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WHO IS GOVERNED? LOCAL CITIZENS AND THE POLITICAL ORDER OF CITIES

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Confidence in representative government appears widely on the wane, and local democracy seems particularly lacking in vibrancy. The claim that local representatives are close to the people rings somewhat hollow. Instead of uniting people in civic work, office holders typically preside over a high level of apathy and in the worst cases their actions give rise to active distrust. Further, as put by one pair of authors: “If a basic aim of institutional design is to nurture a sense of shared fate among citizens, local political institutions are failing badly (Macedo and Karpowitz 2006: 59). Fresh thinking about the study of urban politics is thus very much in order, and a new urban scholarship might well be built around the idea of refashioning local democracy. In this chapter, my aim is to suggest ways of thinking about urban politics in light of democratic ideals. I recommend a nine-step effort.

Step One: Seeing Democracy as an Inclusive Process

Self-government rests on the principle that those who are governed have a role in governing. An ancient Greek version was that all would rule and be ruled in turn. Everyone would have a hand in governing, but in such a way as to have reason to accommodate the concerns of others. No one would get her or his way all of the time, but all would be part of a system in which their concerns were assured consideration. No group would be consigned to the position of a permanent minority, and conciliation would be extended to all (Crick 2000). Thus we draw from Greek wisdom an understanding of democracy as an inclusive process.

Today voting, combined with the right of dissent, is widely seen as fundamental to achieving the incorporation of all. Paying heed to Patrick Dunleavy’s caution about excessive emphasis on such input processes (1980), I argue here, however, that we need a broader understanding of political inclusion, one that involves the total fabric of the polity, that is, the way in which state, civil society, and market weave together. This is an unconventional understanding, but one that provides a way of addressing the fact that many localities contain populations that are disconnected from the mainstream of governance, and find themselves in a position of unending marginality. The presence of such a “permanent minority” falls short on a basic requirement of democracy.

Step Two: Understanding Elections as an Inadequate Expression of Democracy

Our understanding of representative government thus is somewhat shallow. If elections are open and contested and citizens enjoy an opportunity to vote, then we tend to assume that democratic representation is at work. But, let us bear in mind the limits of electoral accountability as a form of representation. Although voting is the most conspicuous form of citizen participation in politics, elections are in reality a highly limited form of political expression. For multiple reasons that need not be elaborated here, elections provide inadequate ground on which to rest democratic representation. Voting itself involves what might be termed a “blunt” choice, imperfectly matched to the complexity of the alternatives that may be at stake Verba (1967). The framework within which voter choices are made sometimes lacks a coherent and relevant issue content. Turnout is often low and class-skewed. And, of fundamental importance, elected officials are only part of what makes up a governing arrangement.

Step Three: Recognizing that Protest Movements Are Not Endpoints in Political Change

One response to shortcomings in official channels of representation is to mount a social movement. Indeed, much of the politics of the latter half of the 20th century was dominated by such phenomena as the civil rights movement in the U.S. and movements for independence in countries whose citizens suffered under the political debility of colonial status. Important as these liberation episodes were, a movement is only a prelude to the main event. When one political order is destabilized (and destabilization is perhaps the major strategy of social movements), the central issue becomes one of the terms of a new political settlement. The resources and strategies used in destabilizing an old order might be quite different from those required in constructing a new and durable political settlement. How, then, does a change become institutionalized? As a new order takes shape, we need to ask how far-reaching is the change. In the U.S., the follow-through to the civil rights movement shows us that many things remained unaltered, and new relationships took shape as buffers against racial integration. White flight, for example, was a powerful new force giving rise to consequences greatly at odds with the goal of ending racial segregation (Kruse 2005).

We have long understood that “protest is not enough” in bringing about lasting change (Browning Marshall, and Tabb 1984). Protests are subject to various short-term counterattacks, and can be outlasted by those in power (Lipsky 1970). Targets of movement mobilization often have a significant arsenal of defenses, and they may even relocate and redirect investments. Thus, over time, the U.S. labor-union movement found itself weakened by the relocation of business operations away from the older urban centers, where unions had their greatest successes, to areas of the country that were less union friendly (Mollenkopf 1983). Now overseas investment and outsourcing have taken an additional toll.

For protest movements, then, an oppositional strategy of putting pressure on established centers of governing power is insufficient. Negotiated settlements may prove to be ephemeral. Lasting change is a matter of establishing durable relationships of a kind that are a part of the system of governance. Incorporation rather than simply “pressure on” is the key, but incorporation into what?

