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Contentious Urban Redevelopment: A Research Perspective

■ Most research in the sociology and politics of urban redevelopment is aimed at explaining patterns of decision making with regard to land use and investment in the built environment.[1] Who usually defines alternative plans for deteriorated neighborhoods or tracts of vacant land? Who typically decides which among the alternatives gets the required government support? These are questions about the "structures"—the laws, norms, or cultural assumptions—that shape common forms of local decision making. My goals are different. I seek to explain how political and economic structures are disrupted in episodes of public, collective struggle. Similarly, I seek to locate the processes within such episodes that constitute or produce their varying outcomes.

In my first case, community leaders challenged a redevelopment agenda in the East End neighborhood of Highland Park. After a long battle in the summer of 1949, the city conceded by accepting a land gift from the neighborhood in exchange for a promise not to locate a Civic Light Opera amphitheater in Highland Park. In the second case, which began a few months after the resolution in Highland Park, merchants and property owners in the Lower Triangle challenged a proposal to clear seventy parcels

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of mixed-use buildings in order to erect the Gateway Center office and apartment tower. The city moved ahead in spite of opposition and by summer 1950 demolition of the Lower Triangle was underway. Also in the summer of 1950, the third case began, with residents of St. Clair and Spring Hill–City View protesting a proposal to locate public housing projects in their working-class community. But the city, as well as the courts, dismissed the residents' claims, opening the door for public housing construction in St. Clair and Spring Hill–City View. Case 4, the final episode from the early postwar era, began in the Lower Hill District in 1958 when a group of parishioners challenged the imminent demolition of the St. Peter's Church. The church was one of the few structures remaining in a project that ultimately cleared 1,324 buildings from the Lower Hill. Protesters met with no success in preventing its demolition and by 1960 construction in the neighborhood was underway for an 18,000-seat civic arena. In case 5, neighborhood leaders and historical preservationists prompted a struggle that later included a wide array of claim makers against the demolition of 60 buildings and removal of 125 businesses. The outcome, to reiterate, was strikingly different from the previous four in terms of opportunities for challengers and other stakeholders to participate face-to-face in the planning of alternatives to the mayor's proposal.

The first step toward explaining each of the three outcomes—concessions from the governing coalition (case 1), collapse of the movement (cases 2–4), and strong democratic participation (case 5)—is to locate the actors in contentious urban redevelopment and to define the interests underlying their participation. The next step is to account for why redevelopment grows contentious, which depends upon a clear understanding of the structures and processes of routine urban decision making that tend to marginalize some stakeholders and thereby incite contentious forms of political participation. The final step in the study of urban contention is to discover the combinations and sequences of interaction that produce varying outcomes across contentious episodes.

Locating Actors in Urban Redevelopment

Sociologist Floyd Hunter was among the first and most celebrated researchers to attempt to identify participants in urban redevelopment and other local policy areas. In his study of decision makers in 1950s Atlanta, Hunter introduced the controversial term "power structure" to describe a network of top financiers and corporate executives capable of controlling the local policy agenda.[2] Hunter's main method of conceptualizing power structure was to ask a panel of fourteen highly knowledgeable people in community affairs to select the top ten leaders from each of four lists of leaders in business, government, the nonprofit sector, and social circles. Hunter found a remarkably high level of agreement on the panel as to who the top leaders were in the four fields, which strengthened the validity of the resulting list of forty community leaders.

Combining his "reputational" method with in-depth interviews of top leaders in the group of forty, Hunter was able to identify important aspects of local decision making in several policy areas. In the area of urban redevelopment he revealed a "closed" group of top leaders, mostly from the corporate business sector, which he called the "policymaking structure." Informally and in private, the policy-making structure moved many important issues onto the public agenda. The group then established committees of lower-level leaders to carry out the policies. For example, Hunter found that regarding Atlanta's controversial urban renewal program, nine top business leaders and four government and other professionals had "laid the groundwork for the program and determined its major outlines" before assembling a somewhat broader "official committee" for implementing it.[3]

Hunter's followers applied his methods to power studies of communities across the United States, most drawing conclusions similar to his about the politics of urban redevelopment.[4] Whether the issue was to initiate a federal urban renewal pro-

gram, finance a bond campaign for road construction, or create a district for business improvement, corporate business executives usually set the agenda, even if they organized leaders outside of business to carry out their plans. The "elite" view of community power advanced by Hunter and his followers presented a rather cynical image of urban democracy in the United States. Critics, however, rejected the methods of the elite theorists and their cynical portrait of democracy. Political scientist Nelson Polsby was perhaps the most persistent critic. He focused on problems related to Hunter's reputational method, arguing that it is impossible to determine who actually exercises influence over specific decisions by asking people who they believe has power. Just because business elites have reputations for power does not mean they will be united on all redevelopment issues or even have the time to examine them in sufficient depth to take a position.[5]

