

# Introduction

## URBAN POLITICS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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In bringing the volume together, we engaged in a vibrant dialogue with contributors and other colleagues. We held several conference panels on the book – notably at the 2006 and 2007 Urban Affairs Association annual meetings and the British Political Studies Association annual meeting in 2006. Colleagues at these events posed important questions to us as editors. What does it mean to study theories of urban politics? Specifically, is there anything distinctive about *urban* theory: is it merely general theory adapted to scale; or is there something distinctive about the urban such that urban theories are not generalisable to a broader canvas? Or since, as Richard Stren illustrates in this volume (see Chapter 10), half of the world's population now inhabits urban spaces (see also Davis, 2006), is the study of the urban increasingly synonymous with the study of society at large? On a second dimension, it was suggested that we needed to think about the relationship between theory and practice in the field of urban politics. Does urban politics constitute the necessary fusion of theory and practice? If so, practice of what kind, and whose practice? That these searching questions were posed is itself an indication of the good health of the discipline. As editors, it was incumbent upon us to provide some direction to our contributors on how to address these issues. In very different ways, it is clear that all were able to meet the challenge. Here, we flesh out our thoughts as they evolved over the past couple of years.

Perhaps the most interesting question posed to us was 'what do we mean by theories of urban politics?' To begin with 'theory', the first key term in the volume title, we asked authors to engage empirical (or explanatory) theories in their respective subject areas rather than explicitly normative ones. Such guidance was, of course, given with the recognition of the impossibility of value-free social science, so we take as given the idea that empirical theory will be infused with normative influences and do not try to force a strict separation. Empirical theory seeks to explain observed phenomena, usually by establishing a number of conceptually linked and generalisable causal relationships about how some factors affect (or cause) phenomena to occur. Most of the (urban political) theories or theoretical propositions collected in this volume fit this general notion of empirical theory.

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Such theories are, however, highly diverse, varying along several key dimensions. Some maintain a high degree of abstraction from direct observation, while others closely ground the abstract in the concrete and empirical. Some proceed largely inductively, building from empirical observation to hypotheses, while others are more deductive in nature, deriving hypotheses logically from an initial set of (non-observable) axioms. Theories in the volume also differ in their explanatory scope. Some seek to account for wide swaths of urban political outcomes, while others, focusing on more isolated urban phenomena, better fit the model of what Merton (1949) called theories of the 'middle range'. Perhaps the sharpest and clearest illustration of this theoretical diversity comes with the Marxism – regime theory comparison (see Chapters 3 and 4). Marxism employs considerable abstraction, deduces hypothesis from axioms about the nature of capitalism, and purports to explain much of the urban condition (and society at large). Urban regime theory, in contrast, focuses on the concrete existence of specific local governing coalitions, generates hypotheses rooted in empirical observation of such coalitions, and offers an explanation only for how local political arrangements mediate larger-order forces rather than for those forces themselves.

Concerning the second term in the title, 'urban', we suggested to the contributors that theory may be specialised where it makes distinctive conceptual generalisations about the character of *urban* politics; about, for example, the distinctive character of urban institutions like urban regimes. Or, it may draw on and adapt political theory at large to help us better understand urban political phenomena. And, there are grey areas. For example, urban regime theory, probably the most influential approach in the field since the late 1980s, owes many intellectual debts and is thoroughly cosmopolitan. In his extensive body of work (see Orr and Johnson, 2008), Clarence Stone credits many influences; from the political classics of the community power debate and neopluralism through to the sociologists Max Weber, Philip Abrams and Charles Tilly, who clarified his thinking respectively on social stratification, the nature of structure and agency and what he sees as the loose connections between the economic, political and ideational spheres. At the same time, it is arguable that there is a fundamentally 'urban' quality to regime theory. In Chapter 1, Peter John argues that a key feature of urban space is the 'propinquity' of political actors, a term which

denotes the closeness of the urban space where actors interact frequently and tend to be small in number. The urban is politics in miniature and this creates a particular kind of political system rather than a mirror image of other levels. ...

