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Week #3
July 1, 2002
Lecture notes

Upcoming Events

1. Hand Back quizzes (optional) and explain what you need to explain.
 2. I have new office hours. From now on, I will be in the office from 2:00 PM to 6:00 PM, Monday-Friday.
 3. Have a happy 4th of July.
 4. Discuss the details about writing the term paper. Spend a substantial amount of time on this.
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Today's Blueprint

Overlap from the last discussion: Last time, we covered several of the stages in the political development of American cities. This evolution went through the following phases:

- a. The Colonial Town
- b. The Early Republican
- c. Political Machines
- d. The Reform movement

Based on this historical overview, Judd and Swanstrom explain that there are four (4) reoccurring themes that loom large over the history of urban development and governance. These looming forces timeless forces represent the dominant issues in urban politics, and no UP study is complete without contending with these issues one way of another.

1. **The culture of privatism** (fosters a conflict between economic individualism social responsibility)
2. **The politics of growth** (leads to the trade-off between a city's having financial autonomy and a city having corporate backing).
3. **The challenge of governance** (makes for a tradeoff between the political and economic logic of governing a city)
4. **The politics of succession** (fosters the conflict between the affluent and the resource dependent)

We will discuss each of these issues in the pages that follow.

The Culture of Privatism

Last class we talked about the fact that American cities are, first and foremost, economic units—each with its own self-contained and self-interested capitalist system driven by the desire to make profits. The “me-centered”/ strictly-business mentality of American cities characterizes what social scientist, Sam Bass Warner (1968), calls the culture of privatism. In a sentence, the culture of privatism is the belief that *individual economic development is more important than public interests*.

- Generally, Americans like limited government. This idea goes back as far as Thomas Jefferson and his notion that the best government is the one that governs least.
 - In addition to wanting to be left alone by the government, Americans want to be free to pursue economic gains without the government intervention.
 - In this sense, city governments are not much different from the citizens that populate them. In order to function properly, cities need to grow economically; therefore,
 - The culture of privatism breeds two types of conflict: one between those who want the government out of their lives and those who support government intervention, another between those who feel the city should devote more resources to serving citizens and

those who believe the city's main objective should be promoting economic growth and letting the market take care of public interests.

The Politics of Growth

The "grow or die" mentality of American cities leads to an interesting dynamic...

- Because city governments are putting their emphasis on business and their fate in the market, officials seek outside businesses to stimulate economic growth in their cities.
- Such businesses have mobile wealth and therefore possess a strategic bargaining advantage. For example, in exchange for them doing business in the city, officials are willing to give kick-backs like land use-permits and relaxed zoning requirements. As a result, cities end up competing for outside investors. Sometimes, they can even sacrifice more than they gain to in these desperate negotiations (i.e. allowing a business to build a factory that boosts the economy but rapes the area of its natural resources).
- Swanstrom (1989) described this skewed give-and-take between city governments and businesses (usually with the city becoming beholden to these) as a new form of machine politics, a corporate growth machine.

The Challenge of Governance

So what is a city supposed to do? The culture of privatism shows that citizens are looking out for themselves (emphasizing the well-being of the individual over the well-being of the city. The politics of growth says that cities look out for their own interests (soliciting business from outside investors, sports teams, and growth machines). This presents an obvious trade-off between citizen-centered (political logic) and city-centered (economic logic) considerations of American cities:

Political Logic:

At first (pre-civil war), political power, like economic wealth, tended to concentrate in the hands of the privileged few. But as cities grew (post-civil war) the power base shifted from the wealthy elites to the masses and city politics became more concerned with making/keeping the citizens (not the elites) happy. This mass focus in city politics characterizes the political logic of governance:

- Generally, policy decision-making is the domain of our leaders, who usually have more experience and more information than do regular citizens. However, this does not mean that public officials design policy without considering popular sentiment. To coin Rousseau's term, the "general will" can—and often does—affect leaders' decisions (1762).
- Just as elites seek to win over the public, citizens ultimately want to influence policy decisions in their favor. The older Verba and friends literature describes political participation as the bridge by which citizens carry information to elites (Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978). The newer Verba and friends literature employs the analogy of participation being a "voice," a form of political body language. Participation is how citizens communicate their concerns and preferences to elites (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995, 1; Nagel 1987, 1-8; Verba, Schlozman, Brady, and Nie 1993, 455). Elites cannot possibly hear everyone, so citizens use different modes, each mode differing in the resources they require, the nature of information they are supposed to convey, and the amount of pressure they apply to get elite's attention (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995, 48). Here are some of the modes of participation available to citizens:

1. Citizen initiated contacting: "complaining to city hall"
 - participate in planning, meetings.
 - hearings

- 20% of Americans say they do this
 - includes once-in-a-lifetimers
 - Why?: crime pot-holes barking-dogs
 - Who?: upper-SES, those w/ resources, skills (speaking)
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2. Voting (sort of) and contacting are individualistic participation

- Goals?:
- Impact?:
- vehicle for mass mobilization?
- "case-by-case" basis

3. Modes of (group-based) Participation:

- local parties (Washington State)
- limited power at local/county level
- precinct captians elected off-year (uncontested)
- county committees suggest platform
- nominate candidates to fill leg. vacancies
- elect folks to set state platform, elect folks to attend state convention (off-years)
endorse in local races

Note: no real powers over:

- who runs under party lable for office
 - who goes to party's national conventions
 - funding candidates (state parties do...)
- goals?:
 - impact?:
 - vehicle for mass mobilization?

