

Chapter 2

Review: GeoPolitical Economies of Planning Space

There will be no sustainable world without sustainable cities.

—Herbert Girardet (1999, p. 8)

2.1 Introduction

Whether approached as urbanizing sustainability or sustaining urbanization, the abstract concept of “urban sustainability” is a multidimensional aspiration. So in the American context, as elsewhere, it relies on more familiar (and concrete) governance arenas for political and policy support as well as pragmatic implementation at the level of individual programs and projects. Some of the most important of these arenas are urban planning systems ostensibly focused on comprehensive socio-spatial management problems, including the multilevel coordination of territorial development strategies that seek to achieve, sometimes in isolation from one another, various economic, ecological, and social objectives over relatively long periods of time. For reasons that are not entirely clear, smart growth has emerged since the mid-1990s as “the most prominent planning framework theory for sustainable land use and urban development” (Green Leigh & Hoelzel, 2012, p. 88). Its practical importance demands scholarly attention.

In this chapter, I consider various ways in which urban sustainability might be differently understood and contested, focusing on three distinct traditions of political-economy that provide alternative theorizations. I then turn to a more specific analysis of smart growth as a state-directed if market-influenced regional planning strategy to limit sprawl and revitalize central cities and older suburbs, by far its most prominent territorial goals and spatial policy ambitions. Following Phil Cooke’s (1983) lead, I argue that we need to integrate the planning theory of smart growth with the wider pursuit of urban sustainability as a contested geopolitical project. Such a theoretical commitment, I further suggest, might help us to describe and to explain what I call in Chap. 2 the (un)sustainable geographies of sustainability across Greater Seattle.

2.2 Urban Sustainability

We are an urban species, and we are in trouble. We may already be in the midst of propagating a “sixth extinction” in the earth’s long history (Kolbert, 2014), with the unnatural self-termination of our own species and the subsequent survival of evolved rats as one scientifically plausible scenario (pp. 104–107). So advancing *urban* sustainability is far and away the most important challenge facing human-kind both now and in the coming few decades. Herbert Girardet (2002, p. 9) puts the problem this way:

Humanity is involved in an unprecedented experiment: we are turning ourselves into an urban species. Large cities, not villages or towns, are becoming our main habitat. The cities of the 21st century are where human destiny will be played out and where the future of the biosphere will be determined. There will be no sustainable world without sustainable cities. Can we make a world of cities viable in the long run—environmentally, socially as well as economically?

The enormity of this last question and what amounts to the almost unfathomable stakes involved, i.e., life on earth as presently understood, means that urban sustainability must be both imagined and implemented through an array of programs, policies and projects; it must incorporate all sorts of actors in various kinds of places who operate resourcefully at multiple territorial scales through a diverse range of strategic approaches and forms of disciplinary knowledge. This much we know.

Urban sustainability is, in consequence, much bigger than community planning issues or urban development problems like affordable housing, green jobs, and smart energy grids. Urban sustainability is, in its largest philosophical sense, a profound aspirational journey that, strictly speaking, nowhere actually exists at present—albeit, the same might also be said of the (still unrealized and “thin”) doctrine of political democracy. When simply stated, after all, democracy refers to a system of government in which power is vested in the people, who rule either directly or through freely elected representatives. But questions about democracy are unresolved. What is power and how does it work? How is any given society organized socially, economically, and culturally? Is the USA today a democracy, so defined, if “freely elected” representatives spend most of their time chasing large donors, a process facilitated by the US Supreme Court; if, as Bernie Sanders quipped in his failed 2016 presidential campaign, “Congress does not regulate Wall Street. Wall Street regulates Congress”? Democracy’s actually existing disappointments and radical imperfections, however concerning, do not ultimately expunge its theoretical desirability as a project worth pursuing. Something normatively similar holds for sustainability, notwithstanding its elusive conceptual nature, its “not-always well-understood mix” of goals that, for better or worse, offers what Yvonne Rydin calls “the prospect of a very different world” (Rydin, 2010, p. 1).

What, then, is urban sustainability? The idea is multidimensional. Narrowed to ecological criteria, as Slavin (2011) notes, sustainability refers to the biophysical capacity of the natural world to endure. This relates closely to older notions of

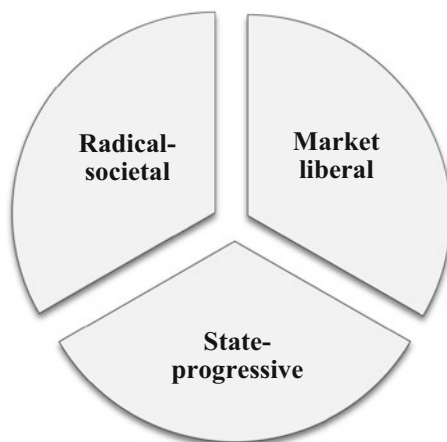
natural preservation or outright protection from industrialized society. Here the core question is: how can various ecosystems remain diverse, resilient, and productive over relatively long periods of time? From an economic point of view, however, sustainability asks more anthropologically how our economic systems can be managed so that we might live off the dividends of our resources (Repetto, 1986). This economic perspective “peoples” the ecological discourse, while an explicit sociocultural standpoint in turn insists normatively that sustainability should be concerned most directly with increasing the economic standard of living of the poor (Barbier, 1987, pp. 101–102).

Urban sustainability: The economic transformation of nature into ecologically resilient, democratically vibrant, and socially just societies whose daily spaces of production and reproduction reflect the material and immaterial requirements of a now predominantly urbanized and interconnected human population.

What, moreover, is *to be* sustained? (A different kind of) globalized urban society? If so, sustainability is about how to change within the context of constancy. And hence from an explicitly metropolitan perspective, where ecologies, economies and socio-cultures concentrate and co-mingle in complex socio-natural assembles, sustainability implicates multifaceted processes of economic, social, and political *transformation*, especially within and through the protean spaces of larger urban regions, where a plurality of the world’s people increasingly now live (Talen, 2012). Sustainability as metropolitan space encompasses new forms and modalities of governance, economies, and built environments; new systems of transportation, energy, waste, and water use; and motivating if not always driving all these changes, new circuits of production, consumption and distribution. In short, conceived as an urban development(al) process of deliberate(d) transformation, the increasingly urbanized search for global sustainability is about building new kinds of human settlement spaces on the now largely urbanized and globalized surface of the earth (Vojnovic, 2012).

Since at least the publication of the Brundtland Report in 1987, urban sustainability has been imagined as a creative, engaged, capable, multitiered polity that has concomitantly achieved, *or at least seeks to achieve over time*, economic vitality, ecological resiliency, and social equity (Fitzgerald, 2011). When scaled up globally with Girardet, sustainability is a future world of environmentally, socially, and economically viable cities, not a future world without such cities. Put another way, sustainability is not merely a system in which power is vested in the people, but a future condition-of-becoming wherein now mostly urbanized people(s) with vested powers over their collective shared life establish how to distribute new rounds of wealth justly without degrading the natural foundations of their multi-scaled economy.

Fig. 2.1 Alternative “political economies” of urban sustainability



Is such an ideal theoretically coherent? Can and do the various meta-components work together synergistically? Can they be balanced, as planners like to contend, or intertwined and co-constituted in specific project, programs and policies? If so, how? What *is* equitable—and who decides? Markets? Parliaments? Neighbors? Do we still need (capitalist) economic vitality or instead a different steady-state economy of de-growth? How can different polities, at different territorial scales, work together institutionally if they also contend for natural resources, political influence, and meaningful social control over daily decision-making?

Much of the voluminous, cacophonous, multidisciplinary literature on urban sustainability—a topic too big for a single book—is essentially an extended effort to answer these kinds of crucial if difficult questions (Cowell & Owens, 2010; Foster, 2008; Gunder, 2006; Meadowcroft, 2011; Moldan, Janoušková, & Hák, 2012; Moore, 2010; Seghezze, 2009; Vojnovic, 2012). In brief, though, three major interpretations of urban sustainability, foregrounding three different traditions of political economy, tend to characterize these various debates, at least within the urban social science family. As depicted in Fig. 2.1 below, these three major traditions or interpretations are state-progressive, radical-societal, and market-liberal. I now consider each of these traditions in turn before engaging the smart growth literature.