Leverage within local government is by no means an insignificant factor (Button 1989), but much is outside the reach of city hall, not only in the U.S. with its incomplete powers of home rule and limited capacity to raise revenue (Elkin 1987; Frug 1999; and Barron 2003), but also in much of Europe (**Stoker 2003-delete note**).¹ Investment activity, informal networks of access to employment, control over patterns of migration, and much more are beyond the scope of local authority. Because official actions are themselves only part of the process of governing, we need to look more widely. Unless members of a movement can incorporate themselves productively into the web of relations between governmental and non-governmental actors, they have limited capacity to define the terms on which political change is institutionalized. To understand what it means to be productively incorporated, we need now to turn our attention to policy and the form that policy takes in the real world of governing and being governed?

Step Four: Rethinking What Policy Is

We have long understood that policy is not what is formally enacted. Policy is what is implemented, but even that insight does not take us far enough. Policy implementation is itself not something with a disembodied form separate from the people affected (Honig 2006). Policy is how official initiatives and programs actually mesh with the behavior of citizens as they respond from the varied positions they occupy in the total order of things. It flows from complex interactions within the polity. *Policy therefore is not a unidirectional force applied to a uniform body of people* (McLaughlin 2006). It is instead a complex set of interactions with which citizens may be aligned in various ways.

Consider the experience with evacuation in New Orleans as Hurricane Katrina swept through the area. In the face of imminent flooding, the mayor gave an official order to evacuate. Initially, an unstated assumption was that residents would simply exit the city and locate temporary housing outside the flood zone. Many residents did so, but many others, lacking automobiles and credit cards, were unable to do so. For the latter there was no coordinated plan of evacuation. Other than opening the Superdome as an emergency (but ill-equipped and poorly managed) facility, officials at all levels did little except launch belated rescue efforts. In short, official action served some but not others. In the manner initiated, emergency evacuation assumed that residents had a capacity, on their own, to leave the city and find shelter elsewhere. As became evident during a badly executed implementation effort, the initial policy plan was seriously flawed. The evacuation aim was not aligned with the inability of a sizeable segment of the population to respond in the anticipated way.

Formal policy is often announced in a universal form. Everyone is to evacuate, or all students are to meet high academic standards. Some policy pronouncements are largely symbolic. They embody good intentions, but change little about how the world operates. Some may be understood as symbolic from the beginning. Others may represent wishful thinking and lapse quickly into an empty gesture. Many others will undergo significant change and adjustment as they move from enactment to execution.

Policy is shaped by the way various people are perceived and treated by others, by their own inclinations, and especially by the resources and capacities they enjoy.

As in the case of the Katrina evacuation, it often happens that declared policy is made with little understanding for how it will be carried through as citizen responses come into play. De facto policy is therefore what governmental and non-governmental actors produce through their joint action. Coordination may be tacit rather than explicit, and it may be weak and friction-laden. But joint action, not government action alone, determines policy reality.

Step Five: Re-examining Policymaking

If policy is de facto what results from the interplay between the behavior of citizens (documented and not) and the actions of governmental actors, then we need to re-think the policy process. Patrick Dunleavy took urban political science to task for being “overwhelmingly input-oriented” (1980, 13). Elections, followed by legislative enactments, he argued, are not the main dynamic of politics. Because government is not an independent force acting upon a passive society and economy, policy-making involves much more than activity in which initiatives move from advocacy to potential enactment and, if enacted, onto implementation (cf. Sabatier 1999).

Significantly, however, even those who call for a balanced or polity-centered approach tend to put the spotlight on actors within the governmental sphere. In her influential work, aimed at reversing society-centered analyses, Theda Skocpol argues: “Both appointed and elected officials have ideas and organizational career interests of their own, and they devise and work for policies that will further those ideas and interest, or at least not harm them ...” (1992: 42). Put another way: “Because states are authoritative and resourceful organizations – collectors of revenue, centers of cultural authority, and hoarders of means of coercion – they are sites of autonomous action, not reducible to the demands or preferences of social groups” (Skocpol 1985: 42).

In countering social determinism, Skocpol tends to describe the policy process as autonomous, with social input, but largely directed by professional politicians and administrators. Yet at other times she talks about a “need to analyze states in relation to socioeconomic and sociocultural contexts” (1985: 20).² ~~delete note~~ However, framing the matter around the conceptual distinction between state and society captures only a partial reality. There are ways in which state and society mesh so thoroughly that the notion of one influencing the other implies a degree of separation that ill fits how the process works.