The particularity to which regime theory points is the form of coalition arising from the need to mobilise governing resources at the urban scale. Krasner (1983: 2) defined international regime politics as 'sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge ...'. This definition could be applied at the urban scale. The differences are partly methodological in that we can more easily study regime formation,

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maintenance and collapse close up; and partly analytical in that urban regime theory makes specific propositions about the development of urban governing regimes. It purports to explain why regimes are rare and difficult to mobilise, the conditions in which they are likely to emerge, how power is pre-empted and governing agendas constructed by actors with divergent but congruent interests. Thus, it purports to explain from the bottom-up why governing coalitions are likely, but not certain, to be biased against the lower classes. Each proposition is grounded in broader social science traditions, but at the same time hinges on conditions pertaining at the urban scale.

Peter John again helps us when we think about the distinction between the urban and the non-urban. Propinquity is a particular characteristic of the urban space, which does not usually apply at other scales of governing or when comparing the urban with the rural. In many parts of the US, Russia, Canada or China the antonym 'remoteness' is more apposite than 'propinquity'. Yet, as John asks, '[i]s not rural life highly urbanised in many respects?' For example, since the 1970s China has pursued a policy of 'rural industrialization' (Liang et al., 2002). Alongside inexorable urbanisation, this policy is imperative for the sustenance of ever growing mega-cities. Urbanisation, then, refers not only to the growth of cities, particularly in the developing world, but also the organisation of social life. It is an ongoing feature of contemporary capitalism affecting both cities and the countryside in equal measure. In this interpretation, the urbanisation of the rural has been occurring at least since the beginnings of the enclosure movement in England in the fifteenth century, which later gathered unstoppable momentum. It became a grotesque feature of so-called socialism in the USSR, where the forced collectivisation of agriculture effectively proletarianised the rural population. Seen this way, the urban is both form and process. And, as Kataoka argues in Chapter 5, following Lefebvre, it is also a matter of identity, disposition, psychology, culture and lifestyle.

Admittedly, we risk concept stretching in characterising the urban so expansively. Nevertheless, we believe that it is possible to assert convincingly that society is increasingly urbanised and at the same time delimit the concept. We do not claim that the urban encompasses every dimension of human experience. Nationalism, supra-national political institutions, parties, religious identities and the rise of social movements and environmentalism come to mind as features which, if they are at least part-constituted in the contemporary urban experience, are certainly not reducible to it. With that qualification, we suggest that to study the urban is, in many ways, to study the motor of contemporary human development.

'Politics' is the third key term in the title of the book. The question 'what is politics' is itself sufficiently contentious to have spawned a substantial literature. A recent second edition of the book of the same title, edited by Leftwich (2004), provides an excellent overview of the key debates. One important question addressed by the book concerns the scope of politics, both as discipline and practice. Thus, is politics about the institutions of government, or more recently, governance? Can any debate in any context, public or private, about what a person or group ought to do, and how, be considered an instance of politics? Is politics a universal feature of

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all human societies, or is it bookended historically; for example, by the rise and eventual fall of class societies? Is politics essentially the same thing now as it has been throughout history? Perhaps of greatest interest for our purposes is what it means to talk about a discipline of urban politics as different from, say, sociology or economics? Such a question could easily lead to a lengthy discourse – indeed another book – on the historical conditions in which disciplinary silos evolved, their merits and limitations. For us, simply, politics is what our contributors have made of it. Thus, it is about the study of government, institutions and public engagement in dialogue and partnership with, or against, government. It is about the dynamic relationships between peoples, conflictual or otherwise. The volume shows that the field of urban politics cannot do other than address questions of livelihood and reproduction, space and migration and the web of relationships between state, market and citizen. Thus, inevitably, it transgresses other disciplines. Centrally, of course, urban politics is and always has been about power; its genesis, its acquisition, its forms and its uses.