Polsby advocated the decision-making method developed by Edward Banfield and Robert Dahl in their studies of 1950s Chicago and New Haven, Connecticut, respectively.[6] Banfield and Dahl sought to measure actual rather than potential control over specific public issues by observing who initiated policy proposals that were ultimately implemented and who succeeded in vetoing proposals initiated by others. Decision-making studies, however, tended to complement the substantive claims of reputational scholars that important decisions in urban redevelopment were usually made by elites. Banfield depicted corporate business elites as prime movers in his case study of the hundred-acre Fort Dearborn urban renewal project, and Dahl showed that important decisions in New Haven's urban renewal were made by a unified group of professionals in government. Although redevelopment elites in New Haven were elected officials and political appointees, according to Dahl they behaved no differently than Hunter's corporate "power structure." The mayor, the development administrator, and the redevelopment authority director created an urban renewal proposal "in secrecy" and then "tested it for feasibility and acceptability" in the business community.[7] After securing corporate business support they created a half dozen citizen action committees to carry out different aspects of

the plan—a central business district, harbor development, housing, and the like.

What makes the decision-making method distinctive is its emphasis upon the limitations of elite power imposed by underlying community divisions. Dahl, Banfield, and their followers observed multiple political factions, rival coalitions, and other "lines of cleavage" in local communities.[8] Through systematic observation of actual decision-making events, these scholars sought to understand how elites attempted to control community decisions. In New Haven, for example, Mayor Lee and his staff created their "bold and daring" renewal plan in secret because it gave them time to generate support from business leaders before releasing it to the public. They viewed business support as a crucial condition for earning the trust of other community stakeholders, thereby minimizing the likelihood of community conflict. Elites in New Haven could not simply have their way in matters of redevelopment. They were limited by the "attitudes and interests of various elements in the community" within which elites had to shape their proposals or risk a political backlash.[9] Similarly, Banfield painted a picture of elite power as quite limited in Chicago. By documenting decisions for and against Fort Dearborn, he observed that business elites who set the agenda had to expend personal "political capital" to get other elites, who stood to gain little from the demolition of downtown, to go along with their project. Implementation, Banfield concluded, is a different process from agenda setting and can easily be compromised by limitations in the stocks of political capital held by different elites.

With its emphasis on the problem of how elites attempt to control decisions and how others might contest such control, decision making is an essential method of research in contentious politics, and I used it to locate actors in the five cases. For each case I sorted through an array of qualitative data, including interviews, municipal records, organizational documents, and media accounts in order to identify who originated select public proposals and how other stakeholders defined themselves and their grievances in relation to the proposals.

While I adopt the decision-making approach, my emphasis is

somewhat different from the community power scholars. None of the decision-making studies systematically observed contentious politics—that is, the making of claims in episodes of public collective struggle. Contention is collective in that participation occurs through the coordinated activity of large numbers of people, as in a strike or protest, which distinguishes it from voting and other individual forms of participation. Contention is public in that the success of a participatory effort often depends on capturing the attention of a wide audience, as occurs in open meetings, public hearings, demonstrations, petitions, and marches. Contention is a distinct form of political participation that has been overlooked or obscured in the decision-making studies of community power.

As McFarland points out, the omission of contentious politics from community power research is partly a result of the pluralist theory that informed most decision-making studies.[10] Pluralism assumes that power on important issues is dispersed under the control of many persons and groups, as illustrated in the studies of Dahl and Banfield. Yet pluralists tend to overlook the structural imbalance in organizational capacity between elites who set agendas and other stakeholders wishing to challenge those agendas. This criticism of pluralism is implicit in Mancur Olson's theory of the "logic of collective action," which states that widely shared political interests will often fail to organize effectively because constituents have a rational incentive to "free ride" on the efforts of others.[11] On the other hand, small groups of elites do not suffer the same organizational problems and will therefore generally defeat their many, less well-organized opponents.

Political contention is one antidote to the collective action problem suffered by large groups. Constituted as it is in collective symbols and rituals, contentious politics both exploits and reinforces social solidarities that can motivate individuals to act politically even when it is not in their rational self-interest to do so.[12] People do not join in protests and demonstrations, participate in open meetings, or sign petitions out of rational self-interest. Such acts of contention express solidarity and commitment and demonstrate political efficacy to others, thereby creating potential

for the diffusion of contention from more- to less-organized social groups.[13]

Political contention occurs when stakeholders who are excluded from elite decisions openly and collectively challenge those decisions. The four cases presented in chapter 3 preceded the fifth case (chapter 5) by half a century, yet all followed the same pattern of business and government elites making decisions and neighborhood activists challenging those decisions through contentious collective action. What interests underlie the involvement of each of these actors in urban redevelopment? Although interests are not always sufficient to motivate political participation, understanding the dynamics of contentious urban redevelopment requires that we know why public officials often risk political capital to promote controversial redevelopment projects, and what is at stake for neighborhood residents of redevelopment areas.