It fell to Robert Putnam’s work on social capital in Italy (1993) and subsequently in the U.S. (2000) to put civil society in the spotlight and move scholars toward a more balanced polity-centered approach **Saegert, Thompson, and Warren 2001**-~~delete note~~.³ While state actions shape civil society, civil society also profoundly penetrates policymaking. Consider the case of AIDS prevention. Studies of Christchurch, New Zealand (Brown 1999), and Zurich, Switzerland (Neueschwander, Kübler, and Frey

2004), underscore the enormous importance of civil society. In Christchurch, for example, prevention policy is achieved through a tight-knit *community*, consisting of volunteers, health and social work professionals, and other activists on the issue. Without a strong sense of community, AIDS prevention runs the risk of what Michael Brown terms “clientilization and poor service delivery” (1999: 80). In his view, effective AIDS prevention depends on bonds that extend beyond officially defined responsibilities, and grow from “a sense of caring and unity” that enhances communication, information sharing, and intensity of effort beyond what a formal relationships is able to evoke. As one AIDS worker put it: “There’s no contractual obligation to perform some of the work we do...(quoted in Brown 1999: 80).

In matters as intimate and sensitive as those involved in the spread of AIDS, it is particularly important that professionals and target groups have a basis on which personal trust can be built. In Switzerland, gay organizations and social work professionals were the early responders to the crisis: “As self-help organizations or professionals with a long experience in working with the different target groups, they were extremely well rooted in the various milieus (prostitution, homosexual community, drug users, etc) that are normally quite difficult to penetrate – especially for state actors” (Neuenschwander, Kübler, and Frey 2004: 7). Hence as AIDS prevention unfolded in Switzerland, public authorities found it essential to collaborate with pertinent self-help organizations “in order to gain access to the relevant target groups” (ibid.: 8). As Brown observes, “AIDS politics do not just work on policy mandates alone. They work effectively because [key players] are part of the communities in which they serve” (1999:80).

AIDS prevention is, of course, an atypical policy in many regards. Still, even in less intimate matters such as neighborhood revitalization, effectiveness depends on a meshing of efforts from government agencies (often at multiple levels), neighborhood groups, and various financial and technical-assistance intermediaries (von Hoffman 2003). Still market forces have to be reckoned with. Some alignments are weak. Neighborhood revitalization sometimes fails to take hold or occurs at only a modest level. Or, in the case of ending racial segregation in America’s highly decentralized school system, legal doctrine failed to align with operational reality and in fact contributed to a drastically reconfigured metropolitan pattern along with significant rethinking about public education (Kruse 2005).

Step Six: Rejecting Functional Necessity as an Overriding Cause

Given the complexity of the policy process, we face the question of what drives policy actions. One possibility is that individuals are largely pawns moved by larger systemic forces. There is no question but that structural forces, such as economic competition between localities, are an important factor (Peterson 1981), but caution is in order. Because intermediate links constitute a significant force, functional necessity has become a largely discredited form of argument (Hay 1995; Hall and Taylor 1996; Jacobs and Skocpol 2005). Alvin Gouldner long ago spotlighted political agency within a corporate setting. Foreshadowing James March (1962), Gouldner argued that powerful individuals within a corporate structure “do not respond directly to all of the tensions of

the organization as a whole; they respond with greater readiness to those organizational tensions which threaten their own status” (1954: 240-241). This means that what is functional or efficient for an organization does not *control* the behavior of individuals within that setting. Concerns that impinge directly on actors may carry more weight than some broadly defined version of the interest of the whole. School reform may be deemed important for the well-being of the city, but the teachers union may have a different set of focal concerns.

In his work on social history, Arthur Stinchcombe observes that human agency stems from understandings that are immediate and contingent, but not randomly subjective. He argues that while structural factors help shape the cognitions of people, many factors come into play. Stinchcombe notes that a “general difficulty with ‘functional’ arguments that explain social behavior as attempts to solve ‘system problems’ of one sort or another is that people quite often solve the wrong problem, or give the wrong solution to the right problem” (1978: 110; see also Rothstein 1992).

Hence, useful as abstract theories that highlight functional “necessities” may be in identifying general patterns of history, they are not sufficient. There is an intermediate level of events where the contingent nature of development reveals important variations and alternative paths of development (Thelen and Steinmo 1992: 28; Weir 1992).

Human agency figures in importantly in how structures are adapted to form governing arrangements and thus how governing arrangements favor some courses of action and disfavor others. Yet agency, which is often seen through a lens of elite behavior, has to be understood within a structured context. The nature of the intersection between agency and structure is one of the most difficult puzzles to solve.⁴ On the one hand, “because humans shape the constraints in which they interact through choice and design,” it is important to look at “moments of institutional change” (Thelen and Steinmo 1992: 27). On the other hand, “human agency occurs and acquires meaning only in relation to already preconstituted and deeply structured settings” (Hay 1995: 200). Unanticipated outcomes play a large role, and some of these have to do with the ways in which those in socio-economically subordinate position adjust to the flow of broad changes around them. Thus we need to appreciate that civic and political relations are at least as much a product of unintended and piecemeal adjustment as of interventions driven by elite aims and ambitions. There is reason therefore to think broadly about the nature of local political orders, how they take shape, and the implanted ways in which the formation of new arrangements are constrained.