Another question posed to us concerned the relationship between theory and practice in urban politics. On a broad canvas, this question is about the orientation of the discipline toward social questions and the role of urban scholars as practitioners and activists. Inspired by the urban movements and crises of the late 1960s, the Council of University Institutes for Urban Affairs was formed in Boston in 1969, succeeded by the Urban Affairs Association in 1981. The UAA is very clear that the urban field is both academic and professional, the Association welcoming faculty, students and professionals alike to its conferences and offering a platform to all. In similar vein, the European Urban Research Association seeks to 'bridge the gap between academic, professional and policy interests, inform public debate and improve the quality of urban policy'.<sup>1</sup> In addition, while urban scholarship encompasses a plurality of political perspectives, it is also well known for its commitment to social justice. The mission of urban studies, then, is to engage in a critical dialogue with public policy and intervene widely in public discourse. There are, of course, very different ways of fulfilling this injunction; from researching and writing about practice, to engaging in practice as participant-observers; as policy makers, dissidents and activists.

All the contributors to this volume can credibly claim to have engaged with practice in one or more of the senses described above. As this is a book about theories, however, they were charged with demonstrating how theory characterises and explains empirical events. We asked them to explore the main theoretical claims and controversies in their designated area and ascertain how far these theories improved our understanding of urban political life – and thus, by implication, our capacity to engage effectively with it. They were asked to evaluate the strengths and limitations of the theories in question and explore how they might be developed to better explain and/or characterise the phenomena in question. *Theories of Urban Politics* addresses the relationship between theory and practice in this specific sense but we also hope that the book will find a wide readership beyond the faculty and influence debates, discussions and activities in the public arena.

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### Design and structure

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Our objective was to produce a collection encapsulating the state of the discipline and pointing to contemporary and future research challenges. While this is a second edition, it is also a comprehensive rewrite. The current volume includes a mix of new contributors and contributors to the first edition. Previous contributors were invited to prepare new chapters on a different topic, thus ensuring that where chapters from the first edition have been retained, they have passed to a new author with a new perspective. Readers will notice that some chapters from the first edition have disappeared altogether, while others remain in a different form or are more or less completely new. The editors are responsible for the cut, which hangs on our judgement about the state of the discipline today and the challenges it faces. For example, regulation theory is now subsumed into the chapter on Marxism, because it has declined in influence since 1995. Pluralism and elite theory are integrated into the community power debate; not because they are less important, but because we had to recognise claims from newer approaches. On the other hand, chapters on urban social movements and leadership are retained intact because both themes have the same, or greater, prominence than in 1995. Themes rising up the agenda, in our judgement, include globalisation and urbanisation and postmodernism. In addition, we decided that overview chapters would be appropriate in opening and closing the volume. We asked Peter John to begin by explaining why it is important and rewarding to study urban politics, and Clarence Stone to conclude by outlining the key research questions confronting urban scholars. All contributors consider cross-national issues. Anglo-American issues feature strongly in most chapters, but many delve into broader literatures. Thus, we believe that the volume has global reach, pointing to challenges that will occupy scholars the world over in years to come. Inevitably, there is overlap between some of the contributions; for example between community power and regime theory and Marxism and postmodernism. However, where overlap occurs, we do not see it as duplication; rather, we believe it casts an interesting light on different interpretations and styles.

Whereas the first edition of *Theories of Urban Politics* comprised 14 chapters, the second edition has 17. In a volume of around the same length, we have inevitably sacrificed depth for breadth. However, we believe the result bears us out, offering a wide ranging examination of theories, controversies and challenges but in sufficient depth for a robust evaluation of the relevant perspectives. In different ways, every chapter covers three specific issues: explication and critique of the dominant theoretical approaches, the application of theoretical approaches in conceptualising and researching the empirical world, and areas for future theoretical development and research. The exceptions are John's opening chapter and Stone's conclusion, where the authors were given more of a free hand.

The core of the book builds around three classic issues in the study of urban politics – Who wields urban political power, the nature of urban governance, and how urban citizens both affect and are affected by these dynamics of power and governance. Apart from the first and the last, the chapters are organised under these three headings: power, governance and citizens.

