



Municipal statecraft: Revisiting the geographies of the entrepreneurial city

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Abstract

The entrepreneurial city is no longer (only) a growth machine: recession and austerity, new forms of financialization, and diverse experiments in urban policy have diluted local elites' focus on growth. But entrepreneurial urban governance remains remarkably resilient despite its inability to deliver growth. Indeed, in many cities entrepreneurial tactics – e.g. municipal speculation, place branding, and inter-urban competition – are simply standard operating procedure. Recent scholarship on entrepreneurial urban governance demonstrates a need for re-theorizing the assumed interdependence between entrepreneurial practices and growth politics. This calls into question the nature of the 'entrepreneurs' of the entrepreneurial city, that is, the nature of municipal states. They increasingly (i) apply entrepreneurial practices to multiple governance agendas in parallel to growth, (ii) evaluate their portfolios in both speculative and more broadly experimental ways, and (iii) challenge top-down narratives about inter-urban competition through inter-urban diplomacy. Each of these characteristics shows the disruptive potential of interventionist forms of municipal statecraft.

Keywords

entrepreneurial city, growth coalition, growth machine, local state, urban regime

I Introduction

The entrepreneurial city is no longer (only) a growth machine. Perhaps it never was, although scholarship on the topic has historically highlighted the interdependence between the political practices of entrepreneurial governance and the political logics employed in pursuing local economic growth (see reviews in Harvey, 1989; Hall and Hubbard, 1996; Ward and Jonas, 2004; MacLeod, 2011). More recently, ongoing states of crisis and austerity (Davidson and Ward, 2014; Peck, 2014), new forms of financialization (Weber, 2010; Fields, 2015), and diverse experiments in urban policy (Karvonen and Van Heur, 2014; Roy and Ong, 2011) have diluted local elites' focus on growth. There is

a growing sense that growth politics have lost salience as urban leaders shift their efforts towards more diffuse forms of 'policy boosterism' (McCann, 2013), 'growth machine diaspora' (Surborg et al., 2008: 342), 'de-growth machines' (Schindler, 2016), 'diplomatic entrepreneurship' (Acuto, 2013a: 490), 'networked entrepreneurialism' (Lauer mann, 2014: 2639), or 'co-produced entrepreneurialism' (McFarlane, 2012: 2797).

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Yet the ‘entrepreneurial’ concept remains useful: practices of entrepreneurialism remain resilient even as they are applied to a broader range of urban governance agendas. These practices are – per Harvey’s (1989) classic framework – public-private partnerships, municipal real estate speculation, and a political economy of place rather than territory (i.e. ‘the speculative construction of place rather than amelioration of conditions within a particular territory’; 1989: 8). Common characteristics across entrepreneurial cities are public sector risk-taking in market ventures (often as a partner in public-private ventures), the use of regulatory power to protect municipal investments (often related to real estate or to support locally-significant industries), and a distinct state spatial logic which emphasizes targeted intervention into particular places rather than distributing resources across municipal territory (e.g. business improvement districts, tax increment financing zones, neighborhood regeneration projects).

There is a need to re-theorize the role of the ‘entrepreneurs’ in entrepreneurial cities: municipal governments. Underlying the assumed interdependence between entrepreneurial practice and growth logic is a particular understanding of local government and its (lack of) agency. Consensus was that municipalities – especially when engaged in neoliberal growth politics – operated on political logics that were nested within an exogenous political economy. Municipalities were said to react to various waves of roll out/roll back (Peck and Tickell, 2002) or roll-with-it (Keil, 2009) neoliberalization – they acted entrepreneurially in order to fill fiscal and regulatory voids left by national rescaling and decentralization (Brenner, 2004; Cox, 2009), and they customized entrepreneurial strategies to fit ever-evolving neoliberal logics (Brenner et al., 2010). For example, while municipal real estate speculation involves active risk-taking, the logic which motivates the risk-taking is more passive. In the traditional growth machine

city such speculation is typically a way to divert national economic gains into the city (Molotch, 1976: 320–1) or to respond to national austerity (Harvey, 1989: 4–5).

Recent scholarship on entrepreneurial cities has presented a more dynamic interpretation of municipal statecraft. While the approaches reviewed here vary significantly, all suggest a more interventionist role for municipal state institutions:

- (i) They draw on entrepreneurial toolkits to pursue a more diverse portfolio of investments and agendas, in parallel to pursuing growth. Just as governments use ‘neoliberalism as mobile technology’ (Ong, 2007) for pragmatic reasons which diverge from neoliberal ideologies, the practices of entrepreneurial urban governance are deployed in ways that diverge from – and even contradict – the imperatives of growth politics. This signals to multiple forms of state intervention within municipal territory ranging from a downscaling of developmental state practices into the city (Parnell and Pieterse, 2010; Shin and Kim, 2015) to the upscaling of entrepreneurial tools for global agendas (Acuto, 2013a; Beal and Pinson, 2014; McCann, 2013).
- (ii) Entrepreneurial urbanism is not only speculative but more broadly experimental. This allows a shift away from economic frameworks by suggesting a broader set of governmental ambitions. While growth politics are evaluated based on return on investment, experimental forms of entrepreneurial urbanism are evaluated with a broader (and often self-defined) range of metrics associated with policy agendas like smart (Gibbs et al., 2013), resilient (Raco and Street, 2012), self-sufficient (March and Ribera-Fumaz, 2014), or world-class (Goldman, 2011) cities.

- (iii) Entrepreneurial cities navigate geographies of inter-urban competition *and* cooperation. While they were historically discussed as territories subject to top-down pressures of neoliberal political economy, the picture is complicated by diplomatic forms of municipal statecraft. Contemporary entrepreneurial cities are extrospective (McCann, 2013), diplomatic (Barber, 2013), and even geopolitical (Jonas, 2013) in their approach to inter-urban relations, as urban politics are negotiated through ‘topological’ rather than territorial political geographies (Allen and Cochrane, 2010).