2.2.1 The State-Progressive Tradition

Urban sustainability can be interpreted as a progressive process of piecemeal but still persistent social change. When urban sustainability occurs *as* space, however measured, it arrives *in* time—the spatialization of historical progress; the ameliorative unfolding of several interrelated dynamics that literally replace an imperfect past with an enriched present, steadily if unevenly activating what Evans (2002,

p. 13) has called “the possibility of trajectories leading in the direction of greener livability.” Manifested through studies of concrete projects and legible policy shifts, interpreting sustainability as progressive urban development means telling action stories about work at multiple territorial scales to confront the series of commonly experienced urban problems, read as imperfections in the kinds of flawed societies we currently experience.

The problems are numerous and interrelated. But a common core includes: social exclusion from livelihoods, post-metropolitan sprawl, overly privatized movement, open-ended consumption, and fragmented politics (Fitzgerald & Motta, 2012). As such, the urban emergence of sustainability ostensibly involves, among other things, initiatives to restructure metropolitan economies, remix land-uses and urban housing, reconstruct transportation systems, recycle waste streams, and reform city-regional governance (Buckley, 2014).

This reading of urban sustainability communicates green projects and urban-environmental policies in the language of the Enlightenment. However unfinished, piecemeal, under-resourced, impressionistic, or tentative the empirical evidence (e.g., permeable pavement, better light-bulbs, roundabouts, rain gardens), we are asked to take solace in the possibility of societal perfectibility, the rationality of public purpose, the cadence of deliberation and social learning. This is the underlying assumption, in my view, that informs some of the seminal treatments of urban sustainability in recent years, including Kent Portney’s *Taking Sustainability Seriously*, Joan Fitzgerald’s (2011) *Emerald Cities*, Phil McManus’ (2005) *Vortex Cities to Sustainable Cities* and Steven Moore’s (2007) comparative treatment of Portland, Frankfurt and Curitiba, *Alternative routes to the sustainable city*. Philosophically, these are resolutely progressive books. They are sober, but sanguine. As Tai-Chee Wong, Shaw, and Goh (2006) put it, urban sustainability is about charting the bid to effect permanent reform.

The permanent reform at issue in the progressive literature is post-liberal but not anti-modern. The central theme is to reshape our economic life, to redirect raw capitalist imperatives like private property, freedom of enterprise, self-interest, unfettered competition, limited government, and, most importantly, the ideology of “self-regulating” markets (Chamberlain, 1976[1959]; Friedman, 1962; Hayek, 1944). In this broad sense, the literature—and the urban activity it imagines and calls for—is an attack on the neo-liberalized version of the global political-economy advanced through market economies. The banner message is to embed markets back into strong democracy.

Arguably these aspirations reflect a specific kind of world anticipated by figures like Karl Polanyi (Jamie Peck, 2013). In *The Great Transformation* Polanyi (1944) called market-liberal principles “utopian” and therefore “impossible” (Block, 2001, p. xxv). *Contra* Friedrich Hayek’s (1944) argument in *The Road to Serfdom*, Polanyi concluded from his study of economic history that markets do not “self-regulate” for very long without producing profound social and ecological damage (Lacher, 1999). Among other projects, Polanyi was trying to understand the economic origins of WWI, European fascism, and WWII—a time when European liberal democracy had either “failed” (Mazower, 1998, p. 403), or come very close

to it. Polanyi's nemesis, Friedrich Hayek, referred to communism and fascism as "a union of anti-capitalist[,] . . . radical and conservative socialisms," respectively. Polanyi was anti-fascist and anti-capitalist; but he was not a Marxist, rejecting for example the labor theory of value (Dale, 2010).

Impressed with markets, he nonetheless dismissed "the 'economistic prejudice' found in both the market liberalism of Ludwig von Mises and the communism of Karl Marx" (Carlson, 2006, p. 32). To him, the regression to fascism emerged not because of state economic planning, as Hayek had claimed, but because of market self-regulation. Unleashed from democratic controls, the liberalized market led to chaos (Somers & Block 2014). Polanyi felt that the problem was not the existence of markets, but their social management within broader political-economic systems at various territorial scales. As Fred Block (2001, p. xxxv) notes:

The key step [for Polanyi] was to overturn the belief that social life should be subordinated to the market mechanism. Once free of this 'obsolete market mentality,' the path would be open to subordinate both national economies and the global economy to democratic politics. Polanyi saw Roosevelt's New Deal as a model of these future possibilities. Roosevelt's reforms meant that the US economy continued to be organized around markets and market activity but a new set of regulatory mechanisms now made it possible to buffer both human beings and nature from the pressures of markets.¹

Contemporary progressives in turn believe, when thinking about city-nature relationships, that social institutions like self-regulating markets "do not spontaneously generate a sustainable development trajectory" (Meadowcroft, 2011, p. 17). Conjuring Polanyi's central theoretical premises, they interpret urban sustainability as a recurrent series of institution-shaping, policy-design and project-level efforts to *embed* market-liberalism back into re-democratized society by 'greening up' its metropolitan engines through a revived social realm. As Polanyi ultimately put it: "the idea of a self-adjusting market implie[s] a stark utopia. Such an institution [cannot] exist for any length of time without annihilating the human and natural substance of society; it would have physically destroyed man and transformed his surroundings into a wilderness." Progressives place their faith in a stronger form of ecological modernization and a related greening of the re-democratized state, key points I return to shortly.

¹My interpretation of Polanyi sees him, with Somers and Block (2014), as closer to Keynes than Marx, emphasizing his work on socially embedded markets and economic democratization—all points Jamie Peck (2016) has taken up. But as Peck (p. 3) elsewhere cautions: "The extent to which Polanyi veered towards an anti-Marxist position, from midway through *The Great Transformation* into his postwar career . . . remains a controversial and contested one, since one can clearly be skeptical of teleological stage models and singular modes (and motors) of economic transformation—as indeed Polanyi was—without burning all bridges to varieties of Marxian political economy." Suffice to say that, like Weber, Polanyi is a complex theorist, subject to multiple renderings and deployments.

2.2.2 *The Green–Red Radical Dissent of Post-capitalism*

Various radical visions of urban sustainability, in contrast, question the supposition that embedded markets and institutions, even if appropriately reformed, can *ever* generate a sustainable development trajectory. The problem is *not* self-regulating markets or enervated democracy; the problem is the rapacious nature of capitalism itself. Whether or not socially embedded and democratically governed, capitalism's fundamental laws of geo-historical motion structurally necessitate the ever-deepening commodification and over-exploitation of nature and society. Rejecting the progressive, ameliorative, lexicon of “green growth,” “natural capitalism,” “Green New Deals,” and especially “ecological modernization,” John Barry (2012 p. 141), for example, envisions a “post-growth, anti-capitalist” paradigm that transcends rather than embeds current political-economies and institutional matrices of power. “In short,” he writes in his conclusions,

the common green critique of orthodox economics must become a clearer critique of capitalism itself, and relatedly its long-standing and evidence-based critique of economic growth must become a critique of capital accumulation. [...] Carbon-based capitalism is destroying the planet's life-support systems and is systematically liquidating them and calling it ‘economic growth’ (ibid.).

The state-progressive's search for urban sustainability “is the pursuit of a mirage, the politics of never getting there” (Foster, 2008, p. ch 1).

These basic fault-lines are familiar to students of other kinds of problems. For example, they characterize the historiography on the Great Depression and the politico-economic effects of FDR's New Deal, which paradoxically Polanyi had once considered important as a possible model of embedded political-economy. Like most sympathetic treatments of urban sustainability, the dominant interpretation of the New Deal is (still) fundamentally progressive (Maher, 2008). Alan Brinkley (1990, p. 134) summarizes the era this way: “Reform might move in fits and starts, but move it did, pushing the nation inexorably out of the inferior past and towards an improving future. The New Deal was, therefore, part of a long tradition of reform—of popular democratic movements battling successfully against selfish private interests—that stretched back to the early days of the republic.” The correspondence here is direct. Certain (progressive) city-regions may not have accomplished *everything*, moving ‘in fits and starts,’ but at least they are now taking sustainability seriously, standing out from others like green emeralds in an otherwise desolate policy desert.

