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Unpacking the Impetus for Regional Planning in the U.S.: Cooperation, Coercion and Self-Interest
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Scott Campbell and Philip D'Anieri
Urban and Regional Planning Program
College of Architecture and Urban Planning
University of Michigan
2000 Bonisteel Blvd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-2069
sdcamp@umich.edu
philipjd@umich.edu

Abstract:
This paper offers a typology with which to assess different regional impulses, a greater understanding of what accounts for the acceptability of a regional endeavor, and a view of the range of outcomes that are possible. We argue that there is a lot of planning that definitionally qualifies as occurring at the regional scale, but does not rise to the level that advocates of greater regionalism envision. We argue for a selective retention of the larger ambitions of regionalism by unpacking the practice of "regional planning" into widely divergent institutional structures, political traditions, and planning outcomes. The challenge is to locate greater opportunities for regionalism by identifying those regional efforts (both governmental and non-governmental institutions) that successfully embody the more ambitious and transformative goals of regionalism.

There is a conventional wisdom that the term "American regional planning" is something of an oxymoron: the Jeffersonian tradition of home rule and small-scale local government precludes any meaningful system of regional planning and governance, save the exceptions (such as Portland) that prove the rule. But given the presence of literally hundreds of regionally-organized governmental agencies in the U.S., the more relevant question is not *whether* there is or should be regional planning, but *what kinds* of regional planning exist today, and why. [1]

Regionalism is not a single, unitary phenomenon, we argue, but rather one that manifests itself in a variety of different forms and structures. Further, this variation can be understood in terms of a handful of characteristics of regional entities. [P1][P2] The most common and least ambitious regional entity, we hypothesize, is that which oversees physical structures such as parks or water; does so in a contractual relationship among co-equal entities; is overseen by an appointed board representing multiple independent governments; and has relatively little independent authority. At the other end of the spectrum, the more rare and ambitious agency has responsibility for such touchy issues as land use and housing; is imposed or mandated by state or federal government; is overseen by an independent board representative of the region as a whole; and has considerable authority. This leads to dramatically different notions of the "planning region": the region of contractual confederation, an exercise primarily in reinforcing the status quo while achieving economies of scale, versus the unified region, with the redistributive power to enhance equity across local jurisdictional lines.

This paper will provide a typology with which to assess different regional impulses, a greater understanding of what accounts for the acceptability of a regional endeavor, and a view of the range of outcomes that are possible. We argue that there is a lot of planning that definitionally qualifies as occurring at the regional scale, but does not rise to the level that advocates of greater regionalism envision. This leads to several divergent interpretations. One can lament the gap between high-flying regional idealism and existing regional institutions, and anxiously (and perhaps futilely) wait for the era of a pure regionalism. At the other extreme, one can skeptically conclude that the call for greater regional planning (to confront urban-suburban inequality, ecological unsustainability and community fragmentation) is overblown and based on a flawed idealism surrounding regionalism's intrinsic virtues. We explore a third, hybrid path: selectively retain the larger ambitions of regionalism by unpacking the practice of "regional planning" into widely divergent institutional structures, political traditions, and planning outcomes. The challenge is to locate greater opportunities for regionalism by identifying those regional efforts (both governmental and non-governmental institutions) that successfully embody the more ambitious and transformative goals of regionalism.

The Appeal of Regionalism

Planners and laypersons are attracted to regional planning for reasons both concrete and wishful. The two standard justifications for regional planning are efficiency and equity: the efficiency of regional rather than local scale economies of providing public services, and the equity of urban, suburban and rural communities sharing their wealth and burdens. Though neither of these two justifications go uncontested, they do lend themselves to conventional evaluation based on measures of productivity, agglomeration economies, redistributional efficiency and income equality.