Step Seven: Looking beyond Elite Clashes and Coalitions

In an assessment of the concept of an urban regime, Gerry Stoker called for greater attention to the “wider relationship between government and its citizens” (1995: 60). Concentrating on elites and their interests can, among other things, underplay the role of race, class, and gender in politics (cf. Wilson 1985).⁵ What, then, does a local political order look like from the bottom up? What place do ordinary citizens, especially those of lower socio-economic status (SES), occupy in the political order. We cannot assume that citizens are simply passive recipients of the actions of distant policy-makers,

hence not an integral part of the policy process itself. Consider what happens if we shift from asking how various policies affect citizens to a slightly more refined question of how people at the grass roots engage with a range of initiatives and programs (Handler 1996). Are citizens deemed to be part of the process? What does it mean if their engagement is marked by alienation and resentment? Is there recognition that the varied actions and reactions of citizens help make policies what they actually are?

Although it is important to consider how elites build support for an agenda and attempt to engineer changes, we should concurrently consider how these changes affect the lives of ordinary people *and how they adjust*. In short, what influences how ordinary citizens of varying means align with sundry policies and programs? One tenet of classic pluralism holds that citizens facing limited life chances have a special incentive to act to expand their opportunities (Dahl 1961; 293-296) (**delete note**).⁶ Yet clearly there are many situations in which no such action is observable, and we cannot attribute such passivity to satisfaction with things as they are.

It seems especially urgent then to understand why misaligned policy configurations, with their hampered capacity for problem-solving, have a tendency to perpetuate themselves. Urban school reform faces that challenge, as do other areas of policy, such as crime control in inner-city areas. Partly it is a matter that problems are interrelated. Efforts to expand opportunity through workforce development, for example, run up against the harsh reality that segments of the population are disconnected from the world of mainstream employment in a manner that is hard to overcome without taking on such broad issues as low-wage work and multigenerational poverty (Stone and Worgs 2004). There is a tendency toward triage responses in which small numbers of the least disconnected are assisted while larger numbers in worse straits are neglected. Bold declarations that “all children can learn” run afoul of the reality that, for some students, actual conditions perpetuate low expectations and resources are allocated accordingly (Oakes and Rogers 2006).

Although at this stage the concept of a political order remains underdeveloped, it can expand our analytical horizons beyond elite-level clashes and coalition-building efforts. It gives us an opportunity to consider how race, class, and other social identities align with systemic inequalities and how these inequalities are perpetuated. The concept of a political order thus enables us to put aside the myth of distinct spheres of government and society (Orren and Skowronek 2004: 80). It gives us a useful lens for looking at politics, focusing not on who governs, but instead on how governing occurs.

Because political order fits comfortably with the notion of a polity-centered approach (Orren and Skowronek 2004), the term avoids giving primacy to socioeconomic processes, but without any implication that the state is detached from its moorings in civil society and economy. Since change is not readily achieved by pulling a single lever, mobilizing for change is likely to be beyond the capacity of those who are lightly resourced. The notion of a political order thus brings into consideration the multiple strands that weave together politics with society’s system of stratification. Stereotypes, past experiences, and fears of “the other” help form a fabric of relationships that are too

important to disregard, though they are not always readily observable as distinct events or strategic maneuvers.

A local political order occupies a stratified terrain, and that terrain poses a test for how inclusive a political order is. And from limited degrees of inclusiveness there are significant policy consequences. For example, social housing planned and developed through a male-dominated order may be sterile and therefore quite different from the kind of housing that might have been built through an order in which women had greater voice (Strömberg 1996).

That localities exist in an intergovernmental context means that there may be levers of change beyond the reach of those in key institutional positions locally, and it is well to remember that those levers of change may not be in the service of local democracy and may instead operate on behalf of a much different agenda. Still, as conditions alter, new ideas come into play, and resources shift, change is possible – sometimes by accretion and sometimes by dramatic shift. Ideas, however, do not operate independent of resources, material and otherwise (Sewell 1992), some of which may flow through intergovernmental channels (Savitch and Kantor 2002).

