building the frontier towns (Dagenais, 1967), so today "the hallmark of media content has been peerless boosterism: congratulate growth rather than calculate consequences; compliment development rather than criticize its impact" (Burd, 1977:129; see also Devereux, 1976; Freidel, 1963). The media "must present a favorable image to outsiders" (Cox and Morgan, 1973:136), and only "sparingly use their issue-raising capacities" (Peterson, 1981:124).

American cities tend to be one-newspaper (or one-newspaper company) towns. The newspaper's assets in physical plant, in "good will," and in advertising clients are, for the most part, immobile. The local newspaper thus tends to occupy a unique position: like many other local businesses, it has an interest in growth, but unlike most others, its critical interest is not in the specific spatial pattern of that growth. The paper may occasionally help forge a specific strategy of growth, but ordinarily it makes little

5. Although many suburban newspapers encourage growth, especially of tax-generating businesses, the papers of exclusive suburban towns may instead try to guard the existing land-use patterns and social base of their circulation area. Ruddle (1983:104) describes just this sort of situation in Westport, Connecticut. There are a number of reasons for this occasional deviation from the rule we are proposing. When trying to attract advertising dollars, newspapers prefer a small, rich readership to a larger but poorer one. Maintaining exclusivity is itself occasionally a growth strategy for smaller communities. Opposition to growth in these cases is consistent with the desires of local elites.

6. Cox and Morgan's study of British local newspapers indicates that the booster role of the press is not unique to the United States.

difference to a newspaper whether the additional population comes to reside on the north side or the south side, or whether the new business comes through a new convention center or a new olive factory. The newspaper has no ax to grind except the one that holds the community elite together: growth.

This disinterest in the specific form of growth, but avid commitment to development generally, enables the newspaper to achieve a statesmanlike position in the community. It is often deferred to as a neutral party by the special interests. In his pioneering study of the creation of zoning laws in New York City in the 1920s, Makielski (1966:149) remarks, "While the newspapers in the city are large landholders, the role of the press was not quite like that of any of the other nongovernmental actors. The press was in part one of the referees of the rules of the game, especially the informal rules, calling attention to what it considered violations." The publisher or editor is often the arbiter of internal growth machine bickering, restraining the short-term profiteers in the interest of more stable, long-term, and properly planned growth.

The publishing families are often ensconced as the most important city builders within the town or city; this is the appropriate designation for such prominent families as Otis and Chandler of the *Los Angeles Times* (see Clark, 1983:271; Halberstam, 1979); Pulliam of the *Arizona Republic* and *Phoenix Sun* (see Luckingham, 1983:318); and Gaylord of the *Daily Oklahoman* (see Bernard, 1983:216). Sometimes these publishers are directly active in politics, "kingmaking" behind the scenes by screening candidates for political office, lobbying for federal contracts and grants, and striving to build growth infrastructure in their region (Fainstein, Fainstein, and Armistead, 1983:217; Judd, 1983:178). In the booming Contra Costa County suburbs of the San Francisco Bay Area, the president of the countywide organization of builders, real estate investors, and property financiers was the owner of the regional paper. In his home county, as well as in the jurisdictions of his eleven other suburban papers, owner Dean Leshner ("Citizen Leshner") acts as "a cheerleader for development" who simply kills stories damaging to growth interests and reassigns unsympathetic reporters to less controversial beats (Steidtmann, 1985). The local newspaper editor was one of the three "bosses"

in Springdale's "invisible government" (Vidich and Bensman, 1969:217). Sometimes, the publisher is among the largest urban landholders and openly fights for benefits tied to growth in land. The owners of the *Los Angeles Times* fought for the water that developed their vast properties for both urban and agricultural uses. The editorial stance is usually reformist, invoking the common good (and technical planning expertise) as the rationale for the land-use decisions the owners favor. This sustains the legitimacy of the paper itself among all literate sectors of society and helps mask the distributive effects of many growth developments.

The media attempt to attain their goals not only through news articles and editorials but also through informal talks between owners and editors and the local leaders. Because newspaper interests are tied to growth, media executives are sympathetic to business leaders' complaints that a particular journalistic investigation or angle may be bad for the local business climate, and should it nevertheless become necessary, direct threats of advertising cancellation can modify journalistic coverage (Bernard, 1983:220). This does not mean that newspapers (or advertisers) control the politics of a city or region, but that the media have a special influence simply because they are committed to growth per se, and can play an invaluable role in coordinating strategy and selling growth to the public.

This institutional legitimacy is especially useful in crises. In the controversy surrounding the army's accidental release of nerve gas at the Dugway Proving Grounds, Lester found that the Utah media were far more sympathetic to the military's explanations than were media outside Utah (Lester, 1971). The economic utility of the Dugway Proving Grounds (and related government facilities) was valued by the local establishment. Similarly, insiders report that publicizing toxic waste problems at Love Canal was hindered by an "unwritten law" in the newsroom that "a reporter did not attack or otherwise fluster the Hooker [Chemical Company] executives" (Brown, 1979, cited in Levine, 1982:190).

As these examples indicate, a newspaper's essential role is not to protect a given firm or industry (an issue more likely to arise in a small city than a large one) but to bolster and maintain the predisposition for general growth. Although newspaper editorialists

may express concern for "the ecology," this does not prevent them from supporting growth-inducing investments for their regions. The *New York Times* likes office towers and additional industrial installations in the city even more than it loves "the environment." Even when historically significant districts are threatened, the *Times* editorializes in favor of intensification. Thus the *Times* recently admonished opponents to "get out of the way" of the Times Square renewal, which would replace landmark structures (including its own former headquarters at 1 Times Square) with huge office structures (*New York Times*, May 24, 1984, p. 18). Similarly, the *Los Angeles Times* editorializes against narrow-minded profiteering that increases pollution or aesthetic blight—in other cities. The newspaper featured criticism, for example, of the Times Square renewal plan (Kaplan, 1984:1), but had enthusiastically supported development of the environmentally devastating supersonic transport (SST) for the jobs it would presumably lure to Southern California. In an unexpected regional parallel, the *Los Angeles Times* fired celebrated architectural critic John Pastier for his incessant criticisms of Los Angeles's downtown renewal projects (Clark, 1983:298), and the *New York Times* dismissed Pulitzer Prize winner Sydney Schanberg as a columnist apparently because he "opposed civic projects supported by some of New York's most powerful interests, particularly those in the real estate industry" (Rosenstiel, 1985:21).

Although newspapers may openly support "good planning principles" of a certain sort, the acceptable form of "good planning" does not often extend to limiting growth or authentic conservation in a newspaper's home ground. "Good planning principles" can easily represent the opposite goals.

Utilities

Leaders of "independent" public or quasi-public agencies, such as utilities, may play a role similar to that of the newspaper publisher: tied to a single locale, they become growth "statesmen" rather than advocates for a certain type of growth or intralocal distribution of growth.

For example, a water-supplying agency (whether public or pri-