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### Part I: Prologue

In Chapter 1, Peter John explores the reasons why new and established scholars should consider studying urban politics. He sets the scene for the rest of the volume by reflecting on the unique characteristics of urban politics; the rich literatures on power on one hand, the reach of the urban concept on the other. John offers a particularly insightful explanation of the value of urban research. Urban spaces create propinquity and as such are more amenable to research than, say, national governments. They are also very numerous with hundreds of cities in any one country and thousands across the globe. Numerosity allows for large N comparisons which would be very difficult or impossible at the national scale. Moreover, large N international comparisons are easier at the urban scale, allowing urbanists to explore the patterns and diversity of political life across the globe (see also Sellers, 2005). John concludes that provided we are not downcast by neersayers, or tainted with an exaggerated sense of our importance, future scholars would do well to follow the path trodden by the many of the great political scientists of the twentieth century who took urban politics as their starting point.

### Part II: Power

A preponderance of urban political theory has been devoted to understanding the nature of urban power: its production, distribution, exercise and impact in its various faces. In Chapter 2, Alan Harding discusses some of the greats – Dahl, Hunter, Polsby and Lindblom – in the context of the community power debate. Harding takes us on a journey through the history of the debate, arguing that the work of community power scholars was formative of urban politics as an independent field of study. He demonstrates why the debate, much derided by commentators like Dowding (1996), remains relevant today. Harding argues that the influence of community power extends in scope well beyond the literature commonly branded as such; notably (or notoriously) the elitism–pluralism debate. Certainly, the concern with power at the urban scale, which was central then remains central now. Harding charts the influence of community power on the later scholarship of the 1960s, 70s and 80s through the works of Lindblom, Peterson and Stone. The influence of community power upon the latter is discussed by Karen Mossberger in Chapter 3. Harding concludes that the challenge for the next generation of community power studies is cross-national; to develop common theoretical and methodological tools, which enable us to overcome the ethnocentrism, of which approaches like regime theory have been accused.

Chapter 3 tackles the subject of urban regime analysis, which, as Mossberger points out, has been one of the most prevalent ways to study urban politics for over two decades.<sup>2</sup> Mossberger explains that one appeal of urban regime theory has been its ability resolve the community power debates chronicled by Harding in Chapter two. Regime theory portrays political power at the urban scale as characterised by neither pluralist fluidity and openness nor elite domination and control, while incorporating

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both political and economic influences on city politics. Mossberger focuses her discussion of regime analysis on the work of Clarence Stone, whose version, which he developed most thoroughly in his historical study of Atlanta, has been most frequently applied in urban research. Regime theory, she notes, incorporates the possibility of variation in regime agendas, and much of Stone's work and that of other regime theorists categorises various regime types. Another major thrust of work attempts to apply, with varying results, the urban regime concept to non-US contexts. She points out, however, that scholars engaged in comparative efforts have increasingly eschewed urban regimes in favour of broader but related notions of 'governance' (see Part III). Mossberger concludes by asking whether these conceptual and theoretical developments sound the death knell for regime analysis. Her answer is a qualified no. Regime analysis will continue to be important to urban political research, she predicts, but it may be seen as only one manner in which governing arrangements can be conceptualised, especially in a comparative context.

In Chapter two, Harding explains that by the 1970s, community power studies had fallen out of favour, with (neo-) Marxist and neo-Weberian approaches increasingly dominant. Mike Geddes charts the development of Marxist urban scholarship from this period in Chapter 4. Geddes contends that despite the reverses experienced by the left over the past 20 years, Marxism remains highly relevant for understanding contemporary urban capitalism and the tasks facing those, notably in South America, who would resist it. He begins by exploring the period around the 1970s during which Marxist scholarship was at its most influential; particularly in the diverse works of Castells, Harvey and Lefebvre. He charts the subsequent development of Marxist approaches, including the 'postmodern Marxism' of Soja and influential criticisms; from scholars of postmodernist and socialist-feminist persuasions as well as those, like Storper, who suggest that Marxism is incapable of translating meta theory to the micro level of analysis. Yet, he argues, if Marxism faces daunting challenges it still has much to contribute to understanding the trajectory and modes of resistance to contemporary neoliberalism. At the same time, it must prove itself equal to the challenges of the day; not least urbanisation and climate change.