Step Eight: Heeding Technocratic Ascendance as well as Globalization

The study of urban politics has long struggled with the challenge that mobile capital poses for local democracy (Imbroscio 1999), and several chapters in this collection call attention to the enormous importance of the global economy. The mobility of capital is a leading concern of local officials everywhere and their desire to attract investment confers on business what Charles Lindblom terms a “privileged position” (1977). Yet, when Patrick Dunleavy called for urban political science to move beyond preoccupation with input processes and take greater account of the context within which local politics takes shape, he had in mind an even broader picture of modernity and its consequences (1980). As a student of British housing policy, Dunleavy knew how the growth of the welfare state had created an intergovernmental edifice within which local decisions were made.

After the erosion of an earlier way of life created needs that private markets were ill-suited to meet, housing became a significant collective good, planned and operated through the public sector. As social housing came under the sponsorship of the national welfare state, that move greatly expanded the role of professional planners and other social-policy experts, with their own particular networks. A case study of the London Borough of Southwark shows how the growth of the welfare state weakened the local labor movement and altered the policy process (Goss 1988). With decision-making becoming more technocratic, it also became less oriented to local concerns, and the populace felt disconnected from the process. Of the post World War II years, one author talks of “a defeat for localist values” and “a growing tendency to sacrifice civic engagement on the altar of centrally determined efficiency” (Marquand 2004: 69).

The welfare state assumed a smaller role in the U.S., but policy experts nevertheless came to occupy an important position. In his study of New Haven, Robert Dahl captures this trend when he talks about the growing importance of planners, technicians, and professional administrators. As he put it: “The new men in local politics may very well prove to be the bureaucrats and experts—and politicians who know how to use them” (1961: 62). Recent historical studies of New Haven (Rae 2003) and Boston (O’Connor 1993) – both places where city hall, not the business sector, was the prime initiator of redevelopment – highlight a striking parallel with Southwark. Though elected officials held center stage in both places, urban redevelopment imposed hardships on those with lower incomes and status, caused significant social disruption, and in the process generated resentments. New Haven’s redevelopment agency was sufficiently disconnected from the populace to be known as “the Kremlin” (Rae 2003: 318)(delete).⁷

What to make of these experiences, now part of an earlier urban history? Redevelopment is not an isolated experience. Across a wide range of services, professionalization and bureaucratization have opened a deep divide between non-affluent citizens and government that we continue to struggle to bridge (Handler 1996; Schorr 1987; and Fung 2004). Southwark, Boston, and New Haven are places in which a sizeable segment of the population found itself on the margins of an emergent order, without an effective voice in how policy might be adjusted. By prediction from classic pluralism, a largely working-class electorate would be expected to bring about responsiveness to their situation. Events, however, took a different course. Seen through the lens of shifting political orders, the lower ranks in socio-economic standing lost ground. The new political force was a professional and technocratic element, with its own agenda and connections but only weakly linked to the nonaffluent citizenry. A point to be explained is thus why this tie is so slack. Neither local elected officials nor administrative professional displayed a hostile stance toward the lower classes. To the contrary, efforts were made to be responsive to their needs. For their part, supralocal actors provided support for what they often regarded as aims of social equity. Still, good intentions or not, their initiatives often damaged ties to the less affluent.

A central puzzle is thus why emerging political orders have weakened rather than enhanced the position of lower socio-economic groups. One possibility is post-industrial capitalism with its diminished place for unskilled workers. No doubt, global capitalism is a contributor, but the politically diminished position of the lower classes preceded deindustrialization. Hence advanced capitalism cannot be the whole story. Similarly, the rise of conservative, anti-poor governments in the U.S. and the U.K. is a likely contributor, but the political debility of the lower socio-economic ranks was evident prior to the Thatcher and Reagan eras in the two countries. Racism is yet another possibility and a strong candidate for a supporting role, but middle-class minorities have found wider opportunities available even as their non-affluent counterparts faced continuing, if not worsening, marginalization.⁸

Perhaps we need to consider something beyond ‘the usual suspects.’ An advantage of viewing experience through the lens of local political orders is that it enables us to ask how the process of governing relates to the lives of ordinary citizens

and what voice they have as policy is put into practice. We see that, for example, both New Haven and Southwark have undergone a transition from a neighborhood-based form of politics in which citizens were connected in highly personal ways with the political and civic life of their communities to a kind of politics in which professionalization played a central role, but failed to find effective links to citizens as they underwent damaging forms of social and economic change **Delete note but move its edited content into text** -- *David Marquand points to a shift in ethos among professionals from being contributors to a “broader civic community” to that of being possessors “of technical skills, technical knowledge and technical qualifications” beyond the ability of the lay public to understand and assess (2004: 75).*⁹ In this process, constructive alignment did not take hold and inclusion faltered.