Beneath these two justifications, however, are several less measurable assertions of regional planning's benefits. At the base of many regionalists' claims is a belief that the regional scale is inherently the best one for planning. Organizing government around municipal borders falls out-of-step with the current dominance of metropolitan regions as the salient unit of urban economics, as well as of ecology and social issues (see, for example, Downs 1996). This shift from the city to regional scale is certainly not a new idea, but has taken on greater force in an era of vast, sprawling polycentric areas (Kloosterman and Musterd 2001). However, one can take this argument too far into the territory of of spatial determinism: if you just get the scale of planning right, then the rest of planning concerns fall into place. This assertion is particularly common among the current bioregional movement (Berg 1978; Berg 1989; Parsons 1985; Sale 1985; Sierra Club 1993; Van Andruss 1990). This scale promises a holistic sense of balance — a balance of the urban and the periphery that will transcend their traditional conflicts. Regional cooperation and interdependence will replace the parasitic or combative relationships between town and country (and more recently, between innercity and suburbia, where inequality runs in the opposite direction). One can trace this search for a balance from Howard's Garden City through Mumford and the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA) to the current bioregionalists.

Regional planning not only promises to balance town and country issues; it also might be the most promising scale to integrate environmental planning and economic development (Campbell 1992; Hardy and Lloyd 1994; Roberts 1994). The city level is too small to contain all the relevant economic elements, and the nation-state is often too large and awkward a political entity to represent the subtle complexities of economic and environmental systems. On the economic side, the region describes the labor market, the housing market, and often the source of water, energy and other natural resources. On the environmental side, the region describes the watershed, the air quality basin, the land and mineral resources. Some of the more successful efforts to create pollution credit markets, for example, have occurred at the regional level, such as the South Coast Air Quality Management District (Robinson 1993).

At a more generic level, the appeal of regionalism is primarily the basic appeal of "cooperation" itself, and only secondarily a call for a specific geographic scale of planning. Coordination leads not

only to the obvious savings of scale economies and avoided duplications of service, but also creates long-run benefits due to avoiding the prisoner's dilemma of autonomous local decision-making. (For example, regional coordination could prevent the vicious cycle created when communities, each seeking to stay outside of the ring of poverty and decline, employ regressive strategies of isolation that in the long run will not be as effective as a coordinated regional strategy.)

Finally, there is the appeal of something that doesn't exist. Regional planning shines above the *Realpolitik* fray of messy city-state-federal government as the geo-administrative "road not taken." It is easy to herald the promise of a style of planning not yet used, for the idealism remained untarnished by experience. Breaking out of existing political boundaries appeals to an idealist — or at least a reformer. The regional scale appeals to the abstract thinker who likes to look at systems (such as the regional scientist): one fluidly defines regional boundaries to include the whole of an economic and environmental system. The regional approach offers the elusive promise of allowing the urban economic system to function freely, unbound by seemingly arbitrary municipal and state boundaries. One hears the call from some New Urbanists and others for the existing hierarchy of *cites – states – nations* to be replaced by the interstitial hierarchy of *neighborhood – region – world*. In this light, many too quickly dismiss state-level planning as not "true regional planning," seeing in it either as an excessive compromise of regional ideals or else as merely coincidentally regional.

These differing justifications for regional planning go back to a fundamental ideological schism in thinking: is regional planning a pragmatic means, or an idealistic end? Does one advocate regional planning because it is merely the most effective scale to carry out certain administrative functions, or because there is something inherently worthy in promoting the regional community ideal? I suspect that many regional planning advocates — certainly among the academics — subscribe to the latter tenet. They see in regions an essential logic that promotes the ideal community. In the inaugural issue of *The Regionalist* journal, the editors state that they are "unabashedly committed to promoting the regional community" (Epling and Whorton 1995). Another contributor to that journal promoted the idea of "natural regionalism" that "proposes a higher order of life beyond the wisdom of the written words of legislative intent and constitutional theory" (Grossman 1995). This regionalist idealism is certainly the reason that regional planning's appeal extends beyond the adherents of territorial administrative efficiency. Yet this uncritical, visceral acceptance of the regionalist ideal is also arguably a hindrance to a critical appraisal of regional planning.

Questions

The appeal of the regional ideal is unmistakable. What is less clear is how that ideal is likely to e compromised in the journey to political implementation. This potentially large gap between the

promise of regional idealism and existing regional institutions arises in large part from the broad and divergent goals of regionalism. This leads us to our central questions: *Which regional goals are likely to be jettisoned in the process of institution building? Is regionalism a big tent with good synergetic coalition-building?   Or is regionalism instead fraught with good intentions but acrimonious and ultimately divisive internal contradictions?*

Regional planning seems to arise from several substantive goals:

> administrative efficiency due to inter-municipal coordination
>
> regional economic competitiveness
>
> protection of the regional ecosystem (its water, land and air)
>
> greater social equality and justice (education, labor markets, social services, housing) between urban and suburban residents.