In the discussion that follows, I review debates over entrepreneurial cities in human geography and urban studies. I then examine the geographic implications of interventionist municipal statecraft, asking how and why: (i) the expansion of entrepreneurial practices to multiple governance agendas (in parallel to growth) reflects the formation of extra-territorial political coalitions, (ii) the use of experimental action challenges top-down narratives of global markets disciplining local politics, and (iii) inter-urban diplomacy is complicating narratives about the geographic zero-sum game of inter-urban competition. I subsequently argue for the continuing relevance of the ‘entrepreneurial’ concept in urban governance by showing how contemporary entrepreneurial cities have disrupted urban politics by diversifying their portfolios in potentially contradictory ways.

II Entrepreneurial practices and growth logics

Comparing the first and second editions of Richard Florida’s *The Rise of the Creative Class* reveals a surprising shift. The first edition (Florida, 2004) was required reading for many

leaders of post-industrial cities, a classic ‘how to’ guide for entrepreneurial governments pursuing economic growth. In it Florida cast municipal governments as laggards, needing to reposition themselves in a post-Fordist economy where:

Access to talented and creative people is to modern business what access to coal and iron ore was to steelmaking. It determines where companies will choose to locate and grow, and this in turn changes the ways cities must compete. (p. 6)

In this sense, ‘regional economic growth is driven by the locational choices of creative people’ (2004: 223) and the most effective urban policy is one of luring in some of this mobile human capital. Florida’s critics adopted a similar narrative of exogenous neoliberal structuration, critiquing his normative commitments but largely concurring with the spatial model. Peck (2005: 760), for instance, notes that ‘the creative credo is only modestly disruptive of neoliberal models of development’. Indeed ‘there is no challenge to the extant “order” of market-oriented flexibility’ which disciplines cities through inter-urban competition. But the second edition of the book (Florida, 2012) retreats from these very same growth models. While cities are said to be generators of economic growth, ‘[o]ur cities are not just economic engines; they are the key to our health and wellbeing’ (p. 394). They are ‘fulcrums of social and political innovation’ because, unlike gridlocked nation-states, ‘cities and community governments actually work’ (p. 395).

In the first edition municipalities can only hope to skim some growth off the broader economy; in the second edition they are leading the economy in a direct, interventionist manner. And this second edition has plenty of intellectual company: we are told that ‘mayors rule the world’ (Barber, 2013), and that a ‘great inversion’ (Ehrenhalt, 2012) of center and suburb has facilitated ‘the triumph of the city’ (Glaeser, 2011) (cf. a critique in Brenner and Schmid,

2014). This illustrative example signals a broader shift in the geographies of the entrepreneurial city – and indeed the authors above are only invoked as an introductory example. Originally conceptualized as a territorially bounded growth machine, it has been re-conceptualized as home terrain for an extraterritorial and globally ambitious municipal state. Scholars have developed more dynamic theorizations of the municipal state – from reading it as under siege by the neoliberal economy to reading it as *the* vanguard agent of global governance. This latter theorization is at the core of my argument. I am not critiquing past theorizations of the entrepreneurial city; in their own contexts, they skillfully interpreted the political economic stresses endured by local governments and powerfully described a sense of disempowerment among urban polities. Rather, I am suggesting that entrepreneurial cities have expanded their agendas beyond local economic growth and contemporary scholars have begun to explore the resulting geographies of urban governance.

I Entrepreneurial cities

The entrepreneurial city framework emerged as a means to describe the localization of state spatial policy as part of neoliberal reforms; it is closely correlated to conversations on growth coalitions and urban regime theory. It refers to a contradictory hybrid of weak-state intervention in local economies through the ‘proactive promotion of local economic development by local government in alliance with other private sector agencies’ (Hall and Hubbard, 1998: 4). The framework highlighted the changing role of government officials and other local elites in neoliberal cities, as municipal governments responded to a climate of austerity by seeking out their own funding sources. This shift also reflected an exogenous shock to urban political regimes: cities became entrepreneurial in reaction to a restructuring of the Keynesian welfare state, and in an effort to fill the political

economic void created by neoliberalization (Brenner, 2004; Jessop, 2002; MacLeod and Goodwin, 1999; Sbragia, 1996).

This marked a shift away from ‘urban managerialism’ (Williams, 1982) associated with national spatial Keynesianism. Managerialism applied a Weberian bureaucratic logic to urban government (Pinch, 2006: 118–20), emphasizing the potential for urban managers to effectively manage urban collective consumption (Dunleavy, 1986) and redistribute resources across municipal territory (Williams, 1982). Entrepreneurialism in contrast implied a more decentralized geography of urban governance and significantly more autonomy for local leaders, as national states cut funding and decentralized policymaking authority. This reflected

some broader macro-economic shift in the form and style of capitalist development since the 1970s... the shift in urban politics and the turn to entrepreneurialism has had an important facilitative role in the transition from locationally rather rigid Fordist production systems backed by Keynesian state welfarism to a much more geographically open and market based form of flexible accumulation. (Harvey, 1989: 12)

This ‘flexible accumulation’ is based on growth in local economies, but a contradiction emerges from the inter-urban competition it necessitates. In his classic essay on growth machine politics, Molotch (1976: 320) is careful to point out that local leaders pursue growth in order to manage employment rates, but ‘local growth does not, of course, make jobs: it distributes jobs’. Local governments gained autonomy to take on risk through speculative investments and public-private partnerships, but the impetus for risk-taking is imposed by the restructuring of national state space and the transnational spread of pro-market political economy. Urban leaders engaged in a ‘new urban politics’ of inter-urban competition (Cox, 1993), real estate speculation (Harvey, 1990), and a shift from managerial government to

speculative *governance* (Hall and Hubbard, 1996) in order to navigate deindustrialization. Simultaneously, the national state used cities as an outlet for neoliberal spatial policy. This ‘rescaling the state’ (Jessop, 2002) used decentralization to target neoliberal interventions into particular cities. In these ‘state spatial strategies’ (Brenner, 2004), the national state provides the neoliberalization logic while local governments respond by innovating and speculating:

urban policy – broadly defined to encompass all state activities oriented towards the regulation of capitalist urbanization – has become an essential political mechanism through which a profound institutional and geographical transformation of national states has been occurring . . . transformations of urban policy have figured crucially within a fundamental reworking of national statehood. (Brenner, 2004: 2)