The radical critique of the progressive search for urban sustainability mirrors the radical (New Left) critique of Schlesinger et al.'s view of the New Deal:

the real story of modern American life [is] the decline of genuine democracy: the steady increase in the power of private, corporate institutions, the growing influence of those institutions over the workings of government, and hence the declining ability of people to control the circumstances of their work and their lives. Reform crusades . . . [have] served not to limit the power of “interests” and increase the power of the people. . . . They [are], instead, the products of corporate liberalism, through which powerful capitalist institutions [have] expanded and solidified their influence at the expense of the people (p. 136).

Originally developed in the tumult of the 1960s, these dissents reverberate with more contemporary critiques of urban sustainability as deeply compromised (Krueger & Agyeman, 2005; Macdonald & Keil, 2012). Here the most common projects and policies associated with urban sustainability may well be “reform crusades”; but they do not challenge or displace neoliberal capitalism; if anything, they ensure it (While, Jonas, & Gibbs, 2010). Put another way, urban sustainability is capitalism’s newest spatial fix: Give the creative class their under-utilized bike paths and built-green, in-fill condos with adjacent solar-paneled parking bays just big enough for their electric SUVs. Following this logic, the urban face of sustainability has simply delivered on the evolving spatial imperatives of the globalizing urban economy, which increasingly call for “habitats” that attract and keep the skilled, innovative, but ultimately mobile butterflies that flutter through the convention centers, boutique squares, experiential museums, and various other cultural assets (Dierwechter, 2008). “Green policies” sanction empirically the theoretical claim that “urban entrepreneurialism itself might [now] depend on the active remaking of urban environments and ecologies” (While, Jonas, & Gibbs, 2004, p. 550).

Moving from outright critique to positive alternatives via deep-ecology politics, radical theorizations of urban sustainability emphasize extreme localism and small-scale neo-anarchistic possibilities for future society, delinking and de-commodifying “organic communities” of mutual self-help from broader global patterns of over-consumption and ongoing ecological exploitation (Giorel, 2004). While various efforts at “eco-cities” fall roughly (if superficially) into a “how-to” manual of this tradition (Caprotti, 2014; Silvestro & Silvestro, 2007), such places are irradiated philosophically by the neo-anarchist, eco-feminist, and/or social-ecological writings of, for instance, Carolyn Merchant (2005), Alan Carter (2010), and Murray Bookchin (1991). Drawing on Kropotkin and Fourier, Bookchin critiques the “ambiguities of freedom” that are based on modernity’s trypic of rationality, science, and technology in favor of a “post-scarcity” society (Brincat & Gerber, 2015). Carter links the state’s reliance on a nature-exhausting process of “throughput accumulation” to its core role in maintaining (internal and external) security through a cash-hungry monopoly on the legitimated use of violence over/against people and territory (Paterson, Doran, & Barry, 2006). More recently, he has tried to sketch out an environmentalist political theory based on a new *entente* between Marxian and anarchist postulates of social change.

Within planning theory and urban studies, moreover, radical engagements with urban sustainability and especially social justice have recently emphasized Henri Lefebvre’s original concerns with “the right to the city” (Purcell & Tyman, 2014; Samara, He, & Chen, 2013). Seeing sustainability as the economic transformation of nature into “socially just” forms of/in/through urban space, the “right to the city,” as David Harvey (2003) notes, is not simply about individual liberty to access services regardless of property, but, more fundamentally, about collectively reconquering the common ownership over the means of transforming nature itself. Or as Basta (2016, p. 5) summarizes the key nexus: “urban transformation is an act of self-transformation.”

2.2.3 *The Liberal Case: Unleashing Markets on Ecology*

From a third perspective, in contrast, the main goals associated with urban sustainability, including enhanced environmental protection and improved economic opportunity, are not advanced but damaged by political efforts to embed and shape much less eliminate self-regulating markets. Clapp and Dauvergne (2008, pp. 6–7) outline succinctly this “market liberal” view of sustainability. “The main drivers of environmental degradation according to market liberals,” they write, “are a lack of economic growth, poverty, distortions and failures of the market, and bad policies.” The problem is not unfettered markets, as the progressives and especially radicals maintain; the problem is the *absence* of a rationally unfettered and therefore more dynamic global capitalist order:

Market liberals believe open and globally integrated markets promote growth, which in turn helps societies find ways to improve or repair environmental conditions. To achieve these goals, market liberals call for policy reforms to liberalize trade and investment, foster specialization, and reduce government subsidies that distort markets and waste resources. . . . Governments are encouraged to use market-based tools—for example, environmental taxes or tradable pollution permits—to correct situations of market failure (ibid.).

At the scale of the global community, a “liberal internationalism” is premised on the “emancipatory utopia of free trade,” where, in David Ricardo’s original phrase, “the pursuit of individual advantage is admirably connected with the universal good of the whole” (Mazower, 2012, p. 43). Scholarly treatments of such ideas include interventions that challenge dichotomous treatments of “markets vs. ecosystems” (Adler, 2000). Free-market environmentalists invoke Frederick Hayek, Ronald Coase, James Buchanan, Garrett Hardin, and Milton Freedman to reject the claim that (democratized) government action improves environmental quality. Fred Smith, for example, theorizes externalities like pollution not as market failures, but as “a failure to permit markets and create markets where they do not yet—or no longer—exist” (cited in Competitive Enterprise Institute, 1996, p. 3). Government power, democratic or otherwise, is bureaucratic and clumsy rather than discursively mediated and socially legitimated whereas “individual self-interest” harnesses, for him, an atomized world of individual-consumer and firm-producer “sovereignty.” In Anderson and Leal’s (2001, p. 12) phrase, public management of the environment is “economics without prices.”

Channeling a long-line of market-liberal theorists, from Cobden to Von Mises to Hayek, Mark Pennington (2002, p. 187) expresses faith in this philosophical orientation in the urban planning arena, arguing that “far from extending the range of state activities, there should be a reduction in the role of social democratic planning and the extension of private markets.” Accordingly, free-market environmentalists, in particular, and market-liberals more generally, stipulate that decisions about the (non-)uses and distribution of resources, ecological or otherwise, are better made in the economic arena rather than any political forum. In fact, the only

“politics” conjured is “an electorally determined succession that checks public interference in markets” (Evans, 2002, p. 4).

2.2.4 Progressive Rejoinder(s): From “Weak” to “Strong” Eco-modernization

Progressive theorists have pushed back against both critiques, but especially against market-liberal dogma. The market arena, they point out, fundamentally fails to capture any common good outside of individual wants and preferences. As Peter Self notes, “[e]conomic markets follow an instrumental logic whereby, under the right conditions, rational egoistic behavior is socially legitimated and acceptable.... In politics, by contrast, it is or was a general social belief that individuals should have some regard to the ‘good of society’ and not just their own private wants” (Self, cited in Beder, 1997, p. 101). Peter Evans (2002, p. 6) has made an even stronger case, linking the ongoing search for sustainability and livelihoods with more concrete “urban livability” doctrines that recognize the important role of markets, particularly in land, but that also rigorously reject “the triumphalist ‘imaginary’ in which minimalist markets are sufficient to maximize welfare and sustainability.” As Evans sees it,

In a neoliberal world, local and regional institutions become more interesting places to look for sources of alternative agency. Local governments have never had the same kind of market-constructing prerogatives that national governments enjoyed and have always been vulnerable to threats by investors to move to other cities or regions. Globalization may also have reduced the bargaining power of subnational political institutions in relation to capital, but [...] [l]ocal governments’ admittedly more modest ability to shape market is more intact (pp. 7–8).

Though sympathetic with local-regionalist experimentation, state-progressives additionally critique (albeit more gently) the anarcho-radical cases of Bookchin, Carter and others as both unrealistic and overstated (Paterson et al., 2006). State-progressives see instead recent institutional changes in state form and legal-policy focus as a legitimately significant if still inchoate response to wider environmental movements and political concerns since the 1960s, if not earlier (Eckersley, 2004). This does not paper over many internal disagreements, particularly between proponents of the so-called “weak” vs. “strong” forms of ecological modernization—and thus varying “distances” between progressive and more radical traditions of ecological (geo)politics.

Certainly the umbrella concept of ecological modernization refers in general terms to how environmental problems “come to be framed as issues that are politically, economically and technologically solvable within the context of existing institutions and power structures and continued economic growth” (Bailey, Gouldson, & Newell, 2011, p. 683). As two of its early and most influential adherents freely admit, ecological modernization does not aim for a fundamentally different organization of capitalist society, but for modernization “with an

ecological twist” (Mol & Janicke, 2009)—or what Huber called “superindustrialisation,” wherein “. . .the dirty and ugly industrial caterpillar will transform into a[n] ecological butterfly” through the adoption of improved technology (Murphy & Gouldson, 2000, p. 34). However, this line of analytical reasoning depends on how we interpret different generations of this still growing family of theories.