Concluding Part 2, Serena Kataoka takes up some of the literatures explored by Geddes, notably the work of Lefebvre and Castells in exploring 'posty' urban politics (such as postmodernism, post-Marxism, post-structuralism). She sees the work of both prominent theorists as having strong post-structuralist affections, and therefore finds it surprising that post-structuralism has been largely forgotten in urban political theory, even within so-called 'posty' maps of the field. Post-structuralism, she notes, consists of an interpretative practice, termed critique, which seeks to delve deeper into the complexities of the familiar and reveal how structures act not merely as explanations but rather as the very means by which the familiar becomes so. Kataoka urges theorists to experiment with this post-structural critique, setting aside radical visions and ethics that, as Walter Benjamin's *flaneurie* and the idea *governmentality* traced by Michel Foucault help us understand, only obscure the possibilities of urban politics and emergent political rationalities. Since the urban is not determined by any single structure, she finds the study of the urban to be inherently

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post-structural. Therefore her aim is to (re)introduce post-structuralism into urban political theory, and toward that end she offers four ways urban theorists can begin experimenting with post-structural critique.

### Part III: Governance

The notion of 'governance' is very broad, but centres loosely on the multiplicity and growing diversity of interests and actors in changing governing arenas. Part III examines the diverse theoretical challenges posed by developments in contemporary urban governance, enhancing our understanding of institutionalisation, regionalisation and re-scaling, leadership, the reform of the urban bureaucracy and development and urbanisation. Chapter 6, *The New Institutionalism*, is one of the new contributions in this edition. New institutionalism has become highly influential over the past decade, an example of theory from the wider field of political science prospering in studies of urban governance. In Chapter 6, Vivien Lowndes, a leading exponent, explains the emergence and subsequent development of neo-institutionalism in urban studies. Contrary to the inductive-descriptive approach of traditional institutional studies, the new institutionalism begins with theoretical propositions about the way institutions work, focusing in particular on the norms and rules governing political behaviour in given settings. Institutionalism itself is a broad church, encompassing structure focused, cultural and rational choice explanations, which leads some to question whether it can reasonably be characterised as a single school of thought. But, Lowndes argues that the unifying proposition in institutional theory is the claim that institutions are the central component of political life and institutionalism (of whatever kind) the most efficacious means of explaining it. She deploys three mini-case studies to demonstrate the versatility of institutional explanation in understanding political behaviour, the complexity of contemporary governance and the relationship between continuity and change at the urban scale. Challenges facing institutional theorists include the alleged incompatibility between its radically different understandings and the consequent methodological criticism that such a broad umbrella approach explains everything and nothing. How, then, can we know the influence of institutions when we see it? Nevertheless, Lowndes concludes that the approach offers significant insights into the nature of political constraint and the differentiation of localities, and thus can offer fruitful advice to urban policy makers about the opportunities and constraints on change at the local scale.

Since the first edition of *Theories of Urban Politics* was conceived over 15 years ago, interest in the possibilities and limits of urban governance at the regional scale has exploded. The urban politics literature from the mid-1990s on is replete with analyses of regional-level governance. As Hank Savitch and Ronald Vogel demonstrate in Chapter 7, however, regionalism has not been so much discovered as rediscovered, since such thinking (and its critique) dates back several decades. Scholars thus dubbed its reemergence in the 1990s 'new' regionalism, contrasting it with older forms. The chief contrast between old and new regionalism, Savitch and Vogel point out, is that the old regionalism sought to create formal *governments* on the metropolitan level to



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eliminate fragmentation, whereas the new regionalism stresses more informal modes of metropolitan *governance* to manage such fragmentation. Persistent criticism of these regionalist visions has come from the public choice school. As Savitch and Vogel explain, this school embraces rather than condemns local governmental fragmentation, rejecting metropolitanism in favor of polycentrism. Most recently, a fourth theoretical approach to regionalism has emerged. This approach, which Savitch and Vogel following others label *rescaling* or *reterritorialisation*, develops a more comprehensive and sophisticated understanding of new regionalism, linking it with larger dynamics of state restructuring and global capitalism. Concluding, Savitch and Vogel find this last approach, exemplified by Neil Brenner's (2004) framing of 'new state spaces', especially exciting, seeing in it the potential to thrust urban politics back to the very heart of political science.