From the perspective of local governments, then, entrepreneurial practices were a specialized form of urban regime politics (Sbragia, 1996; Stone, 1993; Ward, 1996), with regime legitimacy tied to the logics of economic growth rather than to Keynesian/Fordist logics of collective consumption (Cox, 1993; Merrifield, 2014). Scholarship on the entrepreneurial city has long been criticized for assuming interdependence between entrepreneurialism and growth. Early critics noted that entrepreneurial city analysts ‘have baldly stated that . . . entrepreneurial strategies generally favour development and growth over the redistribution of wealth and opportunity’ (Hall and Hubbard, 1996: 167) and

have forcibly argued that the emergence of a new sphere of urban politics is intimately connected to a transition to new regimes of capital accumulation . . . [but] a lack of empirical evidence makes it difficult to state with any certainty how entrepreneurial modes of governance succeed in mediating local capital-labour relations in a manner conducive to such regimes. (1996: 53–4)

Subsequent critiques examined the causal drivers behind entrepreneurialism, noting that growth politics and state entrepreneurialism are correlated but the former does not necessarily cause the latter. Commenting on state rescaling debates and emerging forms of city-region entrepreneurialism, for instance, Ward and Jonas (2004: 2125) noted that

the causal emphasis tends to be placed on subnational territorial reorganisation in relation to a formerly cohesive national state. Here, the rescaling of state functions and the assembling of institutions around city-regions (or metropolitan areas) is seen as a deliberate orchestration on the part of the national state (or local, regional, and national actors selectively empowered by the state) as it seeks to adjust its territoriality to the changing geographical imperatives of late capitalism.

Other critics emphasized the empirical complexities of entrepreneurial cities, noting that the correlation between entrepreneurialism and growth becomes less clear when looking to cities outside the original historical and geographic context. Entrepreneurial cities were originally observed in North America and Western Europe, especially in the United States and United Kingdom. But the framework was subsequently extended – often with warnings about the differences between this original context and new cases – to explain the occurrence of similar governance practices in regions like Eastern Europe (Golubchikov, 2010; Young and Kaczmarek, 2008), Western Europe (Brenner, 2004; Swyngedouw et al., 2002), East Asia (Jessop and Sum, 2000; Wu and Zhang, 2007; Xu and Yeh, 2005), Latin America (Portes and Roberts, 2005; Crossa, 2009), and South Asia (Datta, 2015; Goldman, 2011; McFarlane, 2012). Cities in this broader geography have adopted elements of entrepreneurial practice like state-led real estate speculation (Goldman, 2011; Moser et al., 2015), enclosure of public space or services through public-private

revenue seeking ventures (Crossa, 2009; Zhang, 2010), and the imitation of policy or architectural ‘models’ as a strategy for inter-urban competition (Datta, 2015; Wu and Zhang, 2007).

This broader geography differs from the original Anglo-American context based primarily on political economic circumstances of municipal institutions (e.g. their legal classification across national contexts) and the degree of neoliberalization experienced in a city (especially across post-socialist and developmental state contexts). This expansion is often an appropriation of tactics, not an imitation of strategy. Writing on entrepreneurialism in Latin American cities, Crossa (2009: 45) suggests it is perhaps more contradictory, less reactionary, and more reliant on the decision-making agency of local governments:

although the literature on EUG [entrepreneurial urban governance] has been useful for understanding the changing role of the local state and its ties to the private sector, especially through growth coalitions, it falls short in one key respect: how urban governments engage in multiple and often incoherent urban development strategies that, in many cases, do not coincide with the neoliberal agenda of the entrepreneurial city.

In particular, an empirical preference for stories about growth becomes less convincing. For example, writing on urban regeneration initiatives in eastern Europe, Bernt (2009: 756) argues that

to an overwhelming degree, empirical studies have explicitly or implicitly dealt with prospering regions, ‘going for growth’ strategies, or at least with events (such as the development of sports stadiums and entertainment complexes, publicly subsidized downtown gentrification, and waterfront development) where ‘big money’ is made.

These geographic critiques require a caveat to my analysis. The entrepreneurial city thesis developed in a particular geographic context,

and my arguments are not intended to be applied universally. Labels like ‘entrepreneurial’ have geographically varying degrees of relevance, but there is nonetheless value in analyzing shared characteristics associated with these labels in multiple geographies. If we are interested in theorizing urban processes then ‘it is difficult to imagine how comparison can be anything other than an inevitable and important site of consideration’ (McFarlane, 2010: 726). Indeed ‘any act of theorizing the urban from somewhere is by necessity a comparative gesture’ (Robinson, 2016: 5), and such a gesture need not be colonizing. Rather, it can provide a powerful analytic for unsettling narratives about a concept’s evolution.

Along these lines my assessment of entrepreneurial urban governance can be considered a ‘genetic’ comparative tactic, ‘tracing the strongly interconnected genesis of often repeated urban phenomena’ (Robinson, 2016: 6) like the deployment of entrepreneurial practices by municipal governments. The goal is not to classify cities as entrepreneurial or not in binary fashion, but to interpret why and to what extent city governments use practices commonly associated with entrepreneurial urban governance. Entrepreneurial urbanism varies by degrees: some cities – like the classic Anglo-American case studies – make full use of the entrepreneurial city toolkit while others are more selective in which entrepreneurial practices they deploy. This also recognizes that entrepreneurial practices diffuse and evolve in an iterative manner. They move across cities through a broader neoliberalization of policy, the enrollment of municipalities in international markets, and through policy mobilities across cities. But the occurrence of entrepreneurialism outside the original geographic context is not necessarily evidence of diffusion because not all entrepreneurial cities imitate each other. Genetic comparison is a way to trace the origin and diffusion of the concept, and also the ways in which entrepreneurial practices developed

organically as other municipal entrepreneurs innovated and competed for resources.