Interests and Urban Redevelopment

The most obvious stakeholders in land-use decisions are property investors, developers, and real estate financiers. Each has the potential to gain wealth from practices that intensify the use of properties and increase their market value. As any homeowner knows, the distinctive character of land as a commodity is that its value hinges on aggregate land uses of a larger area. For this reason, those who own, invest in, or develop properties for a living will have a great deal of interest in broader patterns of land use and investment in the city or region as a whole. It is no surprise that landed interests are found to be key players in the urban growth coalitions of many American cities.[14]

Less obvious stakeholders in the business sector are local media and utility companies that often advocate redevelopment projects they believe will help to grow the regional economy and its population. Population growth means greater circulation for newspapers and more users of utilities. Unions can also be major players since they benefit from the demolition and construction jobs created by large-scale redevelopment. Even nonprofit cultur-

al organizations such as museums, symphonies, and operas are stakeholders in urban growth because they also benefit from a growing population. Many cities have "cultural districts," which are nonprofit real estate companies specializing in developing and managing cultural institutions.[15] Though not business organizations in the strict sense, these nonprofit organizations depend upon foundation grants and other sources of flexible financing that require them to operate like regular businesses. Generally, any group benefiting from economic investments that are captured within a municipality, region, or other territory is a potential player in an urban growth coalition.

Growth coalitions depend upon cooperation with local government officials to meet their land-use objectives. Local public policies shape the environment in which economic growth and redevelopment occur. Businesses in search of investment locations look for high-quality services at relatively low rates of taxation. Cities that levy taxes at significantly higher rates than competitors will be less attractive to investors. Growth coalition members can often be found advocating for a "good business climate" and will support politicians who share their policy goals. In their capacity to shape the policy context of economic growth and redevelopment, local governments play a role similar to state and national governments in the larger economy.

Yet local officials can be found doing much more than shaping the policy environment for redevelopment. Like New Haven's Mayor Lee, they often take a direct role in setting and implementing local land-use agendas.[16] Officials work closely with urban redevelopment agencies to acquire and clear specific properties located in areas targeted for redevelopment. Local governments also use low-interest loans, grants, and tax abatements to finance new construction and rehabilitation in targeted areas. But why should this be the case? Why should local governments in a commercial republic—where economic assets are privately owned and controlled—be involved in the controversial arena of real estate development?

Political scientist Paul Peterson has offered perhaps the most widely accepted account of the interests of local government in

urban redevelopment.[17] Writing from the public choice tradition, Peterson views elected officials as rational actors competing in the market for votes, much like buyers and sellers compete in other commodity markets. In modern democracies, local officials win votes on the promise of improving their city's economic standing in relation to competing locales for capital investment. New investment increases demand for commercial real estate, which is reflected in rising land values and new construction or rehabilitation of buildings for office, manufacturing, and retail use. Residential real estate is stimulated in turn as business growth increases demand for labor, bringing new workers into the region's rental and homeowner markets. Capital investment, therefore, directly benefits the city as a whole. It increases the amount of tax revenue a municipality can generate at specific tax rates and thereby improves the benefit/cost ratio to taxpayers who finance municipal services. The more battles a city can win in the competition for mobile capital, according to Peterson, the more it can improve the benefit/tax ratio of its residents.

Peterson drew important conclusions about the politics of redevelopment in American cities from the rather obvious fact that American local government is quite limited when compared with the federal government. Unlike the federal government, municipalities can do little to control flows of capital and labor across their borders. Cities must focus on manipulating the use of land, the only factor of production they can regulate directly. They can use zoning and eminent domain authority to control the size and functions of land parcels within their boundaries. They can pursue large-scale real estate projects—stadiums, convention centers, retail developments—to make the city a more attractive place for firms and their employees. Or they can offer tax abatements, low-interest loans, and other flexible financing arrangements to firms that invest within their jurisdiction. Given the severe limitations on the scope of municipal power as well as the overwhelming importance of real estate development to the economic well-being of cities, it is easy to understand why, for Peterson, "urban politics is above all the politics of land use."[18]

All U.S. cities are the same, Peterson tells us, in their need to

facilitate conditions for local economic prosperity. And all are limited to land-use intervention strategies for meeting the economic imperative. Yet if all cities must submit to the discipline of market competition, then each must formulate a land-use strategy reflecting the advantages and disadvantages conferred by its unique location within that market.[19] Global and national socioeconomic trends affect different cities in different ways. Scholars of the urban restructuring tradition argue that wide variations exist in the economic opportunities and constraints facing different cities at different times in history.[20] American cities in the past century, for example, have struggled much more than their European counterparts with problems related to the movement of businesses and residents away from the urban core. Deconcentration in the United States has transformed many central cities into "jobless ghettos," with intense racial and economic segregation.[21] Significant variations also exist among different cities and regions within national boundaries. In places like Boston and San Francisco, corporate service economies specializing in law, finance, and accounting created much higher-paying jobs than economies more dependent on manufacturing, such as Milwaukee, Detroit, and Pittsburgh.[22] Variation in the relative prosperity of regional economies is reflected directly in the value of taxable real estate in these regions and their central cities.