While professionalism is a necessary element in the overall governance of modern communities, professionalization itself leaves us uncertain about how to put together a political order that is inclusive and effective. From Southwark we can see that a national welfare system oriented toward social equity can still be inadequate for delivering inclusion. From New Haven we also know that an executive-centered approach for governing can be far off the mark (**delete note**).¹⁰ Both experiences fall well short of inclusiveness, and the policies as put into practice failed to align constructively with the lives of substantial segments of the population. Powerful forces from the global economy and from the expanded role of expertise have converged in such a way as to leave policy misalignments in which lower SES populations are increasingly marginalized. Managerialism seems to have eclipsed representation.

Step Nine: Reconsidering the Pluralist Model

It is time to rethink the pluralist model, with its notion of governing as guided centrally by an input process and as characterized by openness. Talk of a shift from government to governance may imply that governing once operated in a chain-of-accountability manner. Yet governing *never* operated in this way. Policy and policymaking fit such a model poorly, elections are (and have been) a highly inadequate link between citizens and their governors, and powerful forces have long been at work outside the conventional input process. Classic pluralism comes nowhere near capturing the reality of local politics.

In Dahl’s account of the evolution from an oligarchy, ruled by a cohesive elite, to a pluralist democracy, political development consists essentially of role differentiation. Wealth separates from social standing, and then electoral popularity separates from both. Seeing that as the master process historically, Dahl believed that the addition of policy expertise further dispersed power. He further assumed that the authority attached to holding elected office can override competing claims. From the fate of the once dominant patricians, Dahl concluded that any big power move by Social and Economic Notables would be checked: “competitive politics would lead in the end to the triumph of numbers over Notability” (1961: 84).

Who Governs? conflates electoral competition with elite competition. The historical process it examines centers on control of elected office, hence Dahl treats the differentiation of wealth and social standing from electoral popularity as the definitive step. Functional specialization, however, sets in motion a different dynamic. After all, functionally differentiated elites do not compete for the same position. Differentiation produces interdependence, thereby providing a basis on which elites can cooperate rather than compete when they work out congruent aims. Under these conditions, economic and political elites are no longer countervailing forces, but potential allies able to act in alignment with enough combined resources to preempt much of a city's agenda-setting capacity. Thus, they in turn become attractive partners for policy experts because an elite coalition stands out as allies who make programs of action feasible. Thus the urban regime argument is that domination is more complex than "power over" (Stone 1989:226-31). "Power to" can work in such a way as to leave segments of the community outside the circle of effective governing. This is the misalignment that surfaced in Southwark, Boston, and New Haven. Economic and political elites found common ground at the very time that policy and program professionals were disconnecting from the lower classes.

Role differentiation created no foundation for competing for the support of the lower SES population. Indeed, given the action agendas of various experts, including social-policy specialists, the lower strata of society found themselves often regarded as obstacles rather than as attractive allies (Stone 1980). Addressing the resulting disconnections and misalignment thus becomes a challenge in the revitalization of local democracy.

Put the matter in deeper context. Pluralism rests on an assumption that what is true formally – that the major institutions of society enjoy a high degree of legal autonomy and a considerable amount of operating autonomy—determines what is true informally. The reality, however, is that a web of interdependence provides a basis on which efforts and resources can be combined to pursue some aims, often at the expense of alternative efforts (**delte note**).¹¹ In other words, the formal autonomy of various elements of the social order is only the surface of a more complex ordering of society. Because the legal element of the overall order is limited in its reach, much is settled by informal understandings and extra-legal arrangements. The *de jure* equality attached to citizenship notwithstanding, the *de facto* reality of socioeconomic inequality impinges on these extra-legal arrangements and related understandings. The core of the political order is therefore, not about elections and the exercise of formal authority, but about relationships that both reflect and give shape to the varied and, as it often turns out, uneven capacities to identify and address problems.

Conclusion

Campaigns and elections are only the tip of the political iceberg. Beneath the water line of overt political activity, citizens interact with officials agents of the state and with one another in numerous ways. The conception of policy offered in this chapter

encompasses the idea of co-construction, the idea that policy is what is yielded by governmental and citizen actions combined.

When we try to take into account the multitude of factors that shape the education experience of children or the level of public safety in a neighborhood, we get a look at the political order that is different from one narrowly focused on who holds office. Some citizens enjoy a network of relationships that give them a strong sense that they have a place in society. At the other extreme are citizens whose relationships provide little collective capacity to respond to challenges, and they see themselves as outside the mainstream of society. They may be citizens in name, but they have little reason to believe that their concerns will be addressed in an effective manner. Furthermore their view of reciprocity and conciliation is confined to a few friends and family members, who may also regard themselves as largely powerless outsiders. What does it mean, for example, that New Haven's poverty commission held hearings, and "virtually no one came forward" (Fox 1988: 127).