These four goals pull together a wide array of interest groups and possible coalition partners for regionalism. But under what circumstances can one build coalitions from groups promoting such different agendas as farmland preservation, innercity revitalization, highway construction, public transit coordination, revenue sharing and park management? Which types of regional institutions address which goals? Such a diversity of motivations may lead to either coalition building or internal conflict (with dissent leading to ineffectiveness). If "the devil is in the details" (funding, redistribution, authority, legality), what of regionalism remains after all the details have been hammered out?   The fear is that when broader regional undertakings confront the inevitable process of political compromise, the most progressive social, economic and environmental goals will be the first to be dropped (as arguably happened with the TVA).

Divergent paths towards Regionalism -- A typology of regions, motivations, structures of funding and governance

In this paper we take the following methodological path. We view regional planning as having a multiplicity of forms and motivations. This interdisciplinary complexity is the source of both its beguiling appeal and its promise of coalition building (the "big tent" of regionalism). However, this complexity also leads to confusion and imprecision, since regional idealism often suffers as an indecipherable holism. We therefore advocate "unpacking" regionalism into its distinctive impulses, allowing for more immediate identification of specific agents, interests and institutions.

To differentiate between the various types of regional planning agendas, we have reviewed a variety of contemporary regional writings that reflect the renewed interest in metropolitan regionalism. One can divide the recent writings into two camps: policy-oriented works that argue the

need for more regional approaches (e.g., Orfield 1998; Rusk 1999) and scholarly works that characterize regional initiatives through historical overview, case studies or both (Katz 2000; Savitch and Vogel 1996; Stephens and Wikstrom 2000). Taken together, these works provide a great deal of insight into what motivates political actors to create metropolitan institutions, what constraints they operate under, and what kind of arrangements tend to emerge from this tension.

These accounts indicate that metropolitan institutions are responsive to four basic motivations: administrative efficiency, economic development, environmental protection and metropolitan equity. These very different goals not surprisingly have different sets of political actors that organize behind them, different measures of what constitutes a successful regional undertaking, and most importantly, different requirements of the regional initiative that is responsive to each. Understanding these four justifications for regional action on their own terms is a critical first step in predicting what is possible for their seemingly common aspiration: regional planning.

Administrative region

Efficiency is arguably the oldest motivation for metropolitan regionalism. Reformers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries drew a sharp distinction between politics and administration, and held forth administrative efficiency as the highest goal of a government (Stephens and Wikstrom 2000, 31). Woodrow Wilson wrote as early as 1885 that "efficiency is the only just foundation for confidence in a public officer under republican institutions" (Wilson 1885, 255). It follows logically from this organizing principle that where metropolitan cooperation will yield greater efficiency, it must be pursued; "efficiency" seems a value-neutral ambition, one that is hard to argue against. As such, the efficiency argument seems to be the most widespread motivation for metropolitan cooperation, mentioned as at least one of several justifications in the vast majority of cooperative initiatives.

A contemporary example of purely administrative regionalism is the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' cooperative purchasing program. The agency makes joint purchases of over 30 different goods, including telephone long-distance service, diesel fuel and police cars, on behalf its members, the local governments of the Washington, D.C. area. Participation is voluntary and varies in popularity: a majority of MWCOG's 38 member governments purchase diesel fuel through the program, while other goods have only one participant (where the benefit is presumably from being part of a streamlined purchasing process.) Some governments purchase over a dozen items through the cooperative purchasing program, while others do not participate at all. Local governments benefit from both the reduced prices that come with a larger purchase, and reduced administrative costs that come from a single, streamlined process (Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments 2001).

As an exercise in administrative regionalism, this program recognizes the efficiency gains that can be realized from local governments acting in concert, and it justifies the regional undertaking in terms of cost savings. Its beneficiaries include local bureaucrats, elected officials and taxpayers, for whom it provides budgetary flexibility. One could also expect the area's business interests to appreciate its lowering of the tax burden and efficiency gains.