2 Entrepreneurial municipalities

The ‘entrepreneur’ of the entrepreneurial city is a municipal government. The ‘municipal’ label is a widely used legal designation; across national systems it can describe political institutions ranging from autonomous city-states to departments nested inside a national government. The ‘entrepreneurial’ label remains a useful concept for describing the motivations of municipal governments. Entrepreneurial motivations are closer to Schumpeterian notions of state entrepreneurship, which fuse governing agendas with profit motivations (Mazzucato, 2015; Schumpeter, 1947). For entrepreneurial cities, this means investing public funds with simultaneous objectives of achieving public policy goals and expanding public revenue.

There is a tendency to interpret entrepreneurial urbanism as a reactionary politics in which municipalities respond to exogenous logics: the shift to post-Fordist regimes of accumulation (Harvey, 1990), national decentralization initiatives (Jessop, 2002), variegated neoliberalisms applied to cities (Brenner et al., 2010), or the disciplining effects of imitating models from elsewhere (Peck and Theodore, 2010). This is seen, for instance, in Harvey’s (1989: 12) early writing on inter-urban competition among entrepreneurial cities. He suggests that:

to the degree that inter-urban competition becomes more potent, it will almost certainly operate as an ‘external coercive power’ over individual cities to bring them closer into line with the discipline and logic of capitalist development. It may even force repetitive and serial reproduction of certain patterns of development (such as the serial reproduction of ‘world trade centers’ or of new cultural and entertainment centers, of waterfront development, of post-modern shopping malls, and the like).

Historically, municipalities were said to be disempowered through successive waves of ‘roll-back’ or ‘roll-out’ (Peck and Tickell, 2002) neoliberalization. More recently, they were said to have thoroughly internalized neoliberal imperatives, adopting a form of ‘roll-with-it neoliberalization’ wherein ‘political and economic actors have increasingly lost a sense of externality, of alternatives (good or bad) and have mostly accepted the “governmentality” of the neoliberal formation as the basis for their actions’ (Keil, 2009: 232). In this way entrepreneurial cities innovate forms of ‘variegated neoliberalization’, but the impetus for variegation is often a reaction to a crisis or other exogenous shock. Such variegation is understood as a ‘systematic production of geoinstitutional differentiation’ (Brenner et al., 2010: 184) in which the differentiation is accomplished through cities but the logics which are being differentiated derive externally to cities:

entrepreneurial urban and regional policies may attract inward investment, but generally fail to sustain economic development or income growth while undermining territorial cohesion. These, in effect, are spiraling – crisis-induced, crisis-managing and crisis-inducing – processes of regulatory transformation. By way of successive, crisis-riven and often profoundly dysfunctional rounds of regulatory restructuring, the ideological creed, regulatory practices, political mechanisms and institutional geographies of neoliberalization have been repeatedly reconstituted and remade. (2010: 210)

Thus municipalities might harness the ‘adaptive capacity inherent in neoliberalism’ in innovative ways, but that adaptive capacity emerges because ‘[a]ctually existing neoliberalism is flexible enough to influence policy in other ways than through the mantra of free markets: it thrives on presenting existing socioeconomic conditions as failing and neoliberalism as the best solution’ (Aalbers, 2013: 1089).

In this framing the entrepreneurial city is innovative, but innovation is circumscribed: it takes place in reaction to ideological imperatives that originate geographically and institutionally outside of the city. Some forms of ‘roll-out’ neoliberalism can involve proactive municipal action ranging from paternalism to revanchism, but that proactiveness is often understood as a response to exogenous imperatives. This is a narrative which has been critiqued as part of what Bunnell (2015: 1989) describes as ‘neoliberalisation from above’. Discussing scholarship on the policy mobilities of neoliberal and entrepreneurial models, he suggests that

the dominant picture remains one in which, at any given moment, cities undergo neoliberalisation in relation to imagined antecedent success stories, and what is mobilised is almost invariably ‘neoliberal’, even if it transforms, mutates and hybridises along the way. (2015: 1989)

Since neoliberal agendas are so malleable – and their interpretation in urban politics literature is so loose – a label like ‘entrepreneurial’ retains value. It offers a more precise description of a type of urban governance practice that is correlated but not identical to neoliberalism.

An increasing divergence between entrepreneurial practices and growth logics requires discussion beyond economic explanations of municipal statecraft. Empirically, there is a need to understand entrepreneurial cities’ diversified portfolios as more than just a fracturing of a neoliberal project, for instance recognizing the impact of ‘growth agendas without growth’ in which ‘[s]tates are once again taking a direct, interventionist role in shaping social and economic affairs’ (Raco, 2012: 163) by diversifying their interventions. They open the possibility for ‘theorizing the agency of the local state as potentially developmental, even progressive’ (Parnell and Robinson, 2012: 594), with a few caveats. The pursuit of alternative ideological agendas using entrepreneurial

tactics does not necessarily redistribute urban political power, as cities are often still directed by urban elites (Barber, 2013; Smith et al., 2014). And there is no guarantee that municipal governments will use their new-found agency to govern wisely or fairly, as there are substantial legal and institutional barriers to integrating public participation with speculative governance (Goldman, 2011; Raco, 2013; Van Der Veen and Korthals Altes, 2012).

Conceptually, there is a need to understand the resilience of entrepreneurial practices as an indicator of municipal state agency. By separating (entrepreneurial) practices from (growth) logics, recent scholarship on the entrepreneurial city has described municipal strategies that operate in parallel with, rather than as derivations of, urban growth politics. In particular, recognizing the multiple agencies of the local state has allowed these scholars to assess how political logics are developed endogenously, as municipalities seek to define and pursue alternative development trajectories. The divergence between the practices of urban entrepreneurialism and the logics of growth is a disruptive force in cities. While post-growth entrepreneurialism reflects a broader shift towards post-political urbanism (MacLeod, 2011; Swyngedouw, 2009), this should not be written off as simply a return to technocracy and managerialism, as it holds the potential for disruption within governance (Davidson and Iveson, 2015).