The perspective of urban restructuring emphasizes how changes in economic and demographic environments influence a city's governing arrangements, offering insight into a central question raised in the following chapters: why do local officials in Pittsburgh and other declining cities risk political capital by taking the lead on controversial land-use projects? Where central city real estate markets remain weak over long periods of time, politicians feel the effects perhaps more than anyone in their inability to finance high-quality services. Mayors in cities with rapidly growing corporate service economies may be able to choose a laissez-faire approach toward real estate development while their counterparts in declining industrial areas may not have that luxury. Mayors of declining cities who take the lead on projects that

change the landscape or skyline often believe that such improvements will enhance the image of their city in the minds of investors and citizens. The symbolic politics of image building are frequently seen as more important to city leaders than the strict economic benefits and costs of alternative growth policies.[23]

Neighborhoods often challenge the city building projects of public officials, and they are the main challengers in the cases of urban contention considered in this book.[24] Neighborhood residents can participate in redevelopment decisions in various ways, depending upon the structure of local political opportunities. Contentious collective action is an alternative mode of participation for areas lacking regular access to government officials. Neighborhood leaders frequently make claims in the name of the "special-use values" of place. Sociologists John Logan and Harvey Molotch invented this term to indicate the additional benefits created and appropriated by a person who uses a particular place.[25] If urban growth coalitions are interested in the commodity or "exchange" value of places, neighborhood residents and many businesses value them for the practical benefits they provide in daily use. The existence of special-use values implies that places are unique, that one place is not interchangeable with another. Living in a particular place might locate a person near family who can help care for children; working in a certain area might help a person to realize the additional health benefits of walking to the office each day. And worshiping at a neighborhood church might create the additional benefit of maintaining close ties to one's ethnic community.

Because people realize additional benefits from using places, a great deal is at stake when places are exchanged and redeveloped. Redevelopment can change how places are used and who benefits from their use, and it is the fundamental condition of the politics of place in its contentious form, whereby stakeholders who lack regular access to government "resort to all sorts of 'extramarket' mechanisms to fight for their right to keep locational relations intact."[26] Why do neighborhoods and other stakeholders get excluded from redevelopment? Robert Dahl hints at an an-

swer to this question by emphasizing that effective coalition building requires public officials to carefully choose when, if at all, it is appropriate to bring different stakeholders into the planning process. Urban regime theory, the prevailing view on leadership in urban politics today, explores the implications of Dahl's basic insight.

Urban Governance and Contentious Politics

Urban regime theory is founded on the premise that political power in U.S. cities is divided into separate spheres, with crucial productive assets under private control and public authority under the control of government officials. The formal powers of government alone are insufficient to carry out important policy agendas, so officials must seek informal ties with business leaders who can enhance their "capacity to govern." When leaders from business and government blend their resources for a common purpose, an urban governing coalition is formed.[27]

Governing capacity that is sustained over the long term creates a regime, which leading regime theorist Clarence Stone defines as the "informal arrangements by which public bodies and private interests function together in order to be able to make and carry out governing decisions." "Governance through informal arrangements," Stone explains, "is about how some forms of coordination of effort prevail over others."[28] Prevailing coalitions usually include business elites but also, less often, other stakeholders because once business and government achieve a coalition with governing capacity, they tend to exclude other stakeholders whose resources are not required to carry out their policy agenda. Stone calls this "preemptive power," which conveys the idea that elites exercise power in order to produce specific results in an efficient manner rather than—as classic elite theory implies—to control the behavior of others.[29] Residents, low-income housing advocates, and others defending neighborhood use values often have few resources that officials perceive as useful to their governing agendas. Officials must calculate whether the resource contributions of marginal actors to a governing agenda exceed

the costs of including them in the coalition. With each additional member, a coalition bears higher costs in terms of managing conflict among potentially competing interests and goals. For this reason, nonbusiness stakeholders are often excluded by urban growth coalitions.[30]

In the U.S. political economy, businesses control investment decisions that create wealth and employment, which politicians depend upon for their electoral success.[31] This relationship of dependency expresses the "systemic power" of business.[32] Their privileged economic position places business interests at the center of governing coalitions, and they join with the government to preempt important policy agendas, in the process excluding other stakeholders perceived as unnecessary and inefficient complications to the process of agenda building. The potential for conflict originating in the marginalization of neighborhoods and other stakeholders from governing coalitions points to a third form of community power, that of social control.