Business region (growth region)

In a process that has only accelerated with the onset of the information economy, regions are increasingly seen as the most relevant spatial unit of global economic competition (Kanter 2000; Markusen 1987). Regional approaches are therefore of particular interest to the business community and economic developers in the public and private sector. These interests seek to create a location attractive to investors, and readily marketed as such. We would expect them to be interested in initiatives that provide a strong system of business-friendly public assets, including such things as commercially supportive transportation networks, taxing arrangements, even educational systems.

For example, in Pittsburgh, "The Region Is a Product," according the Allegheny Conference on Community Development, "a product that we want people to 'buy' when they make choices about where to live, work, invest, and visit." (Allegheny Conference on Community Development 2001). The Allegheny Conference has joined with three other private-sector organizations, each with unique responsibilities, to make the Pittsburgh region more competitive.

> "In the same way that a business has separate departments to handle the different functions of product planning, research and development, product improvement, marketing and customer service, and lobbying, our region has separate organizations working to fulfill these functions.

>> As a federally mandated Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission does "product planning."

>> The Pittsburgh Regional Alliance (PRA) "generates and serves customers of the regional product," e.g. businesses which want to locate here or talent we wish to attract and retain. Nine other non-profit community and economic development agencies are part of the Alliance family, by virtue of their chairs being voting members of the board.

>> The Allegheny Conference on Community Development and Pennsylvania Economy League/Western Division work to "improve the regional product," with the League providing research and analysis and the Conference providing private leadership.

As a 501(c)6 organization, the Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce (Chamber) 'advocates for the regional product.'"

The four private-sector organizations share a single chief executive in order to coordinate the activities of the different organizations, bringing a large swath of metropolitan Pittsburgh's private sector into the effort to define and bolster the region. (The Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission, identified by the private sector as the regional "product planner", is still an entirely separate entity, a traditional intergovernmental Metropolitan Planning Organization.)

This unified approach of Pittsburgh's major private-sector actors clearly demonstrates the economic development motivation for regional approaches. It explicitly views the region as an item of commerce, a "product", and it is organized to make that product as competitive as possible. Its constituents are its own member corporations, as well as outside entities whose business it hopes to attract. Its measures of success are likely economic and financial ones: businesses attracted, improvement in economic indicators, healthier bottom lines, etc. It views governmental entities, including the area's MPO, as servants of the ultimate goal of private-sector growth.

Ecoregion

The eco-region has roots in American thinking about cities going back at least as far as the Regional Planning Association of America in the early part of this century, and given new life by Ian McHarg in the 1960s (Fishman 2000). There are not too many examples, however, of explicitly environmental metropolitan regionalism taking shape in formal governmental institutions. Nevertheless, as public attention to the environmental impacts of urban sprawl has increased over the past decade, regionalism as a strategy for sustainability has gained new attention and support (Wiewel and Schaffer 2001). This line of thinking views the region as an ecosystem, a set of resources and constraints determined by natural systems, and it seeks to bring human activity in accord with those systems. At the very least, it seeks to protect natural areas for the sake of human enjoyment and aesthetic quality.

This approach to regionalism is seen in Michigan's Huron River Watershed Council, a consortium of local governments that promotes water quality in the rivershed encompassing western and southern metropolitan Detroit. The agency conducts public education programs, coordinates volunteer stewardship activities and serves as a technical resource to local governments. Its mission is explicitly and singularly environmental: "The Huron River Watershed Council inspires attitudes, behaviors and economies that protect, rehabilitate and sustain the Huron River system" (Huron River Watershed Council 2001). This initiative represents environmental regionalism at more than just the conceptual level. Governed by a board of representatives from the local governments in whose

jurisdictions the watershed is located, the agency is authorized by and organized under state law with the specific purpose of advocating for an ecologically defined region.

Social region

Equity regionalists see U.S. metropolitan areas balkanized by political boundaries into jurisdictions of concentrated poverty, low tax base and low municipal services at one extreme and wealth, high tax base and generous services at the other. Public investments foster sprawl and concentrate the metropolitan area's growth in a handful of fortunate jurisdictions, while core cities and a growing contingent of inner-ring suburbs are left with decaying infrastructure, declining property values and poor residents. Regionalism from this motivation is primarily a redistributive exercise, whether of investment, revenue or low-income housing. Its backers are increasingly the residents and elected officials of disadvantaged jurisdictions, whose goals include reining in sprawl, providing revenue sharing and requiring fair-share housing (Orfield 1998; Rusk 1999).