III Municipal statecraft

Contemporary entrepreneurial cities deploy well-established entrepreneurial toolkits (i.e. public-private investment ventures, municipal real estate speculation, place branding, inter-urban competition). But these tools are used to pursue multiple political logics in parallel with growth, in ways that are not only speculative in an economic sense but more broadly experimental, and which create a

political space for both inter-urban competition and diplomacy. This suggests a more interventionist role for municipalities in development: not only responding to exogenous imperatives (e.g. in response to inter-urban competition or revenue gaps left by national decentralization) but seeking to define governance logics endogenously. These trends have been explored in recent scholarship by mapping three forms of statecraft in entrepreneurial cities.

I Diversified portfolios

First, entrepreneurial city governments have diversified their investment and policy portfolios. These state entrepreneurs articulate visions for urban development including, but not limited to, growth politics. In some ways, this marks a return to classical urban regime politics, which can accommodate a range of political agendas and which rely on an interventionist local state. Urban regime politics are those which preserve regime legitimacy by providing economic incentives to build an electoral base and maintain coalitions (see reviews in Stone, 1993; MacLeod and Jones, 2011; Ward, 1996). Delivering growth is one of the most common forms of regime maintenance, although recent scholarship has shown how regime elites increasingly pursue agendas beyond growth. Beal and Pinson (2014: 305), for instance, have described this diversification of agendas as a shift from a ‘politics logic’ of conventional coalition-building to a ‘policy logic’ by which ‘urban leaders are more and more inclined to turn away from consolidating their power base through daily grassroots political work, the maintenance of clientelist networks or the distribution of public goods . . . [and] rely more on their ability to deliver urban policies to gain legitimacy’.

Diversification provides a rationale for state intervention. A well-established literature has explored the intervention of national developmental states into the city. They often use

practices like real estate speculation or place branding to implement developmental programs (Parnell and Pieterse, 2010; Saito, 2003; Shin and Kim, 2015) and leverage the city as a platform to articulate and experiment with geopolitical ambitions (Olds and Yeung, 2004; Koch, 2013; Jonas, 2013). But closer attention to the multiple agencies of local states reveals the diversity of stakeholders and agendas involved in municipal intervention. While municipalities may aspire to intervene in development, they are also smaller institutions which may lack the capacity of national states. Thus municipal interventionism is necessarily a coalition-based endeavor. Such forms of entrepreneurialism are ‘co-produced’ through state-civil society coalitions, and

there is often an important excess to the confines of entrepreneurialism: a set of solidarities, commitments to collective improvement and forms of mutual support that cannot be subsumed into market and financial processes. While it would be too far reaching and hopeful to call this excess post-capitalist . . . [it] holds out the possibility of more mutual and collective forms of urban development. (McFarlane, 2012: 2801)

Growth is a dominant reference point, but these diverse policy logics operate in parallel with rather than derivative of growth politics. This reflects a broader expansion of the geographies of urban politics: diversification becomes possible and necessary as urban politics moves from a territorially bounded endeavor to one that incorporates extraterritorial concerns and stakeholders (McCann, 2013; Allen and Cochrane, 2010). This is a form of urban politics that is globally ambitious, but with ambition rooted in local development concerns.

To provide one specific example, diversification of entrepreneurial city portfolios is seen in planning for ‘mega-events’ like the Olympics. Mega-events have long been considered part of the entrepreneurial city toolkit, a ‘production and consumption of spectacles’ (Harvey,

1989: 13) tied to the sports industry's role as 'an extraordinary mechanism for instilling a spirit of civic jingoism regarding the "progress" of the locality' (Molotch, 1976: 315). Mega-events were often explicitly linked to growth coalition politics, for instance through their role in place branding and urban competitiveness strategy (Gold and Gold, 2008) or by 'catalyzing' land investment (Essex and Chalkley, 1998) when global media attention was leveraged to promote growth coalition projects (Andranovich et al., 2001).

But recent mega-events have been linked to a much broader range of objectives in parallel to local economic growth, promising agendas like urban regeneration, sustainable design, world class place branding, or smart city management (Lauermann, 2014). While many of these buzzwords are correlated to growth politics, they only partially overlap. For instance, writing on the interplay of neoliberal growth politics and sustainability politics in Sydney, Davidson (2013: 658–9) argues that these agendas 'exist in an uneasy co-dependent relationship, with neoliberal goals always dominant and sustainability goals moving in and out of prominence according to context and circumstance'. Diversification often means reaching beyond municipal territory to garner support and financing for local agendas: mega-event planners evolved from a local growth machine to a 'growth machine diaspora' whose 'function is to balance the traditional political power of locally-based growth coalitions with the need to respond to extra-territorial actors and coalitions' (Surborg et al., 2008: 342). A diversified entrepreneurial city plans mega-events on multiple political scales through the lens of local concerns (Müller, 2014), such that 'rather than being some free-floating (corporate) festival of sport... [events] also have to be understood through a connected politics of development that locates them in place, and always has quite distinct and distinctive

localized features' (Allen and Cochrane, 2014: 1613).

2 Experimentation vs speculation

Second, entrepreneurial cities increasingly rely on experimentation rather than speculation. This means moving towards a variety of metrics for evaluating entrepreneurial 'success' and 'failure' in terms other than local economic growth. Historically, narratives of the entrepreneurial city tended to view speculation as a revenue-generating opportunity. Entrepreneurial projects were typically evaluated based on a return on investment, with return measured in the terms of growth: Does municipal real estate speculation grow the tax base? Is inter-urban competition adding jobs to the local economy? Can a place brand be leveraged to increase tourism revenue?