Social control refers to an actor's capacity to overcome resistance to his or her desired agenda or to prevent the agenda of another. Marginalized stakeholders initiate a contest of social control when they collectively and publicly oppose redevelopment plans defined and advocated by urban growth elites. Yet regime theory overlooks the dynamic aspects of such conflicts. What happens after contentious situations arise? What determines their outcomes? With its emphasis on how power is created through systemic advantages and preemptive actions, regime theory gives only casual attention to processes and outcomes of urban contention. There is no denying regime theory's crucial insight into the question of how democratic incorporation occurs in U.S. cities: to gain a voice, stakeholders must match their demands with resources commensurate with the kind of agenda they wish to create. Resources such as land, capital, and professional skills, not the voices of opposition, gain the sympathy and respect of urban governing coalitions. But is it not possible for resources to be generated, and elites compelled to recognize them as valuable, by the processes of collective struggle? The results of two of my case studies suggest that it is.

Structures of Contention in Urban Redevelopment

Research in contentious politics explores how social processes unleashed in collective, public struggle produce varying outcomes in the presence of different structures. A structure is a type of scientific variable that is stable for individual cases but subject to variation from one case to the next. A main premise of process theories of contention is that outcomes of episodes are not determined by, and therefore cannot be deduced from, structural conditions. Structures enable some forms of social interaction and constrain others, but they do not determine their actual trajectories and outcomes. It is still necessary, however, to locate the structures that condition contentious episodes if a complete explanation of their outcomes is desired; therefore, I will draw upon the two main structural variables in social movement research: structure of political opportunities and mobilizing structures.[33]

In 1973 Peter Eisenger used the phrase "structure of political opportunities" to explain variation in protest behavior in forty-three American cities. He sought to identify the stable features of local political systems that affected "the degree to which groups are likely to be able to gain access to power and to manipulate the political system."[34] Eisenger's work inspired a new "political process" perspective in social movement research that seeks to explain why movements emerge when they do and how some succeed while others fail at accomplishing collective goals.[35]

Electoral rules are perhaps the most central formal dimension of local political systems. In cities, at-large electoral systems constrain political contention because they provide no incentives for elected officials to respond to claims of neighborhood challengers. Since the constituency of an at-large legislative body (for example, city council) is the city as a whole, members have no political obligation to advocate on behalf of a particular neighborhood constituency. At-large council members can afford politically to get behind legislation that may be unfavorable in one or more neighborhoods as long as they have the support of a majority of voters in the city. From the point of view of neighborhoods,

at-large electoral rules create a more closed political system than district-based rules. Neighborhood leaders find natural allies in district representatives, who must be responsive to their concerns or risk electoral defeat. The implication is that neighborhood challengers in district-based systems should be more successful in getting government to respond to their claims than those in at-large systems, all things being equal.

Informal aspects of political opportunity structures are determined by analyzing a governing coalition's stability and its capacity to govern. I examine these measures for Pittsburgh in the two relevant periods of the study and find that in the early post–World War II period, the governing coalition was somewhat more stable than it was during the 1990s. Stable coalitions, or regimes, offer fewer opportunities for challengers to manipulate the political system than unstable coalitions, where weak or marginalized members might exploit external conflicts to strengthen their political positions. One key to stability in early postwar Pittsburgh was the concentration of substantial productive capacity in the steel industry and the control of much of the region's industrial wealth in the Mellon financial holdings. Governing arrangements in cities dominated by a single industry or firm tend to be more stable than those in cities with a decentralized economic structure. Dominant economic players such as Mellon hold the kind of systemic power that pushes them toward the center of governing coalitions, thereby maintaining the stability of governing arrangements over time. In a more diverse urban economy, as is illustrated in 1990s Pittsburgh, governance does not consistently revolve around the needs of a single firm or industry and the governing coalition is more prone to instability. The implication is that greater opportunities existed for marginalized stakeholders in the 1990s to gain access to government by challenging existing arrangements.

The governing capacity of Pittsburgh's growth coalition was a good deal more centralized in the earlier than in the later period. The ability to govern is expressed in preemptive power, "the power of authorities to implement adopted policies."[36] Urban coalitions with a strong and centralized capability to implement

important policies can more easily ignore contentious claims of challengers than coalitions with a weak and/or decentralized capability. Building a strong and centralized ability to govern, as observed in midcentury Pittsburgh, leads to a greater political exclusion of those not formally incorporated in the governing coalition. It follows that coalitions with weaker, less centralized governing capacity must remain open to new participants in case they control resources commensurate to the governing agenda.