The starting point for Stephen Greasley and Gerry Stoker in their discussion of urban political leadership in Chapter 8 is the chapter on leadership by Clarence Stone in the first edition. Stone cautioned that adopting the Mayoral model would not necessarily result in strong local leadership. Despite this caution, there has been a trend towards the elected mayoral system or other models of executive leadership. Moreover, the challenge of political leadership remains high on the agenda of policy makers, politicians and public managers. Thus, the overview and critique offered by Greasley and Stoker is particularly timely, notably in the UK. They assess recent literatures on leadership, focusing on the relationship between three key factors: contextual influences on the performance of leaders, the characteristics of individual leaders and the distribution of decision making powers between leaders and others in the local political system. The core theoretical concern for leadership studies is understanding the impact of individual actions in a complex social system. With respect to urban political leadership, this question manifests in the form of whether strong leader models make a positive difference in enhancing local democracy. Greasley and Stoker offer a qualified 'yes' to this question, suggesting that the immediate research challenge is to ascertain whether strong leader models of urban governance are better able to put forward a clear agenda and mobilise governing resources than others.

In Chapter 9, Anne Mette Kjaer explores the use of governance theory in studying changes to the urban bureaucracy. Governance theory, most closely associated with the work of Rod Rhodes (1997) in the UK, is concerned with the proliferation of governance by network, caused by the trend towards what Kjaer calls 'authority migration': the hollowing out of the state and diffusion of powers upwards to supranational institutions like the EU and downwards to the urban scale and outwards to the business, community and voluntary sectors. Thus, the task of the urban bureaucracy is coordinative; mobilising governing resources fragmented by these centrifugal trends. Hence, governance theory shares common cause with the concerns of leadership, institutional and regime theorists as well as a concern with the mobilisation of community and social capital. Kjaer draws attention to the many criticisms of governance theory, particularly the claim that network governance is in fact tightly controlled by national governments and the dispersal of state power upwards, downwards and outwards radically overstated. Hence, one of the weaknesses in governance theory is that it does not

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adequately theorise the relationship between hierarchy market and network modes of social coordination. Kjaer concludes by challenging governance theorists to think further about the conditions in which networks might function without hierarchical interventions, the implications of conflict for the management of networks and the relative prevalence of success and failure in particular modes of governance.

Nearly all extant urban political theory has been developed and applied in the context of the Western, or developed, world. The rapid urbanisation of the developing world, driven in part by powerful forces of globalisation, demanded attention be paid in this edition to urban issues in the non-Western context. We have hence dedicated Chapter 10, authored by Richard Stren, to this subject; to recognise the importance of this phenomenon and attempt to better understand it. Stren's survey of the literature reveals that few theoretical treatments of developing world urbanisation incorporate the analysis of the political in any sustained way. One key reason for this lacuna, he points out, is that international organisations concerned with urban problems in the developing world, such as the World Bank and UN-HABITAT, have failed to support work with politics – especially local politics – as its object of study. Stren predicts, however, that the growing recognition of the importance of developing world cities will spur a parallel growth in scholarly research focused on political questions. In particular, the intensity of the social and environmental problems plaguing such cities will demand a better understanding of, in his words, 'the complex politics of urban development of 80 percent of the world's population'.

#### Part IV: Citizens

Part IV is concerned more directly with the role of the urban citizen in politics. The dynamics of urban power covered in Part II and the institutions and processes of urban governance covered in Part III both deeply affect this citizenry. Urban citizens, as agents, experience lives not only shaped by the forces of power and governance; they also often engage in struggles to reshape these forces. To better understand the role played by citizens in urban politics, the first three chapters in this section focus on their differential experiences by class, race and gender. The remaining two chapters examine social capital and urban social movements as key elements in the struggle of the urban citizenry to create and recreate its political milieu.