Most work on ecological modernization, circulating between detached analysis and normative prescription, stipulates that “change can and does occur from within the prevailing forms of industrial states and markets” (Warner, 2010a, 2010b, p. 540). Most also emphasizes gradual consensus rather than shock conflict, tradeoffs and uneven ruptures, perhaps reflecting the term’s origins in German social theory in the early 1980s. “Weak” forms of ecological modernization, though, privilege discourses and practices of “enlightened self-interest,” and are associated typically with new industrial practices by sectors in crisis or with improved eco-design and material efficiencies (Warner, 2010a, 2010b). Here ecological modernization means that efficiency adjustments *within industrialism*—called “dematerialization”—will eventually diffuse to wider, more fundamental forms of socio-political and economic change.

Put (a bit too) simply, money flows to those who reduce greenhouse gases or toxic pollutants, a message of “greenwashing” to radical critics that nonetheless prevails in mainstream (political and corporate) circles because it reverberates with win-win Brundtland-inspired versions of sustainability (Harvey, 1996, p. 378). “Don’t drive less,” one might exhort, “but drive a green car” (Bomberg & Super, 2009, p. 429). Economistic versions of this approach emphasize the Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC), wherein greater pollution from industrialized economies indicates dynamic new forms of accumulation that, in time, will invariably help to pay for a cleaner environment now demanded by (enriched) citizens increasingly wary of ecological risks.

Critics like Robyn Eckersley (2004) dismiss such “weak” versions of ecological modernization as “functionalist” and “deterministic.” While dematerialization is a start, she holds, strong ecological modernization demands, at least in theory, the broader emergence of “green states” predicated firmly upon the constant institutional impacts of a “reflexivity” associated with socio-political processes of “learning, dialogue and agency” rather than with any simple diffusion of firm-level self-interest in dematerialization (Warner, 2010a, 2010b). Eckersley’s model is normative and suggestive—though hopefully imminent—more than positive and explanatory. The “green state” at issue is predicated upon ecological democracy and a new form of sovereignty that might effectively displace both liberal democracy and neoliberal capitalism (Eckersley, 2006). Eckersley’s effort to “reinstate the state” in green political theory assumes, however, that the transformation of the state’s core concerns with territoriality, sovereignty, and especially accumulation, as discussed earlier, can be redirected to prioritize the achievement of urban sustainability (Backstrand & Kronsell, 2015).

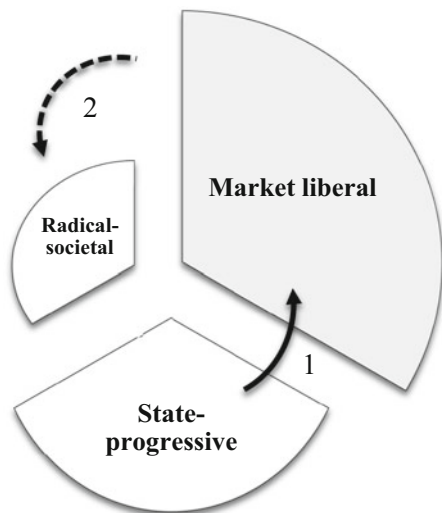
2.3 Shifting Political Economies of Change

As “ideal models,” each of these major traditions of political economy can be treated analytically but not as empirical equivalents in space or time. In reality, as numerous studies have substantiated for many decades (e.g., George, 1999; Keil, 2002), the growing power of global market-liberal actors and institutions since the late 1970s has reshaped the state-progressive tradition of political economy that is represented by Polanyi’s desire for democratically embedded markets. Within geography, this work is subsumed under the broad rubric of urban neoliberalism (Didier, Morange, & Peyroux, 2013; Gunder, 2010; Hackworth, 2007; Parnell & Robinson, 2012; Peters, 2012). Figure 2.2 below visualizes this dynamic in the terms introduced first in Fig. 2.1.

Processes of the so-called neoliberalization (depicted by arrow 1) do not necessarily shrink the state in the manner held by classical liberal theorists, much less eliminate the state in toto as propounded by “anarcho-capitalists” like Murray Rothbard (1971). Rather the modern state’s progressive qualities are reshaped by capital, particularly finance capital, around market rationalities and modes of governing. In theory, the resulting “neoliberal state” focuses on enclosure and the assignment of private property rights, privatization, deregulation, and constant efforts to ensure “competitive” environments. In practice, as David Harvey (2005) notes, constant state power is central to the reproduction of such conditions, which leads to many contradictions and tensions. (These include contradictions and tensions with previous state forms and institutional arrangements, a key point I come back to in Chap. 3 when discussing problems of “intercurrence.”)

However, efforts to build various societies around neoliberal market logics, according to Polanyi, (eventually) create social and ecological conditions that

Fig. 2.2 Contending forces: geopolitical economies and the double movement



produce a sociopolitical backlash—or what he called the “double movement.” This is depicted above by arrow 2. Fred Block (2008) summarizes the idea as follows:

Particularly since 1980, the movement of laissez-faire has been in the ascendant in the form of ‘neo-liberalism’, ‘market fundamentalism;’ or the ‘Washington consensus.’ Yet at the same time, *at multiple levels of politics*—local, national, regional, and global—we also see *counter movements* that have sought to check, control, or modify the impact of market forces. And, in fact, there is considerable evidence that *business and finance ‘need’ some of these limits, especially regulatory initiatives*, to avoid destructive social, environmental, and economic consequences (p. 2, emphasis added).

Urban scholars have recently explored these claims, often with empirical reference to local planning and urban sustainability policies (Hefetz & Warner, 2004; Kantor, 2013; Warner, 2008). Nate McClintock (2014), for example, deploys Polanyi’s theory of the double movement to reinterpret the complex politics of urban agriculture and sustainable food systems vis-à-vis hegemonic neoliberalism within Oakland, California. In her essay on the future of local government within the USA as a whole, Margaret Warner (2010a, 2010b, p. 145) argues even more directly that lack of cost savings and the loss of public values in market provision, “are prompting reversals in privatization, increases in regulation, and new approaches to government enterprise.”

More generally, the global economic catastrophe in 2008 and the publication of Thomas Picketty’s (2014) *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* arguably provide compelling broad-spectrum evidence for Polanyi’s insights about the chaos of unregulated markets and the disruptive nature of capitalism. In the wake of the crisis, Picketty showed that income inequality, for example, does not eventually decline as capitalism matures, a view Kuznets had originally propounded in the 1950s with his famous “Kuznets Curve.” While politics are treated as exogenous shocks to core economic dynamics, rather than constitutive of these dynamics, Picketty’s book nonetheless suggests, in the spirit if hardly letter of Polanyi, the importance of re-democratized states in counteracting capitalism’s tendencies towards inequality (Hopkins, 2014). In this sense, the role of the multi-scaled state in reconstructing politically the good society at various levels has returned to prominence.

2.4 Smart Growth

Narrowing this book’s discussion to smart growth—indeed, “mapping” urban sustainability through planning for smart growth—does not necessarily narrow our core concerns with the key questions these broader debates occasion. Is smart growth part and parcel of state-progressive space, a new counter movement that checks, controls, or modifies the impact of market forces, or is it shaped decisively by neoliberalization and the demands for a “sustainability fix”? Are the new

metropolitan “spaces that smart growth makes” (Dierwechter, 2014), in Seattle and elsewhere, about carbon-based capitalism’s need for “throughput accumulation,” or is smart growth better understood as urbanism “with an ecological twist”? Let us turn now to a more specific discussion of smart growth with these questions in mind, focusing in particular on various planning debates as well as recent research that explore the emerging spatialities of smart growth as an important new strategy of green city-regionalism.

