

Preface

Like other urban scholars of global city-regions and the politics, plans, and policies of the so-called new city-regionalism, I think more attention should be paid to how regional policies and wider development patterns influence urban-scale processes, and vice versa—including those related to “local” sustainability goals. The city of Seattle per se has long garnered attention for many impressive green initiatives, some of which are discussed at length in this book; but in my view Seattle is embedded within, and partially constituted by, *a wider relational setting* of housing, labor, and transport patterns. These structural realities are critical in thinking through how urban growth can (or cannot) be made smarter and thus, in principle, more ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable. In addition, smart growth is a regional planning theory, necessarily demanding a strong sensitivity to supra-local dynamics and relational questions across scales of authority.

Accordingly, this book is not just about Seattle but the wider city-region, with empirical attention paid to other communities (or “nodes”) like Tacoma, Bellevue, Redmond, Fife, Spanaway, Snoqualmie, and so on. I believe that cities and their suburbs co-shape global city-regions. As they confront global problems they necessarily confront each other; they will “hang together,” to borrow Ben Franklin’s famous admonition, or they will “hang separately.” My theoretical (and geographical) engagement with the political science concept of *intercurrence*, suggested originally by my colleague, Charles Williams, has proven particularly helpful to me in thinking about the kinds of spaces that smart growth makes over political time—sustainable or otherwise. The discussion on offer will hopefully interest not only geographers and planners but also political scientists as well as urban historians and, more generally, students of sustainability as both a theoretical problem and a practical strategy. As an urban studies scholar, I engage with themes resonant in political economy, planning theory, historical institutionalism, critical urban geography, and the economic and political history of city-regions. There are philosophical and methodological limits to such interdisciplinary travels. But the gains are worth the risks.

In executing (and just imagining) this project in this particular way, I am in debt to my immediate colleagues, notably Charles Williams, Mark Pendras, Anne Wessells, Brian Coffey, Britta Ricker, and Ali Modarres, as well as to more distance colleagues on other campuses all around the world, including Tassilo Herrschel (UK), Andy Thornley (UK), Andy Jonas (UK), Roger Behrens (South Africa), Eliot Tretter (Canada), Murat Yalçıntan (Turkey), Paolo Giaccaria (Italy), Stefano di Vita (Italy), and Gerd Linz (Germany). Whatever faults this book surely suffers, they are fewer than they would have been absent their positive influence. Sometimes this was through coauthoring previous research (e.g., with Pendras, Coffey, Modarres, Wessells, Thornley, Herrschel); at other times, it was a serendipitous comment or observation they made in passing about planning, geography, sustainability, or political economy. I am particularly thankful for repeated conversations about Tacoma, the region, politics, labor, and political economy with my friends, Mark Pendras and Charles Williams, though they would hardly agree with everything that follows here.

Finally, books about sustainability are books about future generations. And so, this book is affectionately dedicated to my daughter—lovely, inquisitive, amazing Amara, who at just six and a half years of age wants to live in a world populated by “a thousand million and twelve” elephants, *dassies*, meerkats . . . and one little bunny on a boat.

Tacoma, WA

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