The phrase "mobilizing structures" refers to resources that challengers can access and convert into vehicles for mounting and sustaining collective actions. Examples of mobilizing structures include money, communications media, and meeting places, but also social structures such as family units, friendship networks, voluntary groups, work units, businesses, professional organizations, and government agencies that can facilitate resource mobilization.[37] The term "multiorganizational fields" encompasses the full range of social structures that have the potential to facilitate the mobilization (or demobilization) of a movement. The field of a movement may include local social structures or those with national or international scope.[38] In this study, the existence of national organizations as well as local groups connected to broader movements is a crucial structural variation. National and local federated organizations have been decisive in the outcomes of contention because of their independence from the growth coalition. Community organizations that depend heavily upon urban growth coalitions for operating resources are not likely to take the lead in challenging unwanted growth and redevelopment agendas because they might risk alienating their supporters and losing access to valuable resources. Autonomous organizations, those who depend less on the growth coalition, are better candidates for initiating a contentious collective action.

Regime theory and other familiar perspectives in urban politics have not paid enough attention to the role of autonomous national or local-federated mobilizing structures in urban political struggles. Too often urban political studies focus on the internal dynamics of coalition formation and their maintenance at the ex-

pense of a deeper understanding of the broader social context of community power. According to Gerry Stoker, the central challenge of urban political research today "is how to place the analysis within the context of wider processes of change . . . to connect local and non-local sources of policy change."[39] When cases of political contention are the unit of urban analysis, the investigator is forced to look beyond local boundaries to the broader multiorganizational field in which challengers are embedded. A comparison of the four case studies in chapter 3 with the fifth case in chapter 5 illustrates the decisive role that autonomous national and local federated organizations can have upon urban political processes and outcomes.

Integrating the structural ideas just discussed leads me to the following proposition: those who exert power by contentious means will be most successful when they face an open structure of political opportunities *and* benefit from access to autonomous mobilizing structures. Chapter 6 evaluates this hypothesis against the results of the five case studies. Are the outcomes in each case consistent with the expectations of the structural theory of social movements? For all but one, the answer will be yes. Challengers in case 1 had the benefit of neither an open structure of political opportunities nor autonomous mobilizing structures, but they did achieve concessions as a result of their collective actions. How can this anomaly be explained? More importantly, how did attributes of the structures of political opportunities combine with attributes of mobilizing structures to produce the predicted achievements in the other cases?

Dynamics of Contentious Urban Redevelopment

A mechanism-based approach to social explanation can provide answers to these questions. In the mechanism worldview, a complete explanation of an observed pattern between two variables, X and Y, consists of a description of how interactions among mechanisms $m_1, m_2 \ldots m_n$, emerging under condition X, generate outcome Y.[40] I follow Charles Tilly's definition of a mechanism as "a delimited class of events that change relations among

specified sets of elements in identical or closely similar ways over a variety of situations." A well-known illustration of this is Robert K. Merton's "self-fulfilling prophecy," an event in which a false definition of a situation motivates behavior that makes the false definition come true.[41] A bank run is one of many situations produced by the self-fulfilling prophecy. Once a rumor of insolvency is started some depositors will withdraw their savings. This reinforces belief in the rumor, causing more depositors to withdraw, producing more withdrawals, and so on until bankruptcy becomes a reality. The same thing can occur in a wide variety of other circumstances, for instance in neighborhood segregation patterns or presidential primary elections.

Social processes in each case of contention are produced by interactions—"frequently recurring . . . chains, sequences, and combinations"—among specific types of mechanisms.[42] I selected mechanisms catalogued by Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, which I adapted for my purposes of analyzing the politics of place. Once a set of crucial mechanisms recurring across some or all cases was identified, it was then possible to construct a mode of representing their patterns of interaction that constituted or produced varying outcomes in each (see chapter 6). A mode of representation spells out how mechanisms, once activated, "produce the observable concatenations forming observable patterns."[43] Brief definitions follow for seven mechanisms depicted in all or some of the case studies: category formation, attribution of political opportunity, social appropriation of resources, brokerage, object shift, polarization, and certification.[44]

The mechanism of "category formation" creates new social identities. A social identity forms as members of a collectivity agree on a boundary distinguishing themselves from and relating themselves to some other actor or actors outside the boundary. In the politics of place social identities arise among neighbors who share the use of a locality from which they derive special values, as discussed earlier. When people perceive a threat to special-use values, they grow more reflexive about their underlying attachments to the threatened locality. Of course, a collective identity catego-

ry does not take shape mechanically among neighbors once the physical structures in their neighborhood are threatened. Rather, identities are socially constructed. Challengers must invest resources to "align" the categories of potential recruits with those of the movement. Once stabilized, a category serves to both name an aggrieved group of people and to "underscore and embellish the seriousness and injustice of a social condition" experienced by the group that could motivate members into action.[45]