If speculation is the mechanism for conventional entrepreneurial urbanism (entrepreneurs by definition take on risks in search of profit), then policy experiments are a basic mechanism for entrepreneurialism beyond growth politics. Policy experiments differ from traditional forms of speculation because they do not require an economic return on investment: they are evaluated with a broader and often self-defined set of metrics. Successive rounds of experimentation are used when municipal entrepreneurs innovate and creatively destruct. In this way the entrepreneurial city functions as a sort of 'urban laboratory' (Karvonen and Van Heur, 2014), as municipal states experiment with various governance practices: for example, experimenting with smart (Gibbs et al., 2013), resilient (Evans, 2011), self-sufficient (March and Ribera-Fumaz, 2014), or world-class (Goldman, 2011) models for urban design, management, or planning. Some of this experimentation is growth-focused as cities import models from elsewhere in order to facilitate efficiency and competitiveness (McCann and Ward, 2011; Clarke, 2012). But

as municipalities branch out into non-economic experimentation like climate change science (Acuto, 2013b; Bulkeley and Castán Broto, 2013), there is also a focus on using local experiments to design and export policy to other cities (Lauermann, 2014; McCann, 2013).

This is not to say that experimentation has replaced speculation. Experimentation reflects a diversified portfolio of agendas that encompasses growth and other objectives *in parallel*, rather than growth with other objectives *subsumed under* its discursive banner:

The burgeoning realisation that ‘business as usual’ will no longer do has prompted a search for alternative ways to organise, plan, manage and live in cities. Experimentation promises a way to do this... initiating innovation activities to trial alternative future visions of local development, social cohesion, environmental protection, creative sector expansion, policy evolution, service delivery, infrastructure provision, academic research and more. (Evans et al., 2016: 1)

Multiple entrepreneurial agendas can be coordinated in tandem with growth politics, but are not necessarily evaluated based on return on investment criteria which characterize municipal speculation. While ‘there is an assumption that by producing knowledge “in the real world” and “for the real world”, urban laboratories can catalyze rapid technical and economic transformation’ (2014: 415), experiments’ success and failure are defined based on their ability to deliver a more diverse set of objectives. This challenges top-down geographical narratives about entrepreneurial cities. Speculation implies discipline through risk as local governments respond to exogenous imperatives set by the invisible hand of inter-urban markets (for capital, talent, jobs, etc.). But experimental objectives are often self-defined by municipal governments when setting up the parameters of an experiment, and can be quite fluid: the criteria for evaluating success and failure evolve through experimentation, since

urban policy learning ‘depends on the (re)construction of functional systems that coordinate different domains’ (McFarlane, 2011: 363).

To provide one specific example, the shift from speculation to experimentation is seen in American municipalities’ evolving approach to debt. Growth politics involve a speculative form of debt financing, often as a ‘politics of circumvention’ (Sbragia, 1996: 9) in which ‘general-purpose governments (that is, city governments) created innovatively financed, non-elected, special-purpose governments in order to dilute [national] state power and the power of local electorates’ (p. 4). City governments as investors dabbled in ‘municipal capitalism’ (Chapin, 2002), such that ‘just as flexible accumulation looks more to finance capital than the Fordist firm did, entrepreneurial states rely more heavily on the markets in public debt and private equities in real estate than did the Keynesian state’ (Weber, 2002: 536).

All of this required a particular type of municipal debtor: a responsible borrower offering low-risk bonds backed by the promise of future growth in government revenue. But recent trends in municipal investing have undermined this role. New instruments like tax-increment financing and bond derivatives allowed municipal governments to ‘financialize’ their operations by ‘devising new ways to monetize their own assets and create new securities... turn [ing] income streams from their existing and future tax bases, infrastructure, and pension funds into fungible securities and help[ing] build secondary markets for their exchange’ (Weber, 2010: 270). Likewise, municipal governments have increasingly turned to bankruptcy to discharge debt (Peck, 2014), a practice that wreaks havoc in traditional municipal bond markets but which has allowed a form of ‘bottom-up austerity’ (Davidson and Kutz, 2015) by which political factions take ‘advantage of their opportunity to realign the city’s politics, despite no clear eligibility for bankruptcy’ (p. 1457). An entrepreneurial city

that is willing to experiment with debt challenges geographic narratives that posit global financial markets disciplining cities. Instead, these cities also shape market geographies because municipalities

were not just arbitrarily selected for investment as a result of a game played far above their heads; their local government representatives played a critical role in constructing the conditions under which capital could be channeled into locally embedded assets . . . some municipalities were able to steer capital toward what was formerly a backwater of financial markets. (Weber, 2010: 270)

3 *Inter-urban diplomacy*

Third, analysts highlight how contemporary entrepreneurial cities engage in both inter-urban competition and inter-urban diplomacy. This is not to say that contemporary entrepreneurialism is more global than earlier forms. Rather, these scholars signal to municipal outreach strategies that build on entrepreneurial practices like ranking/benchmarking, participating in competitions for symbolic status or hosting events, or providing incentives for industries to relocate. While the historical turn toward competition was a reaction to political economic crisis (e.g. deindustrialization) and restructuring of state spatiality (e.g. the decentralization of Keynesian welfare states), there is a growing interest in the agencies that emerge within municipal state institutions as local elites use entrepreneurial practices to pursue transnational agendas.

The move toward municipal diplomacy is seen in recent conversations around boosterism and inter-urban relations. Recalling Harvey, inter-urban competition was an important mechanism for disciplining cities: ‘an “external coercive power” over individual cities to bring them closer into line with the discipline and logic of capitalist development’ (1989: 12). Those relations are also an arena for growth

politics, because cities compete against each other for growth. And this link to growth politics provided a reactionary dimension to early entrepreneurial city politics: municipal states engaged in ‘the proactive promotion of local economic development’ (Hall and Hubbard, 1998: 4), but that proactiveness was a beggarthy-neighbor form of competition. Indeed, Molotch’s (1976: 320) growth machine framework made clear that growth politics is a geographic zero-sum game:

the key ideological prop for the growth machine, especially in terms of sustaining support from the working-class majority, is the claim that growth ‘makes jobs’ . . . But local growth does not, of course, make jobs: it distributes jobs . . . All that a locality can do is to attempt to guarantee that a certain proportion of newly created jobs will be in the locality in question.