A broad understanding of politics directs our attention to how various sectors of society are connected and the extent to which each sector views itself as in a position to receive consideration from others as they encounter challenges. A democratic order is one in which all sectors see themselves as possessing recourse to respond to problems that arise. Such problems come in many particular forms: a natural disaster, a weakness or decline in the level of public safety, diminished access to gainful employment, an inadequate system of transportation, extraordinary circumstances requiring a safety net, environmental degradation, to name a few.

Much overt political activity is about what agencies of government should and should not do, but below the surface in a political order lie a set of sometimes contested but always important arrangements through which state, civil society, and market intersect. Public policy is therefore not about what, in some disembodied way, government agencies do or don't do. It is about these intersections and their consequences. It follows, then, that we should not reduce citizenship to membership in an apolitical audience, which reacts periodically to a drama on a remote stage. Democracy is not just about the accountability of elected officials for the decisions they make and the programs they oversee.

Of necessity democracy is about how market, government, and civil society intersect and interact. If, as seems probable, the continuing expansion of market relations weakens civil society and undercuts the sense that a web of interdependence binds a people together at some fundamental level, then the prospects for democracy are waning. And there is need to find ways to reverse the trend. But first we have to understand the trend and its political implications. Looking at the larger order through a local lens makes the matter concrete in a way that highlights state /civil society/market connections. The central political question is about how citizens align with various interwoven elements of the polity in matters ranging from childcare to emergency evacuations.

Why have emerging political orders weakened rather than strengthened the position of the lower strata in today's world? By simply asking who governs, we run the risk of limiting inquiry to a search for some elite group that actively suppresses a more inclusive politics. To ask who is governed and how points to a broader inquiry. What would a different and more democratic configuration of state, market, and civil society look like, and how might we get there?

Although the outcome of a continuing tension between persisting inequality and democracy depends on a full range of activities from local to global, much can be gained by a view from below. For that reason, it is important to ask how local citizens fit into the picture. How are they governed? What steps can be taken to enable them to occupy their rightful role as constructive contributors to governing?

In modern political life a low position in the system of social stratification often carries with it multiple political handicaps. As the Katrina experience illustrates, lower SES populations lack the market capacity officials sometimes assume to be in place. In addition, the lower classes are widely perceived as social and economic liabilities, and thus are often unattractive as coalition partners. Although the record is far from uniform, many service-providing professionals relate ineffectively to lower strata populations, who, out of accumulated experiences with negative stereotypes, ill treatment, and unkept promises, often harbor a high level of alienation and distrust toward the larger society and those acting in official capacities. The result is sometimes called the "two world" phenomenon (Stone and Worgs 2004; cf. Mollenkopf and Castells 1991).

Urban political study faces a dilemma. Describing the problem in itself yields no solution. Indeed, the more thoroughly the problem is delineated, the less susceptible it seems to corrective action. The analytical challenge is to break the vise of structural determinism. That cannot be done by simply laying out a program of action. The task is to confront the full reality of structural forces, acknowledge their potent character, and detect leverage points that may be mutually reinforcing.

Part of this challenge is critical and ideational – to identify weaknesses in current arrangements and show why change is in order. The tension between capital accumulation and reproduction of the labor force is one version of this effort. It, however, tends to devolve into a dead-end discussion about redistribution and the equity-efficiency trade-off. A more apt angle might be to look at the issue as a matter of social investment. Here the trade-off is short-run benefit versus long-term return. Both profit-taking and election cycles tend to work against long-term consideration of what may serve society well (~~delete note~~).¹² One question, then, is how to introduce into policy deliberations a time frame that is less tied to immediate return.

A major factor to be confronted is the pervasive influence of the market, not just in locational decisions about investment, but also in altering the character of civil society. In housing and transportation particularly, there is an increasing tilt toward private consumption and away from reliance on public provision (Goss 1988; Kearns 1992)). While one-time common forms of mutual assistance have declined (Rae 2003), those

with less income are often unable to use the private market effectively. Consequently non-affluent citizens find themselves increasingly in policy company with the poor in hurricane-stricken New Orleans—that is, when they are unable to use private means to meet their needs, they find little in the public sector with which to link constructively. A cultural tilt away from recognizing conditions of interdependence and toward what one author calls “personalized realities” is in evidence (Bennett 1998). Exploration of alternative mechanisms and what makes them feasible stands as an appealing research target. The workings of community development corporations are an example (Peterman 2000; Von Hoffman 2003).