This last goal is served by Montgomery County, Maryland's Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU) program. It provides affordable housing in a geographically dispersed way in order to offset the effects of concentrated poverty. Developers are required to sell to the county a certain proportion of new housing, whether rental or owner-occupied, which the government then provides at a subsidized rate to low-income residents. In addition, developers are required to make an additional share of units available to the general public at affordable rates. So rather than poverty and its attendant public costs being concentrated and thus intensified in a handful of public projects and run-down neighborhoods, it is relatively evenly distributed throughout the county. The government is intervening in the housing market with an explicitly redistributive goal, in this case relocating housing for the poor from where it might have occurred under a different set of public subsidies and regulation (Rusk 1999).

Coalitions and Conflict

Of course the vast majority of regional institutions and initiatives will not fall neatly into one of these four types. Rather, this is a classification of the main motivations for regional approaches, and an illustration of the kind of institutional characteristics that are responsive to each. Viewed from this perspective, the conflicts among regionalists become easier to identify. As this section will demonstrate, backers of a regional undertaking who come at the issue with differing motivations are going to require very different things of that regional initiative. That which is critical to the success of one kind of regional initiative may be either insignificant or downright antithetical to supporters of a different kind of initiative.

Two characteristics of a regional undertaking in particular highlight this potential conflict: the physical scale of the regional jurisdiction, and the power that is granted to the institution.

Scale of region

Administrative efficiency, with its goal of cost savings, is not defined by any geographical imperative. The most efficient solution to one policy challenge might be met by an association among a handful of local governments, while another would require a stand-alone agency covering a larger portion of the metropolis, and a third would merit a jurisdiction covering an entire metropolitan area. The scale of the efficient region is determined on a case by case basis. For that reason, regional supporters from this perspective would have little interest in a standing, permanent region, because it would lack the flexibility that makes efficiency possible. Rather, as is the case with metropolitan Washington's joint purchasing program, the boundaries of the "region", i.e. the governments taking part, should be allowed to grow and shrink as circumstances warrant.

Similarly, economic developers are likely to prefer only that scale of undertaking that affords maximal advantage to their growth imperative. If certain portions of a metro area don't fit into a strategic economic development plan, then growth regionalists would likely see its inclusion as a burden on their effort and want to separate from it. The economic development region need only include the territory and jurisdictions sufficient to bolster the goal of securing investment.

The eco-region presumably has less flexible borders than the administrative or growth regions, because the eco-region is determined by natural systems like riversheds, valleys or other features. But there is nothing to say that these borders are necessarily inclusive of an entire metropolitan area. As in the case of the Michigan watershed council, environmentally defined regions may be large or small parts of a metropolitan area, or even encompass multiple urbanized areas. Environmental regions, then, are not necessarily connected to the human settlement patterns that constitute a metropolis.

For equity regionalists, however, the region must consist of the entirety of a metropolitan area. When the whole purpose for getting into a regional arrangement is to redistribute resources and burdens among advantaged and disadvantaged jurisdictions, it is critically important that all of the area be involved. Virtually every jurisdiction in an equity region is going to be a net donor or net recipient (of revenue, of low-income housing, etc.) compared to their position before the regional initiative takes hold. It is therefore critical that all be included in the region, not just a subset of the whole.

Power

The power of a regional organization can be described in terms of several variables: Does it have the authority to levy taxes and distribute that revenue as it see fit? Is its governing board independently chosen or is it instead simply a confederation of local jurisdictions? Are its board members elected directly or appointed by others?

For equity regionalists, a regional initiative must possess the power that comes with taxing authority, independence from local jurisdictions and election of its governing board. The taxing authority provides not only an independently sustaining revenue source, but the capacity to redistribute that revenue. An independent board, appointed by a governor or some other set of independent actors, means that a set of unique interests can be identified over and above a mere agglomeration of parochial local interests that comes with a governing board composed only of local officials. Direct election of that board is the ultimate in independence, ensuring representational equality and an independent political base.

Because redistribution of burdens and benefits is an inherently controversial endeavor, an institution devoted to enhancing metropolitan equity would require some or all of these power attributes. For an agency with little or no independent authority, that controversy would likely be utterly debilitating.