In the politics of place, the "unjust" use of eminent domain to acquire private property for redevelopment is a common source of collective identity formation. When multiple property owners are involved, they endure a common experience that facilitates the definition of a common grievance. But it takes skill and invention to define categories that withstand assaults from a hostile environment.[46] Robust categories evoke emotional reactions, such as anger at being excluded from a plan that demolishes one's place of business or a sense of injustice at having the state acquire one's property only to turn it over to a developer who can put it to more "productive" uses. Emotions are evoked through rituals, rhetoric, and popular symbolism, as the case studies in this book will demonstrate.

But urban growth coalitions attempt to prevent the spread of opposition to their plans by undermining the sense of injustice generated in the categories constructed by challengers. This can happen in two ways. The first is by articulating a "territorial ideology" that emphasizes the common interests of the residents of a city, regardless of the differences among them.[47] Promoters of redevelopment, for example, claim that their projects improve the economic standing of the city as a whole. All residents benefit when a city becomes "major league" or "world class," or when it achieves national visibility, even if residents or small businesses in redevelopment areas bear the disproportionate costs of these accomplishments. A second tactic of urban growth elites is to "try to make their projects *faits accomplis* by getting them as far along as possible without any kind of public input."[48] When public attention cannot be avoided, they can frame issues in narrow technical terms of relevance only to experts. This starves challengers of the

information they need to make credible claims against the growth coalition. If the city is merely "conducting a feasibility study" for a new stadium but has "no immediate plans" to pursue such a project, there is little to create a burning sense of injustice among those who might be threatened by it.

"Attribution of political opportunity" occurs when challengers identify a change in the political environment as an occasion for making contentious claims. Contention increases when people perceive a lifting of existing constraints on their action or coming events and resources that might facilitate action. As an example, the Christian Right viewed changing electoral alliances in the Reagan era as an opportunity to organize a national movement through the Republican Party.[49] The attribution mechanism is different from the structure of political opportunities discussed earlier, for two reasons. First, it indicates that a shift is underway in a previously stable political structure, for example when growing internal conflicts weaken the governing capacity of an urban regime. Second, attribution operates through the perceptions of challengers, who mobilize when they both perceive structural changes and define those changes as occasions for mounting collective actions. Thus, attribution of political opportunity depends upon the previous formation of a collective identity category.

If mobilizing structures are the resources accessible to challengers, then "social appropriation" refers to the process of converting resources into vehicles for mounting and sustaining collective action. The existence of strong mobilizing structures, however, does not guarantee that a movement will take advantage of them in a timely or strategic way. With poor leadership, valuable resources available through social connections could be squandered or overlooked. Alternatively, people with few resources of their own could win respect and their movement gain support from sympathetic allies by demonstrating strong collective identity and strategic responsiveness to shifts in political opportunity. Thus, social appropriation often works in combination with identity formation and attribution of political opportunity.

"Brokerage" is another mechanism that can lead challengers to identify and gain access to resources not available to them prior

to the emergence of contention. It occurs when two previously unconnected sites are linked by a third site that mediates relations between them. Sometimes in the course of a conflict previously unconnected people find themselves making contentious claims in the same time and place, which can lead them to share resources and struggle together on a common front.

"Object shift" transforms relations between challengers and the objects of their contentious claims. Herbert Gans illustrates object shift in his study of neighborhood resistance to federal urban renewal in Boston's West End.[50] Beginning in 1956 a Committee to Save the West End opposed the city's plans to demolish their neighborhood and relocate seven thousand low- and moderate-income residents. After failing repeatedly to prevent the Boston Redevelopment Authority from moving ahead with demolition, the committee shifted its object of claims to federal lawmakers, who ultimately had the authority to terminate Boston's West End urban renewal project. Students of U.S. social movements argue that the multilevel structure of American federalism provides multiple opportunities for object shift, which can reinvigorate waning social movements. For example, gay rights activism in the 1960s occurred at local, state, and federal levels simultaneously, and successes at one level frequently strengthened activism at other levels.[51]

According to McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, object shift is important for two reasons. First, it can activate new allies or opponents in contentious struggles, such as when national politicians are drawn into local policy debates. Second, object shift affects the "repertoires of contention" available to challengers.[52] For example, claim making in courts is governed by more restrictive rules than claim making in city council hearings. As illustrated in my first four cases, early postwar property rights battles against eminent domain tended to shift into the courts rather quickly, where judges determined their outcomes to the detriment of property owners. Property rights attorneys in the 1990s had learned from this experience and began advising clients to fight their struggles in the "courts of public opinion."