More recent scholarship on policy mobilities and the entrepreneurial city has examined why cities develop extra-territorial relations: in order to compete more effectively, but also to build inter-urban cooperation in a more diplomatic fashion. The inter-urban movement of policy expertise signals a mutual dependence among entrepreneurial cities, which ‘is a quite fundamental recalibration of the relationship between the neoliberal capitalist system and the urban condition . . . One city and its experiences appear to be increasingly implicated or entangled in another’ (Ward, 2011: 732). This entanglement is based on circulating entrepreneurial practices and models like business improvement districts (Ward, 2006), enterprise zones (Gotham, 2014), urban regeneration models (González, 2011), creative economy initiatives (Ponzini and Rossi, 2010), or cultural spectacles and mega-events (Müller, 2014). The practices are similar: municipalities engage in local boosterism and place branding, using their position in various imagined urban hierarchies to lure private sector investors. But the logic behind policy imitation is more strategic:

engaging and disengaging from inter-urban circuits, thereby creating space for more cooperative forms of translocal networking.

This approach explores the contradictions between inter-urban diplomacy and inter-urban competition. Closer empirical and historical readings have called into question the links between inter-urban competition, growth politics, and entrepreneurialism. One representative interpretation concludes, for example, that extra-territorial outreach of the entrepreneurial city involves ‘an inherently politicized process of policy mutation whereby a complex interplay of bureaucratic interests and political forces were determinant . . . a battlefield of contention in which different state agencies and state officials struggled to design and implement the program’ (Gotham, 2014: 1184). That is, the geographies of urban entrepreneurialism were messier than previously thought. As entrepreneurial practices have spread globally they have been used as a sort of ‘mobile technology’ (Ong, 2007) divorced from its ideological origins in growth politics and deployed toward developmental and post-colonial agendas (Roy and Ong, 2011; Goldman, 2011). Others have gone further still, emphasizing ways in which urban politics might move beyond zero-sum inter-urban competition. They highlight the more diverse ways in which municipal states build local political legitimacy through translocal cooperation. City elites in particular engage in various forms of city-to-city diplomacy (Acuto, 2013a; Barber, 2013): ‘extrospective’ boosterism (McCann, 2013) which allows a form of ‘networked entrepreneurialism’ (Lauermann, 2014) by which entrepreneurial practices are conducted through a lens of inter-urban cooperation.

To provide one specific example, the turn toward inter-urban diplomacy is seen in a proliferation of city-to-city policy networks. These are transnational organizations with municipal governments as members and which advocate for urban-level solutions to global problems

(see reviews in Acuto, 2013b; Barber, 2013; Bontenbal and Van Lindert, 2009). These institutions act as lobbyists and knowledge brokers on themes like climate policy (*C40 Climate Leadership Group, Covenant of Mayors*), sustainability (*International Council of Local Environmental Initiatives, United Cities and Local Governments*), or urban planning best practices (*City Protocol Society, World Association of Major Metropolises*). These types of inter-municipal organizations have existed for decades (e.g. municipal leagues or mayors’ associations), but they have become increasingly global in recent years (Acuto, 2013b). Municipalities’ global outreach has often been interpreted as a form of competition: Knowledge sharing occurs when municipalities hire consultants or send representatives to learn from elsewhere through ‘policy tourism’ (Ward, 2011), but extra-local learning is often an ‘oligarchic diffusion’ of knowledge brokered by elite stakeholders to improve a city’s competitive position (Smith et al., 2014), and municipal entrepreneurs have slowly expanded the scope of their inter-urban relations (Ponzini and Rossi, 2010; Beal and Pinson, 2014). Using these city-to-city networks expands a ‘growing transnational agency [that] has rested mainly on self-appointment by mayors to the central stage of global policymaking’ (Acuto, 2013a: 485). In an era when traditional growth and regime politics are not enough to maintain voter loyalty, ‘these leaders tend to favour the mobilization of electoral support through the production of “indivisible goods” such as major urban projects or festivals and relying less on traditional electioneering methods and party campaigning’ (Beal and Pinson, 2014: 305). The result is an urban-scale geopolitics which is reshaping the ‘neoliberal competition state’ through ‘ongoing attempts (and, at times, failures) to re-couple economic development with the collective provision of social and physical infrastructure’ (Jonas, 2013: 294). These practices change the geographic scope of urban politics from

boosterish concerns to a more broadly diplomatic function: a means for municipal states to build transnational relations while simultaneously competing for resources.

To summarize, while the practices of entrepreneurial governance remain common, these practices are deployed towards an increasingly diverse range of agendas in parallel to local economic growth. My goal is not to critique previous scholarship for its reliance on neoliberal frameworks or its geographic origin in post-industrial cities of Western Europe and North America (although if it were, I would build from critiques by analysts like Bunnell [2015], Parnell and Robinson [2012], or Shin and Kim [2015]). Rather, my goal is reviving debate over entrepreneurial urbanism as the entrepreneurs – municipal governments – repurpose their investment portfolios and policy toolkits in new ways. Recent research demonstrates that entrepreneurial cities are diversifying their portfolios, speculating *and* experimenting, and engaging in inter-urban competition *and* diplomacy. It has also sought to re-theorize the agency of municipal state institutions, demonstrating the role of local elites and municipal officials in shaping new entrepreneurial agendas.

IV Disrupting urban governance

The replacements for growth politics require further analysis. A typical interpretation is to view them as an intensification of technocratic tendencies already latent in neoliberal urbanism. Most prominently, a growing literature on the post-political city describes an evolution from entrepreneurial to post-political governance, such that entrepreneurial policies and programs ‘have been presented by apologists and a benign media as the “commonsense” doxa and the only “sensible” or “responsible” mode of “good governance”’ (MacLeod, 2011: 2632). In this way, entrepreneurial agendas filter the places and institutions which have a voice in the political process.