4) Interest Groups (civic)

- "good government", charity, service orgs.
- tradl. male = Kiwanas, Lions, Rotary
- tradl female = Jr. League, L of W voters, Soroptimists (dift than "social"/fraternal clubs: Elks, Moose, FOE, etc.)
- serve as private networks for access to public officials
- Rotary Wendsdays recruit local candidates

Note: at best, participation sporadic; also note that participation in these groups is declinong

- Goals?:
- Impact?: 1965 Survey of council members
 - 94% named civic assocs as most imfluential and active at meetings
 - 28% named economic groups (merchants, realtors...)
 - 21% named taxpayer groups

1999: now environmental groups, homeowners assoc, (reps of racial/ethnic minorities)

5) Business/Economic groups

Chambers of Commerce
 Realtors, Developers, Building Industry of _____,
 Downtown Merchants Groups

Note: may employ full time, paid staff, executive officer,

- lobbyists
- goals?:
- impact?:

- vehicle for mass mobilization?
- 6) Neighborhood Associations
- a.) event inspired
- to protect homes from some proposed land use
 - raise \$\$ for lawsuits, etc.
 - some lawsuit victories fund group....
 - some persist after threat is gone
 - ex) Fairhaven/southside: Ferry Terminal, trucks
 - Eldridge: Truck route
 - 3rd runway, new airport, transit line
- b) city plan inspired
- master plans call for routinized public input
 - ex) Portland, where the city funds group's newsletter
- c) Federally- inspired
- maximum feasible participation
 - goals?:
 - impacts?:
 - vehicle for mass mobilization?

7) Violent Protest

- Politicians seek legitimacy through election and re-election. Political authority is the ability to make decisions with the people's blessing (or at the very least, their tolerance). Since the people can put politicians into office (and kick them out, if necessary) it is important that political decisions benefit the bulk of the electorate.

Therefore, city leaders must build broad coalitions of support—spreading the rewards of public policy to as many voters as possible, and, ultimately, guaranteeing her re-election.

Economic Logic:

Since firms and entrepreneurs are free to take their business elsewhere, politicians must cater to investors in addition to (or maybe in spite of) voters. Again, some people stand to benefit from this while others tend to suffer. To remain competitive, city officials offer interesting incentives for businesses to work in their cities (see above).

To sum it all up, the political logic of governance dictates that politicians should cultivate government support, while the economic logic of city governance dictates that cities should primarily promote economic growth. Focusing on one will almost automatically mean compromising the other. Therefore, the real task of governing a city is successfully balancing the economic and political pressures of the city.

The Politics of Succession

This leads us the final force that reoccurs in the history of city governments. Succession is arguably one of the biggest issues contemporary issues of UP. The empirical regularity in UP is that old, core cities tend to become surrounded by White, municipally independent, suburbs or “edge cities.” [Give the Livonia vs. Detroit, MI example: The latter has highest White population 96.5% and the former has the 2nd Blackest population (82.8%). Because urban areas tend to a collection of city governments, one may look at how these separate jurisdictions play off one another. The bad news is that, if the rate of municipal fragmentation remains constant we may never be able to resolve the appeal of succession.

- Americans love moving away from their problems. That is how the first settlers got here is the first place.
- As we spread westward, leaving eastern safe-havens (and braving restless natives) for the sake of a better life. One should note that, while all this running away is taking place, the technology of the time how far removed suburbans could be from the urban core.
- Now that we can no longer move westward, well-to-do Americans are leaving cities for suburbs, occupied by people like them. The logic of America’s trend toward suburbanization can be explained as follows:
 - It is a known fact that urban problems, for whatever reason, tend to accompany urban development. It is not surprising that one of the common reactions to these rising problem is to flee the scene.
 - When they talk about suburbanization, they usually refer to the idea that urban factors like fewer job opportunities, bad public schools, and high crime rates, etc.) push residents from cities to suburbs. The reality is that the word “urban” has become synonymous for racial and ethnic minorities and poor people, and many residents leave urban areas to escape these groups.
 - Drawing back the to the ideas discussed in the challenge of city governance, suburbanization leaves behind a contingency of non-taxable institutions and lower- to working-class minorities, all of which depend on city services and drain the city budget. As a result, American cities, once the hallmarks of prosperity, become impoverished because they stockpile debt faster than they generate revenue.