2.4.1 *Normative Planning Theory*

In this book, smart growth is seen generally as a *normative* theory for city-regional planning practices that seeks to promote the broader project of urban sustainability through a specific spatial (re)ordering of metropolitan regions over time. The use of theory to guide future action arguably most distinguishes the field of planning from urban studies, human geography, sociology and other academic disciplines. Professional planners and other actors involved in deliberated urban development processes at various scales and sites—from the activist neighborhood to federal bureaucracies—typically look forward, proposing specific interventions in the environment over other potential interventions. This means that planners, broadly defined, typically move beyond explanation and prediction, i.e., the classic understandings of “theory” (ibid.). In consequence, planning theory is more explicitly prescriptive than other kinds of theory, sometimes bordering on ideology and ethics. Normative theory invariably asks the following kinds of questions. What should we do? How should we engage? What ought to be done? What sort of city ought to exist? How should space be organized? What norms should we employ to do so?

These questions reflect concerns with either the process of planning (planning as a “verb”) or the urban form of planning (planning as a “noun”), but rarely both at the same time. Until WWII or so, the professional field of planning was dominated by architects, engineers, and other kinds of designers concerned strongly with the physical geometry of built-environments at various scales, levels of resolution and empirical detail. Planning theory was much more about rendering and projecting idea(l)s of the “good city” and appropriately ordered space, i.e., normative diagrams of how regions, cities, neighborhoods and groups of buildings should be spatially organized as products, than about core questions of improved process (rational decision-making, comprehensive planning, citizen participation, radical advocacy, etc.).²

²Important early exceptions include the seminal work of Patrick Geddes, with his integrated concepts of civics, selective surgery, and the regional survey.

Smart growth: A planning theory of practice that calls for shifting new development away from low-density residential and commercial sprawl into well-serviced cities and suburbs using tools like containment, mixed-use, transit and stronger regional coordination.

This changed in the late 1950s and especially the 1960s, when social scientists increasingly populated the still relatively new planning profession, in the USA as elsewhere (Alexander, 1981). Perhaps the dominant theoretical concern in both scholarly debates and the empirical world of practice over the past several decades, at least since the mid-1960s, accordingly has been how to make “rational” planning procedures more collaborative, participatory, democratic, administratively effective, etc. Here the approach is to consider how planning is an ongoing process of decision-making between state and society about alternative urban futures, i.e., between public officials and society-based groups (neighborhood leaders, community development corporations, developers, unions, chambers of commerce, etc.) all concerned with the future form and function of shared physical environments and eco-social spaces. While planning is thus often seen as “technical,” can it also be made more collaborative and meaningfully inclusive of economic and social diversity? If yes, how might/does this occur and what are the implications for how we theorize the possibility of rationality, where collective ends are achieved through selected means?

Such questions also encounter the issue of power. For some scholars, such as John Forester (1987), planning must and sometimes does effectively “face” the widely recognized reality of uneven relations of power occasioned structurally by obdurate socio-spatial and economic stratifications within patriarchal, unequal, and racialized forms of urban capitalism and bureaucratized statism (Lauria & Stoll, 1996). Within this context, Forester focuses our attention on improving the practical capacity of various actors to communicate more skillfully with one another about possible urban worlds, arguing (through Habermas) in the normative and procedural tradition of planning studies that “decent social theory must address possibilities, not just constraints; it must inform hope, not simply resignation” (Forester, 1998, p. 214). Such hope, moreover, is predicated upon identifying a series of “right and “good” actions, which are defined more elaborately by Patsy Healey (1992, p. 144) as “those we can come to agree on, in particular times and places, across our diverse differences in material conditions and wants, moral perspectives, and expressive cultures and inclinations.”

For others, such as Bent Flyvbjerg (1998), the world of collaborative planning practice is a shared fiction. Local actors tell one another misleading stories about the interrelationships between planning, space, and power (Yiftachel, 2001). Through a detailed case study of transit planning in Alborg, Denmark, collaborative planning for sustainability-related goals is little more than an elaborate process of self-deception that effectively masks how power really works as key actors seek to transform or stabilize configurations of space in particular ways. Efforts to shift

planning procedures from an elusive and elitist “instrumental” rationality, i.e., a comprehensive assessment of means when ends are known, to a more “communicative” or inclusive form of rationality, i.e., establishing rules for reaching mutual understandings and conducting argumentation, float too far above a more disturbing reality: power always “defeats” rationality, however defined. What is rational to do, in Flyvbjerg’s estimation, is dependent strongly on context and context in turn is defined decisively by power, which ultimately tends to turn rationality into rationalization. In fact, he concludes, the capacity to present rationalization as rationality is how power works.

All planning theories, at bottom, necessarily presume that our cities “should be purposefully shaped rather than the unmediated outcome of the market and of interactions within civil society” (Fainstein, 1999, p. 250). Differences are important to consider and can be dramatic. Early planning and design innovators, as diverse as Tony Garnier, Camillo Sitte, Ebenezer Howard, Soria y Matta, Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier, among many others, focused more attention on the preferred “shape” of the city (or city-region) rather than on the *processes* of “shaping,” whereas by the mid-1960s, the question of “shaping” itself—of process, procedures, and decision-making—became more important in planning scholarship.

But the ghosts that haunt planning practice still drag around the heavy chains of power. Who really does the shaping or can do the shaping, even in theory? Relatedly, what sorts of “shapes” or urban forms do those enacting power in society seek to occasion, transform, stabilize or extend? What values, interests, and motivations “shape the shapes”? In various ways, these latter questions, which explicitly link together planning and space through power, require that we explore not only “how planning shapes urban form,” or at least tries to do so, but also that we attend closely to “the political and economic forces constraining planning, and the distributional effects of planning decisions” (Fainstein, 2005, p. 122). It also requires that we ask whether the spatialities of planning are progressive, regressive, or something hybrid, and therefore whether they advance social reform or legitimize control (Yiftachel, 2001). This is no less true for the spaces of smart growth than for any other planning program.

2.4.2 *Smart Aspirations, Territorialized Spaces*

David Resnick (2010, p. 1853) sees smart growth as “a policy framework that promotes an urban development pattern characterized by high population density, walkable-bikeable neighborhoods, preserved green spaces, mixed-use development (i.e., development projects that include both residential and commercial uses), available mass transit, and limited road construction.” Others offer similar views, albeit from slightly different perspectives (Burchell, Listokin, & Galley, 2000; Daniels, 2001; Downs, 2001; International City/County Management Association

& Smart Growth Network, 2006; Pollard, 2000; Ross, 2014; Schneider, 2008; Song, 2012; Szold & Carbonell, 2002).

Smart growth scholars further link smart growth to regional-scale policy action that is focused ultimately on deepening sustainability. For Scott (2007), as one example, smart growth constitutes nothing less than a comprehensive strategy of regional sustainability. Tom Daniels (2001, p. 277) in turn posits that smart growth represents a “new American approach to regional planning” focused squarely on leveraging Brundtland-inspired sustainability: i.e., “the best of both worlds: economic growth without the ugliness, congestion, environmental degradation, and wasteful public subsidies or sprawling development.”

American-style smart growth, then, is one species in the global genus of planning movements for urban sustainability, many of which predate smart growth by many years (e.g., Dewar & Watson, 1990; Faludi, 2005). Indeed, Richard Cowell (2013) has argued that the field of planning has emerged as a “vital mechanism” for promoting sustainability goals and governance values. “Calls for planning to be used in the service of sustainability [have] emerged from all levels of government—international, national, and local—from countries around the world, and from public, private and non-governmental sectors,” Cowell writes, “[i]n many countries, this rhetoric has been turned into formal, statutory requirements for plans to promote sustainability” (p. 2447).

Scholars of US planning have traced the growing parallels between the policy ambitions of urban sustainability and the rise of smart growth, respectively (Barbour & Deakin, 2012). They have explored how, in the US context where concepts like “Agenda 21,” a global policy child of the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, are still unfamiliar or ignored, the spaces of urban sustainability might emerge theoretically through the albeit contested localization of smart growth strategies and philosophies (Godschalk, 2004). From this perspective, the appearance of most any smart growth policy, program and project is associated with the piecemeal implementation of sustainability. “While the meaning of [smart growth] continues to evolve,” one study by the Lincoln Land Institute puts it, “today’s sustainable development initiatives share many of the goals promoted by the smart growth movement” (Ingram, Carbonell, Hong, & Flint, 2009, p. 3).