These analysts suggest that a transition from entrepreneurial to post-political maintains the hegemony of growth while diversifying policy agendas. One interpretation is that entrepreneurial cities have simply adopted a more diverse vocabulary. ‘Post-growth’ agendas could be seen as discursive tools which provide an appearance of diversified governance but which ultimately fold back into growth politics. In this way, ‘vague concepts like the creative city, the sustainable city, the green city, the eco-city, the competitive city and the inclusive city replace the proper names of politics’ (Swyngedouw, 2009: 612). The proliferation of entrepreneurial labels (creative, smart, etc.) has allowed a depoliticizing form of technocracy by which diverse agendas are able to be re-articulated through the lens of growth. Thus, ‘there may indeed be scope for debate about which politics might help that city to become more competitive, more global, more sustainable, more secure, and so on . . . But challenging the underlying necessity and legitimacy of these visions is far more difficult’ (Davidson and Iveson, 2015: 546).

However, this conversation would be enhanced by examining the disruptive potential that emerges from municipal statecraft. In particular, there is a need to ‘re-consider the form and character of emerging [post-growth] state spatialities’ (Raco, 2012: 163) and for more ‘studies geared toward recognizing and examining the “messy actualities” of state programmes, in the sense of their internal and external contradictions and tensions’ (Fuller, 2013: 645). For example, sustainability planning might be understood as a green-washing of growth politics (While et al., 2004), but qualitatively distinct sustainability politics also emerge in parallel (Davidson, 2013). Smart city initiatives are undoubtedly entrepreneurial (Hollands, 2008), yet that entrepreneurialism is not a growth politics per se, but rather a form of corporate welfare promoted by technology firms and consultants (Söderström et al.,

2014). Entrepreneurial governance initiatives in the informal sector certainly include attempts at instilling a neoliberal ethos in low income communities, but these initiatives are also paired with a diverse set of state- or civil society-led developmental politics (Crossa, 2009; McFarlane, 2012).

While contention has always been possible in entrepreneurial cities, the potential for disruptive, paradigm-shifting conversations is less clear. Moving entrepreneurialism beyond growth politics does not in itself lead to more participatory urban politics. Nor is there anything inherently progressive about an entrepreneurial city that is diversified, experimental, and/or diplomatic. Diversifying entrepreneurial city agendas may disrupt the more economic forms of governance, but entrepreneurs by definition operate on political economic logics of profit and growth thereof. Experimental governance may appeal to a wider stakeholder group than traditional municipal speculation but nonetheless display elitist tendencies for the simple reason that '[i]t is very hard to say no to rich, powerful actors, particularly when their preferred policy appropriations are framed as privately financed, and thus publicly costless, experiments' (Smith et al., 2014: 24). And despite the diverse territorialities of contemporary urban politics (Allen and Cochrane, 2014; Jonas, 2013; Beal and Pinson, 2014) and recent praise for the pragmatic and participatory nature of city government (Barber, 2013; Florida, 2012; Glaeser, 2011), we cannot assume that municipal leaders like mayors are more adept at diplomacy and global governance than their nation-state counterparts.

However, these trends do signal a challenge to the hegemony of growth agendas within entrepreneurial cities. The breakdown of the relationship between entrepreneurial practices and growth logics reworks definitions of urban development, contesting what 'development' can mean and introducing alternative rationales for its pursuit. In this sense there remains a

pressing need to trace how alternative urban politics operate alongside the growth politics of the contemporary entrepreneurial city.

V Conclusion

The urban politics of the entrepreneurial city are evolving, as the practices of entrepreneurialism (e.g. municipal investing, speculation, inter-urban competition) are increasingly separated from the logics of growth politics (e.g. growth machines, growth coalitions, and urban regimes premised on growth). Entrepreneurial practices are applied to multiple governance agendas parallel to growth, evaluated based on return on investment and on a more diverse set of metrics, and are deployed in a more diplomatic manner by pursuing both competitive and cooperative inter-urban relationships. Each of these trends demonstrates multiple – and potentially contradictory – agencies within municipal statecraft, nuancing analysis of who the entrepreneurs are and why they act entrepreneurially. The divergence of practices and logics in entrepreneurial cities calls into question the role of neoliberal political economy in disciplining cities.

This evolution matters because entrepreneurial urban governance is widespread; while each city has a unique political history, it has been widely practiced in European and North American cities while individual elements have spread globally. Analysis of the entrepreneurs in the entrepreneurial city – municipal governments – remains an important task, especially as they seek influence in global debates and markets. Future research would do well to consider the disruptive urban politics which emerge within entrepreneurial states. First, there is a need to evaluate how entrepreneurial practices are subverted and what the impacts of that disruption entail. There is a need to nuance critiques of post-politics in entrepreneurial city and 'see the city as a space through which politics is staged, but one in which the stage is constantly being constructed and re-constructed'

(Davidson and Iveson, 2015: 558). For example, questions remain about the contradictions which emerge when entrepreneurial practices are repurposed or when growth politics is practiced alongside other urban political strategies.

Second, there is a need for detailed analysis of ‘actually existing’ (Brenner and Theodore, 2002) entrepreneurial cities as they evolve institutionally and spatially. There is a need for ‘thinking cities through elsewhere’ (Robinson, 2016) while carefully ‘recogniz[ing] both the territorial and the relational histories and geographies that are behind their production and (re)production’ (Ward, 2010: 480). This requires a particular type of comparison, which reads state entrepreneurialism through a spectrum of more and less entrepreneurial political systems. While the entrepreneurial framework is based historically on trends in Anglo-American cities, an analysis of municipal statecraft can certainly be informed by parallels and discontinuities with other modes of urban government.

Third, there is a need to evaluate the possibility of a ‘post-neoliberal analytical optic on contemporary urbanism (Parnell and Robinson, 2012: 594) and to theorize contemporary entrepreneurial urban governance as ‘more-than-neoliberalisation’ (Bunnell, 2015: 1992). Post-neoliberal entrepreneurialism would not necessarily move beyond growth politics; it means simply that entrepreneurial cities are engaged in parallel, diverging, and contradictory political agendas which cannot be described solely through a neoliberal analytic. There is a need to catalogue and compare the types of urban politics which a post-growth entrepreneurialism might be used to pursue.

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