In the Montgomery County, Maryland example, we see each of these attributes. The MPDU program is backed up by the financial and political independence of an elected county board with its own taxation authority. One can only imagine how little would be accomplished on regional fair-share housing if the effort consisted of only a meeting of independent jurisdictions haggling over who is going to do what.

Environmental regionalists, one would expect, also require a fair bit of power to overcome the imperative of traditional economic growth in favor a greater sensitivity to issues of sustainability. In the regional context, these issues are frequently played out in terms of land use and its associated impacts like water quality. With local governments zealously guarding their prerogative to guide development in their own narrow interests, a powerful agency would be necessary to achieve a plan responsive to the eco-region's needs. In the Michigan example, the watershed council that is simply an association of governments is reduced to engaging in fairly marginal public education programs. Contrast this with Portland's Metro, where wholesale change in land use patterns required a powerful, elected home-rule regional government.

These kind of powerful independent institutions would not be preferred by regionalists from either the administrative or economic development camps. The efficiency that is the goal of the administrative region may occasionally require some operational independence, but too much independence would mean an agency is free to pursue other goals that have less to do with, or are

even in opposition to, efficiency. And growth advocates would be particularly wary of powerful public institutions, precisely because the advocates' motivation is private investment and gain. As Pittsburgh's ambitious private-sector regional undertaking demonstrates, public institutions are only valuable to the extent that they service the growth goals so dear to the business sector.

The regionalist continuum

It would appear that regional undertakings can be viewed as a continuum of lesser and greater ambition (Table 1). We have spelled out how this continuum includes issues like the scale of the region and the power associated with the institution that is created. We would suspect that other institutional characteristics could also be situated on this continuum, including an agency's functional areas of responsibility, whether it has multiple responsibilities, and whether or not it was imposed by a higher level of government.

Table 1: The Continuum of Regional Motivations

		REGIONAL MOTIVATION:		
	EFFICIENCY	GROWTH	ENVIRONMENT	EQUITY
	"the administrative region"	*"the business region"*	*"the ecoregion"*	*"the social region"*
scale of region	case-by-case basis, sub-regional OK		Ecosystem (e.g., river basin, air shed, including open space and farmland)	entire metro area (including both innercity and suburban rings)
Power/ authority	little own-source revenue, controlled by local governments or private sector, appointed board		elected or independent board	
Responsi-bilities	traditional services, infrastructure, economic development		land, water, air resources	housing, public education, revenue sharing
single/multi-purpose	single		multi	
bottom-up /mandated	bottom up		mandated	

(Left column spanning label: Institutional characteristics)

This schematic, while hardly a precise roadmap to sharp delineations among different kinds of regional undertakings, does point to a key issue for students of regionalism to appreciate. The logic of regionalism is not necessarily one of mutually reinforcing arguments. When the attempt is made to institute regional practices, we can expect conflict not only among supporters and opponents of regional approaches, but among regional supporters themselves. The regional undertaking that is

responsive to one set of motivations looks considerably different from that which is responsive to other motivations. It would be naïve to believe that with so many different groups attracted to "regional" approaches, they are necessarily natural allies. This analysis is especially relevant to those who advocate regional planning in the name of enhancing metropolitan equity. It suggests that equity regionalism is in fact quite different, in its structure and characteristics, from regionalism responsive to other motivations, and that equity regionalists can therefore expect to be in conflict with other regional advocates. It is not enough to advocate regional approaches and assume they will have positive equity implications.

Implications of this regional typology

We are therefore questioning – though not necessarily abandoning -- the common assumption that "regional planning" connotes a common, shared set of values, goals and basic principles. Planners generally do not think that "urban planning" should have a similar consensus, but there are certain unchallenged assumptions embedded in the "regional" notion that are both intellectually appealing and yet institutionally problematic. We argue that the growing interest in regionalism may in fact entail several divergent notions of "regional planning." These separate regional traditions will arguably lead to conflicts over key regional issues: housing, revenue sharing, infrastructure investment, and land use are a few.[2]

This leads back to our original question: how well can one build coalitions across four types of regionalism: administrative, business, environmental, and social? One can borrow a lesson from the mixed success of the urban sustainable development movement, which seeks to reconcile the three fundamental goals of the "planner's triangle": economic development, environmental protection and social justice (Campbell 1996). Sustainability may theoretically reside at the center of this triangle, but getting there is neither easy nor assured. Greater collaboration – and win-win outcomes -- between these interests are possible, but often only through intense debate, conflict mediation, compromise, as well as coercion, court mandates, scientific and technical advances, popular protest and crisis-induced innovation. (One saw this in the Portland metropolitan planning debates, where economic development interests put pressure to roll back land use restrictions.) The more that the regional debate heightens the public debate over social, economic and environmental priorities, the more certain one is of the critical importance of the issues at hand.