That said, as shown in Fig. 2.3 below, smart growth is concerned mostly with “outcome” questions of “how planning shapes urban form” (op cit.), i.e., with “bringing the city back in” (Beauregard, 1990). Attentive to procedural issues and challenges like development control and collaborative decision-making, smart growth seeks mainly to spatialize urban sustainability goals through deliberate(d), more predictable, and hopefully high-quality densification of (re)development activities in new and established communities, preferably near public transport that is distant from ecologically vulnerable areas like farms, critical habitats and forests. Although affiliated with “deliberative democracy” (Resnick, 2010), smart growth is less a discursive process than an urban form for sustainability, albeit with a nod to process around the recognition of contingencies. “It’s like a Christmas tree,” as one planner in Washington State reports, “people can decorate their community how they want, but they have to have a tree” (Vincent, pers. comm.).

<i>A. Urban form vs. planning process</i>	<i>B. Focus of action</i>	<i>C. Normative principles</i>
<p>Urban form ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Howard</i>: Urban-rural balance, clear growth boundaries/lines • <i>Burnham</i>: Using public facilities as key focal points • <i>Unwin</i>: Neighborhood-scale life; de-emphasis on automotive dependency • <i>Mumford</i>: Regional-scale planning and active regional culture • <i>Jacobs</i>: Mixed- and adaptive- reuse, preservation, complete street life • <i>Alexander</i>: Improved urban-scale connectivity and spatial legibility • <i>McHarg</i>: Environmental planning and natural integration into form and design • <i>Bauer</i>: social housing reforms, range of types 	Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas • Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities
	Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create walkable neighborhoods • Provide a variety of transportation choices.
	Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take advantage of compact building design • Mix land uses • Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place • Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
<p>Planning process...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mannheim</i>: planned shaping of private markets • <i>Simon</i>: means-ends rationality • <i>Faludi</i>: comprehensive planning • <i>Geddes</i>: civics, surveying • <i>Healey</i>: collaboration 	Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective • Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

Fig. 2.3 Smart growth as normative planning theory (Sources: (a) author's rendering; (b) Knaap and Zhao, 2009; (c) smart growth Network.org)

Smart growth is procedurally prescriptive in so far as extant planning processes and regulatory powers should be fair, predictable, cost effective, and collaborative. But its favored spatialities are presumed universally accommodating: mixed, compact, ‘rangy,’ distinctive, walkable, preserved, and varied.

When taken together, smart growth, at least in the imagination of its strongest advocates, steadily replaces low-density, rigidly segregated, automobile-oriented and overly private forms of (sub)urban living with denser, mixed, clustered, walkable, disproportionately infill-oriented developments that, by their locational/functional nature alone, might help to conserve adjacent farmland and other assets and directly support multimodal transit alternatives (Litman, 2009). So functionally defined, smart growth concomitantly aims to “impose a consciously chosen pattern of development upon the urban terrain” (Fainstein, 2005) but in a democratically inclusive, socially participatory manner of collective mutual learning that somehow still results in economically efficient and technically rational decisions about specific urban changes with respect to the most vested parties in particular places.

Seen this way, smart growth is ambitious because, I argue, it is syncretic (Dierwechter, 2013b). The chosen pattern of development that smart growth promotes, after all, draws eclectically on decades of planning theory and experimentation—incorporating various elements from, *inter alia*, Ebenezer Howard’s garden city ideals around urban-rural balance and sharp growth lines; Daniel Burnham’s urbane celebration of iconic public spaces (who drew on Camillo Sitte’s ‘urban rooms’ and use of monuments); Raymond Unwin’s more intimate walkable neighborhoods; Christopher Alexander’s sense of place, connectivity, and coherent pattern language; Ian McHarg’s insistence on planning through natural forms; Catherine Bauer’s agenda for more diverse and equitable housing; Jane Jacobs’ influential defense of historic preservation and short, densely intersecting blocks to promote street life; and not least the eco-regionalist sensibilities of Lewis Mumford, among many others.

In addition, smart growth’s *procedural* insistence on regulatory efficiency but technical rationality reflects the seminal impacts on planning theory of Karl Manheim, Herbert Simon, and Andres Faludi. Its desire to encourage community collaboration around preferred built-environmental change even evokes the spirit of Patrick Geddes’ foundational notion of “civics” as well as more recent work on collaborative planning that seeks to develop “relational resources” of action by Patsy Healey. Here smart growth is imagined as a meta-tool to reconsider how we traditionally think of state and market relationships to forge new partnerships.

Efforts to understand how smart growth programs, policies, and especially projects (re)shape US urban form at various scales emphasize its long range aspirations. The same Lincoln Land Institute study that foregrounds the parallels with sustainability goals also evaluates smart growth theory, so rendered, within the geographically comparative context of state-level planning (non)reforms over the past several decades. Rather than planning processes, this study focuses mostly on spatial “outcomes” in terms of a handful of key program arenas: (1) growth patterns and trends (especially compaction goals); (2) the protection of natural resources and environmental quality; (3) enhanced transportation choices; (4) fiscal efficiency of

public outlays; and (5) social equity concerns around affordable housing. It compares states like Oregon, Florida, New Jersey and Maryland—where smart growth and earlier forms of urban growth management are explicitly instituted in state laws and planning regulations—with states like Indiana, Texas, Colorado and Virginia, where smart growth is less institutionalized and/or geopolitically fragmented, unevenly localized, and contingently deployed (e.g., Boulder, Denver, Austin). Designed to gauge the impacts of various kinds of state-level smart growth programs, the study pays less detailed attention to metropolitan-scale and intra-metropolitan patterns of urban (re)development.

From a national perspective, however, the study argues that smart growth states differed from other states as well as from each other. Overall, for example, “developed land generally increased less in smart growth states” (p. 136), “marginal land consumption was lower” (p. 137), “smart growth states kept more population growth in urbanized areas” (p. 137), and “annual increases in traffic delays declined . . . after smart growth programs were introduced” (p. 140). At the same time, New Jersey performed better with respect to affordable housing; Oregon with respect to countering sprawl. These uneven stories across the US reflect differently institutionalized political-economies of development and urban change. Smart growth has a *geography*.

The scholars of this study are appropriately careful to highlight notable limitations and weaknesses of various policy experiences, particularly with respect to social equity. But the practical benefits of smart growth theory are considered central to the slow, hard, progressive improvement of metropolitan America. This is seen in their optimistic summary of the otherwise (for them) desultory situation in Texas:

Given its historical and political context, the state of Texas seems unlikely to support smart growth principles and practices any time soon. While the state has become increasingly urban, its mindset is distinctively country and western. One way that a shift might happen is if state law makers and business leaders become convinced that smart growth can provide a competitive advantage in the marketplace. A second possibility is that state leaders come to realize that Texas is urban (if not urbane). At the same time, though, visioning processes in Dallas, Houston, and Austin have generated hope that a majority of the estimated 12 million new residents arriving in Texas over the next three decades will be able to live, work, and play in a more livable, walkable, and socially just urban settings (p. 229).

Other work on how state-level programs of smart growth shape urban form and/or built environmental patterns of development similarly compare and contrast “state-led” planning strategies (Anthony, 2004; Deal, Kim, & Chackraborty, 2009). Howell-Moroney (2007) argues that the “intensity” of state-level programs matters the most in discernably impacting local land development outcomes. In particular, he concludes, only states with the strongest regulatory regimes, notably Oregon, Florida and Washington, showed success in meeting the truly synoptic goals of smart growth doctrine, notably to curb sprawl through intensification. States that make local communities plan without mandating auxiliary tools, for example, urban growth boundaries and infrastructure concurrent rules, are simply “managing growth,” but not really reshaping growth over time into the so-called smarter

forms. Yet top-down mandates complicate interpretations of how smart growth differs from early, supposedly more state-interventionist phases of urban growth planning. Top-down forms of smart growth in Oregon and to a lesser extent Florida and Washington, in other words, now contend geopolitically with other state-territorial forms of smart growth in other US states whose models of regulation rely instead on incentives and fiscal steering rather than one-size fits-all legislative requirements.

Hamin, Steere, and Sweetser (2006), for example, explore the Community Preservation Act (CPA) in Massachusetts, finally passed in 2000 after 16 years of negotiation, and initial (though not final) opposition from the real estate lobby. Under this law, local communities vote “yes” or “no” to implement the provisions of the CPA system (in Oregon, *all* communities *must* implement urban growth boundaries, etc.). Designed to favor more local flexibility, Massachusetts communities are allowed to tax themselves at various rates and also receive commensurate matching grants in order to protect open space, preserve historic buildings, and/or build more local affordable housing. Here smart growth is a spatially selective, deliberately narrow, and thus far more geographically uneven form of self-investment in only parts of the overall theory.