Leading off this section, Mara Sidney in Chapter 11 addresses the vexing problem of poor people's marginalisation in urban politics. She identifies and explicates three broad theoretical approaches used to understand this marginalisation and how it might be ameliorated, usefully labeled 'politics first', 'economics first', and a 'problem-centred' approach associated with the European concept of social exclusion. In this explication Sidney uncovers numerous cross-cutting themes and points of difference among the three. Nonprofits and community-based organisations are central to each approach's vision of poverty amelioration, but the approaches vary as to whether they emphasise policy or process changes. The three approaches also engage the role of ideas and political discourse and the possibilities and limits of the local scale. Sidney closes by identifying four directions for further theory development. Better

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theory is needed concerning variation across policy sectors and the role of conflict in securing benefits for the disadvantaged. She similarly suggests more theoretic attention be paid to differences among various sub-groups of the poor, while making a compelling case for scholars analysing poverty in cities to develop and apply constructivist and interpretive theories and methods.

J. Phillip Thompson next engages the related issue of race in Chapter 12. Urban political theory, Thompson argues, has failed, at its peril, to put the theorisation of race at its center. As a result, many of the field's most significant and enduring research problems remain unsolved. Three fundamental questions regarding race remain especially neglected. The first concerns the radical basis of society; in particular, whether white racism produces a fundamental racial divide, rivaling that of class, in social life and politics. The second asks why poor blacks are so economically marginalised decades after the civil rights movement in America. The third asks whether, in light of the black experience, state power should be conceptualised as genuinely democratic or fundamentally repressive. Thompson suggests that critical appraisals of the role of race in cities not only sharpen empirical inquiry; such appraisals also introduce a host of analytic and strategic questions wholly different from conventional urban political studies. The powerful backdrop to these efforts to better theorise race in U.S urban politics is the high level of immigration that is rapidly altering its racial landscape. Thompson next explains the political significance of this changing landscape and contrasts the American experience with that in Britain. Finally, Thompson compellingly calls for re-imagining current notions of political community and citizenship, so that minority advancement is not pitted against that of whites and immigrant advancement is not pitted against that of the struggling native-born. The former, he points out, is the unfinished civil rights revolution; the latter, the unfinished human rights revolution.

In Chapter 13 Judith Garber highlights the major contributions of gender theories to urban studies in four areas. These are, first, the development of an interdisciplinary vocabulary and conceptual framework for talking about the influences of gender on urban politics; secondly, contesting and correcting the dominant Marxist and postmodern theories about urban political economy; thirdly, understanding 'gender' expansively, so as to include sexuality and, indeed, various identities and sources of power/oppression; and fourthly, an examination of the ways in which urban space – in its physical and metaphorical guises – simultaneously construct each other. The theories she discusses provide empirically grounded as well as abstract models of cities that can both guide our thinking about the functioning (and dysfunctioning) of familiar gender relations and help us envision new configurations of citizenship, family, work, and other gender-based dimensions of urbanity.

The concept of social capital is another mainstream political science concept that has become very influential at the urban scale, when it was barely known in the field in 1995. In Chapter 14, Helen Sullivan undertakes a critical examination of the concept and its application in urban politics. Social capital refers to the generation of shared values and norms, 'lubricated through trust, in generating and maintaining social order'. Sullivan contrasts different approaches to the study of social capital; from Bourdieu, who saw it as something we possess which explains how the class

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order is maintained, to Putnam who saw it as something desirable, but often lacking and therefore to be acquired. Putnam has become very influential in urban politics, where the acquisition of social capital is seen by many as aiding the revitalisation of cities, communities and the institutions of governance; particularly in the network era. Social capital theory has become particularly influential in studies of community organising and development, where the relative merits of acquiring 'bonding' and 'bridging' capital are much debated. Sullivan suggests that the concept, while problematic, has merits and has generated important insights into urban politics. However, important challenges remain. How do we conceptualise the development of 'good' and 'bad' social capital and situate social capital analysis in a broader analysis of urban power dynamics? In what circumstances can social capital of what kind aid in democratic renewal and empowerment? And what empirical evidence can we bring to bear on the question of how social capital aids well-being? Such questions are likely to be salient in the urban field for years to come.