Conclusion

This paper sets out an initial framework to disentangle the divergent impulses for regional planning and the resulting possibilities and obstacles towards coalition-building. The next step in

this ongoing project will be to apply an number and variety of regional planning cases to this typology, allowing for further refinement and differentiation of the typology and causal conclusions. We offer the following initial conclusions:

1.   Regionalism responsive to different motivations yields different characteristics.

2.   It is not that increasing regionalism per se is a difficult undertaking, but instead that the kind of regionalism that is most easily done is not as progressive or equitable as many of its advocates would like.

3.   Therefore, increasing regionalism per se is not an inherently worthy goal, but depends on whether a specific type of regionalism is responsive to a specific set of goals.

One should be careful to not fall into the notion of regional determinism. A common criticism by regionalists is that the wrong geographic scale of administration (either cities that are too fragmented; or nations that are too large) leads to problems. Yet the converse of this argument is problematic: by getting the scale right, then the problems will go away. Instead, realize that shifting decision-making to the regional level may not solve all problems, such as sprawl (see, for example, Downs 2000).

4.   A paradox emerges: the most politically acceptable justification for regional planning is based on mutual self-interest (among communities within a region). However, this path generally only achieves the first two types: the administrative region and the business region. It is harder to use mutual self-interest to achieve the eco-region or the social region. Examples of regional planning serving the eco-region and the social region often are the result top-down imposition (e.g., Mt Laurel decision in NJ; or the TVA.)

5.   How does one respond to this gap between existing regional planning and regional idealism?   We see three approaches:

Idealism/Advocacy: Cry and Lament this Gap – that existing regionalism falls short. And advocate for a new type of regionalism that strives for the ecoregion and social region.

Reform/Expansion: See existing regional agencies (e.g., MPOs and COGs) as currently inadequate, but with the potential of being ratcheted up (scaled up) to achieve these broader goals.

Acceptance/Pragmatism: See regional idealism as misplaced and illusory.   Accept the benefits and virtues of existing regionalism. Explore other (non-regional planning) strategies to promote the broader goals of environmental sustainability and social justice.

Remaining Challenges – Rethinking Regionalism in an era of globalization and

polycentric metropolitan sprawl

The idea of the "region" is not static. Structural changes in the regional economy, settlement patterns, the role of regional resource extraction, and transportation networks have in turn altered our view of the region. (Though one can argue that our models - and even our language — to describe these newly emerging regional landscape lag far behind the actual changes underfoot.) These historical changes lead to a larger question: is the current transformation of regions (and their economies and infrastructures) leading to greater convergence or divergence of our four elements of regions: administration, economic growth, environmental protection and social justice?

For example, the traditional understanding of the region was built upon a tidy, concentric city/suburb/rural trio. With the emergence of new spatial arrangements such as the technoburb (Fishman 1996), the old notion of regional balance (from Geddes and Mumford) as a balance of city and suburb becomes problematic. Like Ebenezer Howard a century ago, New Urbanists are responding to what they perceive as a city-periphery imbalance. Yet Howard was responding to an excessive inward migration, while New Urbanists are objecting to flows in the opposite direction. In addition, advocates of the ecoregion view this imbalance as the uneven distribution of pollution and natural amenities (that is, environmental racism), while advocates of the social region interpret this imbalance as one of employment and housing options (a spatial mismatch).[3] As a result, though the essential regional impulse of striving to correct a region out of balance remains, both the internal geographic patterns and the political agendas have profoundly changed and expanded. [4]

Relatedly, the contemporary preoccupation with "sprawl" has created a common rallying cry for planners, New Urbanist architects, transportation planners, farmland preservationists, environmentalists (and even some presidential candidates). For regionalists, this new-found status promises growing support for metropolitan-level planning and regulation. However, this is built upon the problematic assumption that there is a real link between anti-sprawl efforts, sustainability and metropolitan/regional governance. Perhaps we have exaggerated the extent to which our unsustainable development results from deeply flawed human settlement patterns (suburban sprawl; jobs-housing imbalances; weak urban growth boundaries; excessive land devoted to impervious surfaces; etc). In other words, have we relied too much on a flawed assumption of regional spatial determinism (i.e., getting the right socio-economic processes requires the right geographic arrangement), while undervaluing the role of other factors (such as renewable energy resources, population control, pollution control technology, "polluter pays" market incentives, stronger international regulations, recycling, more efficient energy sources, etc.) as far more important steps towards the goal of sustainability?