State-scale systems also highlight crucial temporal dynamics. In perhaps the best single monograph on the new politics of planning across Oregon, Hurley and Walker (2011) explore electorally successful property-rights challenges to what most scholars regard as by far the strongest land-use regime in the USA. Oregon’s elaborate planning system, particularly as manifested in the Portland area, “is characterized by a top-down and interventionist philosophy of land use regulation, which places greater authority in the hands of the state than with officials in local communities” (p. 23).

But once again, is this smart growth? Built mostly in the 1970s with a bi-partisan coalition that today would appear all but impossible, Walker and Lewis distinguish Oregon’s system with the state of Maryland’s approach to growth planning, which was built largely in the 1990s, when both wider political-economic and ideological conditions had shifted within the USA as elsewhere. Maryland’s statewide system, which popularized the term smart growth, relies less of hard regulation, statewide systems of review, and enforcement than on fiscal incentives and targeted infrastructure investments to implement key smart growth principles (e.g., compact development patterns).

Yet people routinely visit Portland, the state’s most important city, “to learn the wonders of smart-growth planning,” as one libertarian critic of the city’s planning approaches consistently laments (O’Toole, 2004, p. 203). Such wonders include the rare statewide mandate of regionally coordinated urban growth boundaries along with extensive commitment to public transit systems, etc. Real estate scholars sometimes worry that aggressive anti-sprawl strategies pay insufficient attention to the satisfactory production of affordable housing (similar complaints are made about green belts in the UK). But they also acknowledge the complexity of competing metropolitan goals that still require regional policy coordination, such as the need for incentivized infrastructure taxes (Mildner, 2015). This again

suggests that smart growth manifests itself differently in specific geographical *and historical* contexts as well as within socially and economically diverse metropolitan regions. It is difficult to do everything well, yet rather easy to entreat the impossible utopia of market liberalism.

At the other end of the territorial scale, practitioner-focused literature produced by advocacy organizations, such as the National Resources Defense Council (Terris, Vorsanger, & Benfield, 2001), exemplifies work that explores more micro-level impacts on urban form, focusing on exemplary policies and development projects. The focus is especially on *projects* rather than politics, suggesting an easier path to rapid replication. In the book, *Solving Sprawl*, projects like Adidas Village in Portland putatively highlight how suburban campuses can be transformed into urban villages through the reuse of abandoned property, the recycling of materials from old buildings, and “an inclusive, neighborhood-oriented planning process” (p. 13). The implication is that more of the same types of projects will invariably expand urban sustainability over time, recognizing however that cutting-edge places are rather too often like the Reston Town Center in Reston, Virginia, i.e., “an island of smart growth in a sea of suburbia.” When defined as most *any* mixed-use, infill, and/or adaptive reuse project, smart growth is actually more a scattershot phenomenon, found nearly everywhere one might look yet also usually concentrated, restricted, unevenly distributed within the fabric of cities and suburbs. Here, too, its metropolitan-scale geographies demand closer inspection.

Evidently smart growth policies tend to revitalize and valorize *certain kinds* of urban uses and socioeconomic functions, especially those that directly reflect the so-called post-Fordist landscapes of consumption and reproduction commensurate with upper middle-class notions of an appropriate(d) twenty-first century urbanism. Industrial uses, for example, are usually overlooked or even discursively excised as smart growth seeks to curb sprawl and revitalize existing cities and suburbs, its two most important meta-goals. For Green Leigh and Hoeltzel (2012), in particular, manufacturing is smart growth’s “blindside,” even though paradoxically this sector “[most] contributes to diverse, innovative, and more resilient local economies” (p. 88), a crucial ingredient, it would seem, in the ongoing search for a stronger, more socially just form of urban sustainability.

Mindful that newly refashioned spaces of smartness might be read as “ecological gentrification” (Dooling, 2009) or “sustainability for hipsters” (SustainabilityHub, 2013), of which more below, examples such as the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative in inner-city Boston are cited to bolster broader claims that smart growth does not necessarily generate displacement (Terris et al., 2001). Other examples include neighborhood-based plans that seek to institute countervailing policies (e.g., <http://eastportlandactionplan.org/>). However, this micro-work of celebration, experimentation, and hope seldom links planning practices to wider theories of political-economy and socio-spatial development and especially to the core problem of how power works through institutions and coalitions over time. Yet the spatial organization of any given urban society, as the radical geographer Doreen Massey (1984) has argued, is integral to the production of the social, not merely its result. Planning is, from this perspective, an effort to institute horizons that stabilize

space-time envelopes, which helps to create in turn a grid of particular “power-geometries” (Massey, 1993).

Geographers have offered distinctive and generally more critical readings of smart growth. Rob Krueger and David Gibbs (2008), for example, have situated smart growth in broader theoretical terms, seeing it more expansively as America’s “third wave” of urban sustainability. In their judgement, the US smart growth movement reflects a decidedly “neoliberal turn” in the wider political-economy of city-regions since the steady demise of Fordism: “Smart growth is, in the last instance, a paradigm shift from more state-based regulatory mechanisms to market-based mechanisms, primarily incentives” (p. 1272). Paul Knox (2008, pp. 124–128) also analyses smart growth—which he sees as little more than “a stealthy euphemism for old-fashioned regional planning”—as part and parcel of the now heavily neoliberalized “geopolitics of suburbia.” More recently, Tahvilzadeh, Montin, and Cullberg (2015, p. 4) argue that smart growth “is [still] intimately integrated with sustainability concerns, but may stand in sharp contrast to the change of course that [sustainable development] demands by mainly relying on ‘fetishized’ urban life-styles which avoids the critical issue of consumption patterns.”

Eliot Tretter (2013) has offered analogous ideas in his critical discussion of smart growth policies in Austin, Texas (cf. Karvonen, 2011). The spatialization of smart growth, in his view, means that “environmental issues are only about internalizing the effects of urbanization on non-human species” (p. 4). Austin’s creative classes get environmental sustainability in a remade metropolitan space from a state dominated by business groups whose quid pro quo is targeted urban regeneration at the cost of “a firm commitment to social justice.” His scholarship explicates the strategic role of smart growth in helping to create, not “emerald cities,” to appropriate Joan Fitzgerald’s (2011) felicitous and influential term, but something more like elite emeralds—places colonized increasingly by “upscale condos, rehabbed housing, candle-lit restaurants, vintage furniture emporia and valuable real estate,” i.e., greener urban worlds “cleansed of its working class residents” (Wetzel, 2015). For Tretter (2016), environmentalists representing “anti-growth” politics have not stopped growth in Austin; they have helped to create appropriate conditions for new rounds of segregated accumulation.

Tretter’s emphasis on class, race, and accumulation and hence on Fainstein’s theoretical concern with “the distributional effects of planning decisions” (op cit.) is also reflected in scholarship on urban sustainability in Portland. Using David Harvey’s influential theory of capital switching,³ Goodling, Green, and McClintock. (2015, p. 511) explore Portland’s urban development history “to illustrate how cycles of investment and disinvestment have left a legacy of racially and spatially

³For Harvey (1985), the capitalist system involves investment in basic commodity production, which he calls accumulation in “the primary circuit” of the economy. In Harvey’s view, over-accumulation in the primary circuit is structurally inevitable and eventually forces more and more investors to look for alternative outlets to secure sufficient profits. Capital “switches” at this point to “the secondary circuit,” which includes the urban built-environment (e.g., real estate as well as loans to finance public infrastructure).

explicit disparities, arguably exacerbated rather than mitigated by the city's sustainability efforts." Goodling et al.'s work raises serious questions about the role of strong political institutions like Portland Metro in forging tertiary bonds of place around the city-region's collective future. Governed by a home rule charter and six directly elected councilors, Portland Metro has the "astounding power," as Ethan Seltzer (2003, p. 38) puts it, "to require changes in local comprehensive plans to make them consistent with regional functional plans." Carl Abbott (1997) shows that Metro's management of the Portland area UGB is coupled tightly with regional housing goals, which essentially mandates

a 'fair share' housing policy by requiring that every jurisdiction within the UGB provide 'appropriate types and amounts of land. . . necessary and suitable for housing that meets the housing needs of households of all income levels.' In other words, suburbs are not allowed to use the techniques of exclusionary zoning to block apartment construction or to isolate themselves as islands of large-lot zoning. By limiting the speculative development of large, distant residential tracts, the [Metro system] has tended to level the playing field for suburban development and discourage the emergence of suburban 'super developers' with overwhelming political clout. . . .