"Polarization" widens the differences between governing elites

and challengers in contentious episodes. Conflict bystanders will often remain neutral, contributing nothing to either side and thereby sustaining an existing balance of power. Polarization infuses disputes with strong ideological and emotional content, activating new stakeholder categories and generating sympathy from observers who get drawn into conflict on one side or another. New contenders change the existing balance of power and ultimately determine the outcomes of social struggles.[53]

"Certification" of actors, their actions, or their claims by third parties is fundamental to the creation of allies who can sustain the momentum of a contentious challenge. Challengers generally welcome certification by legitimate authorities and experts, but also benefit from decertification of claims or actions of their opponents. Certification often acts in combination with the object shift mechanism. New actors such as courts can get drawn into a struggle through object shift and subsequently play a certifying role.

Each of these mechanisms is activated in at least two of the five cases studied in this book, as noted in table 1.1. Four are active in all the cases. But more important than the number of mechanisms is "the ways they combine, in what sequences they occur, and why different combinations and sequences, starting from different initial conditions, produce varying effects."[54] The cases produced three different outcomes for challengers—concessions,
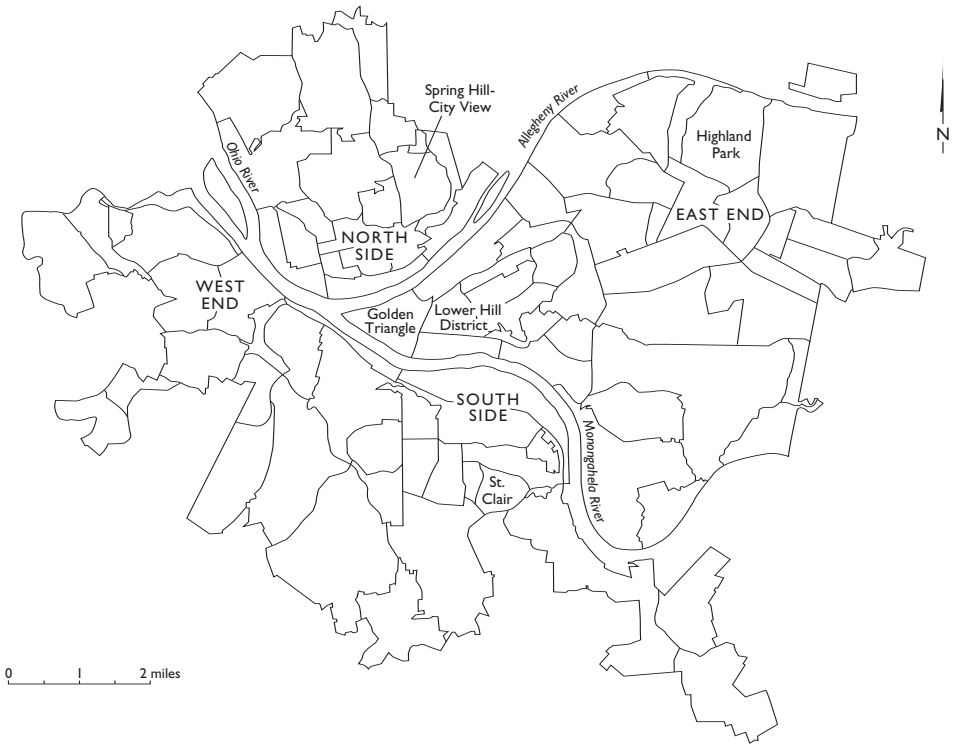
TABLE 1.1
Mechanisms activated in five cases of contentious urban redevelopment

Mechanism	Cases
Category formation	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Social appropriation of resources	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Object shift	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Certification	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Attribution of political opportunity	1, 3, 5
Brokerage	3, 5
Polarization	1, 5

collapse, and strong participation. A complete explanation of each case involves identifying the processes that produced its outcome and locating the crucial causal mechanisms in those processes.

Conclusion

This study differs from other political research on urban redevelopment because it emphasizes how stakeholders struggle to gain a voice in policy making by challenging, disrupting, and rendering uncertain the structures of local governance. Such a research effort is valuable because it begins an exploration of how some instances of collective struggle create opportunities for meaningful citizen participation while others do not. Direct citizen participation in neighborhood land use and redevelopment projects gives palpable expression to our collective aspiration for a democratic way of life. It is therefore worthwhile to understand the conditions and processes that facilitate broader and deeper forms of neighborhood participation, especially in those cities where formal, citywide systems do not exist.

Spring Hill-
City View

Allegheny River

Highland
Park

Ohio River

NORTH
SIDE

EAST END

WEST
END

Golden
Triangle

Lower Hill
District

SOUTH
SIDE

Monongahela River

St.
Clair

N

0   1   2 miles

City of Pittsburgh. Map by Bill Nelson.