Finally, there is the emergence of a new internationally-oriented economic region under the label of "new regionalism." Like the earlier emphasis on "global cities," the "global region"

presupposes that in the era of globalization, the geography of localized communities still matters – and that the connection between these local spaces and the larger global network is no longer necessarily mediated through the monopoly of the superordinant nation-state (Scott 1998; Scott 2001). This shift in focus from the global city to the global region is not only a recognition of the expanding geographic scale of nodes on the global economic network, but also a greater focus on the complex structure and inequality *within* these global-regions. These major metropolises are longer treated as a monolithic black box or zero-dimensional point, but rather with greater internal differentiation and conflict. The impact of global regions is complex: heightened global competition increases the pressure on interests within regions to pull together to mount an effective strategy to compete in world markets. yet globalization has also exacerbated inequality and threatens internal breakdown within these regions (Stren 2001).

As a result, we have now at least two variants of "New Regionalism": one from the world of land use and metropolitan government administration in an era of suburban sprawl, the other from economic geography in an age of post-Fordist restructuring (Tomaney and Ward 2000). Are there important connections between the two, or just an unfortunate and confusing coincidence of terminology from two unrelated fields? This unfortunate gap in part due to the use of fuzzy concepts in regional analysis that lack clear expressions of agency and causation, and therefore lack clear applications to planning and policy (Markusen 1999).

This lead not just to a conflict of semantics: this global city-region theory argues that these metropolitan areas connect directly to the global networks, largely bypassing the traditional intermediaries of federal provinces/states and nation-states. Yes the experience of regional planning – at least in the U.S. – has been that it is these very state and national institutions that provide the authority for regional planning efforts.

In the end this is a critical debate over the nature of community, coherence and political governance in these new regions. Are we dangerously constructing a new model of metropolitan governance that runs counter to the prevailing forces of regional economic development in a global society? Or is this oppositional stance in fact a necessary regionalist corrective to the forces of globalization?

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[1] The common argument that the American tradition of "home-rule" local communities undermines regional planning has a certain weight.   However, European regional planning efforts don't seem to be unduly hampered by the many European cities with greater local autonomy (due to long-standing independent charters) than their American counterparts (which are essentially creatures of the their respective states) Nivola, Pietro S. 1998. Understanding American Urban Form from a Transatlantic Perspective. *Brookings Review* 16 (4 (Fall)):17-20..

[2] Other regional issues where one can anticipate conflict include sustainability; restrictions on sprawling highway development; regional self-sufficiency vs. globalization (and thus the role of trade); the understanding of "regional balance" (be it jobs-housing or natural carrying capacity); the use of natural features vs. economic networks vs. existing administrative boundaries to define regions; the role of state and federal government in regional planning; the importance of regional land use planning; and the virtue of regionalism as a means versus an end in itself.

[3] One can see this as a new type of deconcentration policy: this time of poverty Orfield, Myron. 1997. Metropolitics: Coalitions for regional reforms. *Brookings Review* 15 (1):6-9.

Orfield, Myron. 1998. *Metropolitics; A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability*: Brookings Institution Press.. The goal is to both break the culture of poverty isolation and overcome the spatial mismatch between urban unemployed and suburban job growth.

[4] There is also the shift of the predominant tension between city and rural areas to city versus suburb to now an a set of conflicts between different suburbs (often of different social, economic and racial composition). The expression of these suburb to suburb tensions as the politics of homeownership have been vividly documented by Mike Davis in Los Angeles and Thomas Sugrue in Detroit (Davis, Mike. 1990. *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*. New York: Verso.   Sugrue, Thomas J. 1998. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*. Princeton: Princeton Univ Press.)