This is inspiring research, but is planning for smart growth in strongly institutionalized settings a progressive, malleable space for collaborative regional empowerment? Or is it, alternatively, a convenient space for overpowering forces that seek to rationalize regional accumulation as urban sustainability and green corporate citizenship?

Elevating questions of class, race, and ethnicity forces broad, often deeply unsettling, questions about linkages between synoptic planning experiences, on the one hand, and the social composition of otherwise shared communities, on the other (Abel, White, & Clauson, 2015). Lipsett has drawn sustained attention to how the complex, urbanizing mosaic of immigrant and racial enclaves in the USA has militated historically against progressive politics (Lipsett & Marks, 2000). Even well-known exceptions, such as the municipal socialism of Progressive Era Milwaukee, Wisconsin, paradoxically underscore the cementing role of German-immigrant identities in building an outward but thin façade of place- and/or class-based based solidarity.

Similarly, Europe's post-war social democratic states look decidedly more contingent when we consider darkly that "between 1914 and 1945 [multicultural] Europe was smashed into dust," as Tony Judt argues, "[t]he 'tidier' Europe that emerged, blinking, into the second half of the twentieth century had fewer loose ends [. . .] But since the 1980s. . . Europe is facing a multi-cultural future" (Judt, 2010, p. 9). The rightward lurches in European politics at multiple scales in recent years has exposed the difficulties in maintaining post-war variants of progressive political-economies in shared (now fully urbanized) territories, including spatial planning policies. Diverse Dutch municipalities like Almere and The Hague, for instance, are building some of most interesting new kinds of green urban space in Europe, arguably much more advanced than smart growth theory and practice in the USA. But they also places where, as recently as 2010, openly nativist and

reactionary parties like the PVV (Party for Freedom) experienced a disturbing growth in influence.

Nativist elements within the American Tea Party movement and more recently Trumpism have explicitly pushed back against smart growth and attendant concerns with global climate change and sustainable regionalism (Hester, 2011; Trapenberg Frick, 2013). Martin and Holloway (2005) explicitly link the limitations of progressive planning and neighborhood governance in St. Paul, Minnesota, for example, to growing ethnic diversity. They worry that,

the city is fragmented along multiple dimensions at multiple geographic scales. Its significant racial and ethnic cleavages do not correspond to political units for urban governance—units that form a basis for citizen involvement and community development within the city. The governance structure in fact reinscribes or reinforces economic inequalities across the urban landscape, even as it enables some areas to foster a district-wide political and social identity that partially transcends significant racial and ethnic fragmentation (p. 1110).

That cultural concerns with accommodating diversity and attendant narratives of global governance are driving Tea Party push back against smart growth and urban sustainability is a significant development. Carruthers and Úlfarsson (2008, p. 1816) suggest, for instance, that sprawl “nearly always raises per capita spending,” a finding that might otherwise lead conservatives to support cost-saving smart growth policies. So hostility to smart growth reflects cultural narratives as much as economic interests.

My own work has considered many of these themes as well. Nearly a decade ago, I suggested that smart growth had emerged as a syncretic solution to the contradictory problems of pro-growth and anti-growth histories, offering a specific kind of metropolitan-scale synthesis nonetheless wracked by recurrent geopolitical conflicts around the “contending spatial rationalities” of diversity, justice, nostalgia, and freedom (Dierwechter, 2008). While incorporating classic political economy concerns and commitments, particularly as expressed through regulation theory, I was also concerned with parallel questions of culture, ideas, and values, including people’s hopes and fears, aspirations and anxieties. Nostalgia, for example, seemed important if hardly sufficient in mapping the complex new landscapes of smart growth in fast-growing city-regions like Portland, Seattle, Baltimore, and Madison.

In different ways, other urban scholars have developed theoretical approaches that also seek to account for the complex spaces of planning consensus, conflict, and growth (geo)politics by emphasizing both hard interests and soft idea(l)s, political-economies, and socio-cultures. Hurley and Walker (2011), for instance, analyze the land-use planning changes in Oregon just discussed using the foundational work of Raymond Williams, highlighting the political and economic roots of cultural visions and highly romantic processes of “cherishing” rural landscapes.

More recently, I have advanced a series of arguments that together formed the main warrants and embedded motivations for this longer book treatment. “Thinking critically and geographically about smart growth,” I suggested in my examination of smart transit nodes across Greater Seattle,

implies that we are sensitive to the structuring effects of capital as it conditions the state's territorial projects, particularly at the city-regional scale where much recent urban scholarship is now directed; but such thinking should likewise alert us to the perils of sweeping generalizations in the search for tidy explanations of metropolitan space. Following [Sue] Parnell and [Jennifer] Robinson, we need to look *at* space both through but also beyond neoliberal frameworks. Such a move, drawing creatively on the 'pluralist conversations' of various urban disciplines, may allow us to *occasion new descriptions and explanations* of smart growth as a key component of urban space, not only in North American cities but in comparative dialogue with a fast-changing world of experimenting politics (Dierwechter, 2013a, pp. 148, emphasis added).

My related study of residential changes over the past 20 years in the wider metropolitan region offers a second set of cognate conclusions:

Smart growth across Greater Seattle, then, struggles to reverse very strong, long-subsidized sprawl forces that produce regionally scattered, haphazard development—seizing new opportunities to reinvent urban areas through containment strategies that also, at least in broad outline, generate improved compactness, mix use, density, and diversity And indeed, in general, new growth is being contained. Land recycling is up, and generally at higher densities than before [...] Yet smart growth cannot and does not 'land' unalloyed; it is adulterated socially, if often surprisingly, by what Lefebvre memorably and elusively called the 'meshwork' of cities. *Additional reflection is needed* on how this meshwork feeds back into smart growth theorizations of urban change, and, at still higher levels of generalization, alternative philosophies and programs of/for urban sustainability—particularly where concerns of racial and economic segregation are foregrounded (Dierwechter, 2014, pp. 709, emphasis added).

2.5 Conclusions

The search for urban sustainability encompasses new forms and modalities of governance, new kinds of economies, and new types of built-environments. Conceived through alternative political economies, however, sustainability is an uneven project in state-progressive, market-liberal, or radical-societal transformation. In practice, the fin de siècle expansion in market-liberal rationalities at multiple territorial scales, the so-called "neoliberalization" of state-society-economy relationships, has paradoxically eroded state-progressive traditions even as it may have produced in recent years what Polanyi called a "double movement." Broader questions of political economy infuse how we think about the emerging geographies of US smart growth, a syncretic and normative planning doctrine for (re) organizing metropolitan space associated with sustainable land use and urban development. Smart growth does not explain itself.

In this chapter, I have suggested that geographers, planners, and urbanists interested in questions of urban sustainability differ in their interpretations of "the spaces that smart growth makes." They mobilize different traditions of political economy and attendant theories of urbanization. Key scholars have attempted, in my view, to address Phil Cooke's (1983, p. 9) still-relevant argument more than a generation ago that theories of planning (such as smart growth) should not be

separated from wider theories of the socio-spatial development process. As a generalization, geographers have tended to be more critical of smart growth space; planners discernably more positive if still circumspect. Nonetheless, many scholars have explored in various ways, “how planning shapes urban form, the political and economic forces constraining planning, and the distributional effects of planning decisions” (Fainstein, 2005, p. 122).

Although I am generally sympathetic with many of the critical-geographical arguments about smart growth as inchoate urban space, I am also concerned, once again, to “look at space both through but also beyond neoliberal frameworks” (op cit.). In particular, I wonder if it might be time to occasion “new descriptions and explanations of smart growth” (op cit.), wherein we draw on/in pluralist conversations. In what now follows, I attempt to move both with and beyond the neoliberal framework per se, focusing on the central neo-Weberian concept of “intercurrence” that is borrowed and also adapted from the field of American Political Development (APD).

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Urban Sustainability through Smart Growth
Intercurrence, Planning, and Geographies of Regional
Development across Greater Seattle

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