Chapter 15 on urban social movements by Gordana Rabrenovic anchors the Citizens section of the book. Given the subject's significance to many areas of urban politics, it is one of the few carried over intact from the first edition. Rabrenovic begins by nodding, as several in this volume have, to our more globalised and urbanised world. These trajectories continue to augment the importance of urban social movements, as urban issues will continue to dominate the agenda of social movement organisations around the world. She begins, as many students of urban social movements do, with the groundbreaking work of Castells from the 1970s. Rabrenovic notes, however, that over time the concept of an urban social movement broadened to include other, less radical examples of grassroots organising and political mobilisation. She next explains three prominent theoretical approaches drawn upon to understand social-movement dynamics – resource mobilisation theory, political opportunity structure theory and framing theory. These approaches are illustrated with examples of social movements combating homelessness, highway construction and hate against immigrants. Rabrenovic concludes by pointing to numerous lacunae within the urban social movement literature. She also underscores the importance of globalisation to our understanding of contemporary urban social movements, both as a source of the urban ills against which movements mobilise and as a force linking localised mobilisations with broader transnational ones.

### Part V: Challenges

Finally, Clarence Stone addresses some of the challenges lying ahead for urban political theory and practice. Stone urges scholars to resist the pervasive political pessimism and fatalism to which much urban scholarship has too often capitulated. What is needed, he contends, is 'fresh thinking' about urban politics and its possibilities. In particular, Stone offers a nine-step research program to refashion a new urban scholarship explicitly built around the goal of redesigning local institutions to better realise democratic ideals. Just as Harold Lasswell famously sought to formulate 'a policy science of democracy' (Lasswell, 1951), Stone seeks to formulate what might

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be understood as an 'urban political theory of democracy'. He exhorts scholars to take up the great international challenge of how to build just cities, in which citizens wish and are able to engage in political discourse.

We hope and believe that this exciting collection will provide ample inspiration for those embarking upon, or continuing their careers in, the study and practice of urban politics. Evidently, there will be gaps that some readers will regret. Frantic change seems to be a pervasive feature in the urban political landscape and perhaps the concept of urban political change itself merits further theorisation and comparative analysis. Continuous change also means that by 2020, a third edition of *Theories of Urban Politics* may well be required. It is foolhardy to predict what such a volume might contain. But, at the methodological level, urban political power is likely to remain at the centre of controversy, as it is in politics at large. Intra and cross-national comparative urban studies are likely to proliferate and should be encouraged (Sellers, 2005). Urban politics will continue to transgress and engage in productive dialogue with other disciplines; particularly economics, sociology and geography. Urbanisation will almost certainly be an even more urgent concern by 2020. The political agency of the vast, and growing, urban poor needs to be centre stage in political analysis, as does the concomitant problem of what social justice might mean for them, and others, in a world rapidly polarising along the lines of space, wealth, health and power. On a truly global scale, questions of climate change and environmental justice are likely to be of even greater import than they are now. Urban politics 'as if nature mattered' (Carter, 2004) is almost certain to demand greater attention than it has received here. At the institutional level, Kjaer shows how over the last 20 years, network theories have become pervasive, alongside network modes of governance. In 2020 we will almost certainly need to reflect on the evolution of network theories and network governance. Will regime theory still lead the field? Will the spread of collaborative, cross-sectoral governance continue? Or, will the fashion for network forms of political organisation and analysis pass as quickly as it emerged centre-stage in the late 1980s? But, in order to navigate change, it is certain that future studies of urban politics will have to maintain continuity in one important respect: the critical, reflective and reflexive disposition that characterises so much scholarship in the field, amply demonstrated in this volume. In this respect, we hope that *Theories of Urban Politics* offers readers a stimulating tour of both the great theoretical challenges of today and the means by which they may be fruitfully studied far into the future.

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**Notes**

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- 1 See [http://www.udel.edu/uaa/about\\_uaa/index.html](http://www.udel.edu/uaa/about_uaa/index.html) and <http://www.eura.org/pdfcharter2006.pdf>. Both accessed 25 January 2008.
- 2 A prevalence is unmistakably apparent in this volume. Urban regime theory makes an appearance in the coverage of multiple subjects, including community power, poverty, social movements, leadership, race, bureaucracy and new institutionalism.

## ••• Introduction •••

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