Along with market biases, another structural challenge stems from the growing complexity of contemporary life. Complexity raises the hurdle of reconciling democracy with “techno-bureaucratic administration” (Fung and Wright 2003: 3). In dealing with society’s lower ranks, most professionals see themselves as the embodiment of essential expertise. Moreover, ‘reinvented government’ despite its customer orientation (Osborne and Plastrik 1997) has pushed the master source of expertise to a point remote from the direct provision of public services (**move into body of text -- As put my Marquand:** *“Trust ... was displaced from professionals directly engaged in service delivery to more remote professionals engaged in scrutinizing other professionals”* (2004: 111). *The British experience with the “audit explosion” parallels the education reform process in the U.S.*¹³

Today the relevant expertise is increasingly a managerial and entrepreneurial one about orchestrating market and outcome-evaluation processes so as to bring about sought-after performance standards. The process has become more, not less, technocratic, and the guardians of expertise are far removed from the lives of people in the lower ranks of society. Thus one problem is the emergence of a new class of policy Mandarins little connected to lower SES populations and without much of a record of success in devising effective schemes for addressing social exclusion. Line agencies have lost considerable political ground, and the voluntary and for-profit sectors have gained political footing but without so far showing large break-throughs in solving social problems.

As new and complicated schemes of service provision are devised, a relevant question is who is guarding the guardians – not who is evaluating single programs, but who is subjecting the grand schemes, the “big pushes” to scrutiny? Who is analyzing critically the bases of political support that undergird these schemes, locally and beyond? Are there alternative coalitions and new forms of professional training that can bring policy practice into closer and more constructive connection with the marginalized populations in today’s society? The AIDS prevention experience points in a useful direction. Professionals understood that they could not solve the problem alone, and they realized that they needed to enlist the active cooperation of the target population. Most professions, however, have not moved very far in that direction. They have little grasp of how the complex weaving of state, civil society, and market define of the situation in which some citizens operate.

Although the outcome of a continuing tension between inequality and democracy depends on a full range of activities from local to global, much can be gained by a view from below. For that reason, it is important to ask how local citizens fit into the picture. How are they governed? What steps can be taken to enable them to occupy their rightful role as constructive contributors to governing.

At the heart of our quest for inclusiveness is a realization that local democracy is far from being a mere luxury we can indulge only after technical effectiveness is satisfied. Seen through a polity lens, technical effectiveness includes constructive ways of melding the roles of citizens and professionals. It means holding in check the tendency of market relations to downplay interdependence and long-term consequences. It means constructing a civil society in which those with fewer worldly advantages are not isolated and rendered marginal. Discovering how to move toward such a world is the research task confronting the field of urban politics. It is a challenging task, but one that is filled with potential excitement and fulfillment because much is at stake.

¹ The weak and uncertain position of local authority in Britain is examined in Stoker 2003)

² See also the treatment of historical institutionalism, particularly the point that it bridges state-centered and society-centered analyses of institutional arrangements (Thelen and Steinmo 1992:100.

³ See, for example, Saegert, Thompson, and Warren (2001).

⁴ The **literature** on this matter is vast. I find especially useful Stinchcombe (1978), Abrams (1982), Tilly (1984), Sewell (1992), Hay (1995), and the edited volume by Steinmo, Thelen, and Longstreth (1992)..

⁵ It might be noted that those politically associated with the more privileged segments of society tend to dismiss the importance of these categories as “political correctness” while stressing “personal responsibility” as if it somehow transcends such labeling.

⁶ Dahl also acknowledges that other factors such as resources and feelings of political confidence enter the picture. However, he stops short of exploring fully how these factors interact, and he particularly leaves unexamined the implications of patronage-suffused arrangements and how they might inhibit development of collective awareness (cf. Crenson 1971).

⁷ Note the characterization of Mayor Lee’s strategy as one of “bureaucratizing redevelopment decisionmaking” (Fox 1988, p. 26.

⁸ This not to suggest that race is unimportant in the experiences and opportunities for middle-class African Americans, but it is the case that a lower-class position carries with it disadvantages that cut across racial lines – see Lareau 2003; and Kusserow 2004.

⁹ **Move to body of text # --** David Marquand **points to** a shift in ethos among professionals from being contributors to a “broader civic community” to that of being possessors “of technical skills, technical knowledge and technical qualifications” beyond the ability of the lay public to understand and assess (2004: 75).

¹⁰ Policy expertise and executive power may have a special affinity. In discussing British practice, Marquand talks about the “monarchical state” and its tradition of autonomous executive power” (2004: 74).

¹¹ For a discussion of the implications of a declining sense of interdependence and a rising sense of atomistic individuality, see Marquand (2004).

¹² See, for example, the argument in Erie (2004).

¹³ As put by Marquand: “Trust ... was displaced from professionals directly engaged in service delivery to more remote professionals engaged in scrutinizing other professionals” (2004: 111). The British experience with the “audit explosion” parallels the education reform process in the U.S.