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INTEGRATING INVESTMENT AND EQUITY:
A CRITICAL REGIONALIST AGENDA FOR A PROGRESSIVE REGIONALISM

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ABSTRACT

Since the 1980s different conceptions of regionalism have emerged, reflecting distinct perspectives on place and space, and a variety of policy orientations. The debates in planning over which regional policies are both “equitable” and “democratic” have been intense. This article clarifies these debates through a critical regionalist approach to the two prominent “regionalisms,” investment and distributive.

This article then proposes how to strengthen the connections between investment and distributive regionalism and build on the successful practices in each arena. We argue that a progressive regionalism requires focus on 1) the labor market as a whole, and 2) multi-scalar coalitions and policy initiatives.

KEY WORDS:

Critical regionalism
Regional economic development
Labor markets
Multi-scalar coalitions

INTRODUCTION

The regional question was rediscovered in the 1990s not only by planners but also by geographers, economists, and political scientists concerned with growing spatial and socio-economic inequality within metropolitan areas and within national economies. The idea of "progressive" regionalism developed in response to this challenge. While there are many ways to address socio-economic inequality, the regionalist approach is distinctive in focusing on a particular spatial scale and on political and economic strategies within city-regions or metropolitan areas. In planning, intense debates have emerged over how to promote regional policies that can concurrently promote economic competitiveness and social equity (Markusen 1999; Brenner 2002; Imbroscio 2006).

In this article we address the question of what kind of regional policies achieve "progressive" goals and, although we touch on the methodological debate about how best to study regions, our focus is on the framework for a progressive regionalism. By "progressive," we mean regional policies that: 1) produce effective economic growth strategies while promoting equity and, 2) build an institutional framework that supports civic participation and representation. This second issue---expands the practices of community-based organizing while shifting the scale of action---is a central challenge in the new regionalism and the ongoing "regional project" (Massey 1979).

In order to engage this challenge, we use the lens of "critical regionalism" to identify two types of regionalism in contemporary practice and discuss how these regionalisms contribute to an emerging "progressive" regional agenda. We define these regionalisms as investment regionalism (IR) and distributive regionalism (DR) and highlight the different actors and agendas behind these regional practices (see Table 1).

We then propose that the keys to a progressive regional policy agenda include a focus on the labor market as a whole and an ability to build multi-scalar coalitions and function at multiple scales of governance. We argue that contemporary regionalism is an ongoing and incomplete project, with investment regionalism incomplete in the first regard while distributive regionalism is incomplete in the second. However, there is the potential for building a progressive agenda which stands on the substantial successes of each practice. This progressive agenda addresses the challenges, particularly growing social and spatial inequality, facing regional policy makers in an era of trade liberalization and market integration, that is, of what we have come to call globalization.

First, a few words to define our terms. Investment regionalists (IR) perceive the region as a locus of global economic competition. They focus outward -- on the region within the global economy. From the perspective of investment regionalists, the goals of regionalism can best be achieved by emphasizing a growing economy and by expanding the proportion of high-skilled jobs in export industries. A central assumption behind investment regionalism is that public investment in the physical infrastructure, research, and labor market skills that foster innovation and increase firm productivity in the export sectors will rebound to the benefit of the regional economy, thus creating jobs and protecting the region against cost-based competition. Ultimately all residents of the region will benefit from these investments and a healthy regional economy.

By contrast, distributive regionalists (DR) perceive the region as the locus of spatial inequality in society. Distributive regionalists look inward – at inequalities between city and suburb and at their costs. They emphasize equity and access as the keys to building a successful region. Distributive regionalists contend that regions with poor central cities and a lower-skilled inner city population will not be able to compete with regions with a more equitable distribution of resources and socio-economically healthy central cities. They are less concerned with how to grow the regional "pie" than with how that pie is carved up, and who makes the allocation decisions.

In many discussions, the concept of regional development, balanced between growth and distribution, is characterized by "the three E's" of equity, efficiency, and the environment. In this article, we restructure this paradigm along parameters set by regional development practice in the U.S. where investment regionalism---concerned with efficient growth--- and, distributive regionalism---concerned with equity and sustainability---have diverged, resulting in different political coalitions and distinct policy strategies (Orfield 1997; Dreier, Mollenkopf et al. 2001; Imbroscio 2006; Swanstrom 2006). We propose an alternative model based on distributive and investment regionalism to foster rethinking about how perspectives on the regional question originate and move along different paths in research and practice. Our intent is to demonstrate the potential for convergence based on the shared concern for social and economic inequality.

That being said, we agree with the Neil Brenner's cautionary argument,

> …no scale of governance can ever be reduced to a single political or ideological project, but represents instead a multidimensional institutional forcefield permeated by ongoing conflicts, struggles and contradictions. From this perspective, there is nothing intrinsically progressive, or, for that matter, intrinsically reactionary, about the metropolitan or regional scale of governance. Until they are vested with substantive political content and organizational capacities through place-specific sociopolitical struggles, metropolitan institutions represent no more than empty jurisdictional shells (Brenner 2002).

Our examination of the two parallel trajectories of contemporary regional practice, IR and DR, is intended to analyze the actors and actions remaking the regional scale and to understand to the processes of this rescaling. To that end, we examine how these parallel regionalisms emerged from different theoretical paths and political perspectives, for behind each conception of regionalism is a policy agenda, a body of theory, and a history of practice.

We use a critical regionalist perspective to assess what investment and distributive regionalism have to offer an emerging progressive agenda, examining the limitations as well as the strengths of each approach as represented in contemporary practice. Each of these approaches is complex and changing. This as a learning process, especially as it results in evolving progressive perspectives that create bridges between investment and distributive regionalism as communities of practice.

A CRITICAL REGIONALIST PERSPECTIVE ON THE EMERGENCE OF PARALLEL REGIONAL PRACTICES

There is a well established argument for the region as the scale for urban and metropolitan governance on equity, efficiency, and sustainability grounds although debate continues as to whether metropolitan government is the ideal institutional response (Orfield 1997; Katz 2000; Swanstrom and Banks 2007). Despite this consensus on the region as the scale of action, academics argue that “getting the scale right” is only half the objective. It is necessary to get the policies, institutions, and the politics right as well (Markusen 2001). And, as we will discuss in more detail in the section on multi-scalar coalitions, action cannot be *limited to* the regional scale.

A literature on “the regional question” and an emerging critical regionalism raises questions about the taken-for-granted role of the region as dominant scale of action in the global economy and about the construction of inter-regional competition (MacLeod 2001; Brenner 2002). This literature, centered in economic geography, is rapidly expanding and includes critiques of the proposition that nation-state power is declining, demonstrations of the continued influence of nation-state policy on sub-national territories and uneven development, and analysis of the “contingent” nature of regions as temporary and rhetorically-based spatial constructions (Lovering 1999; MacLeod 2001; Hudson 2005; Jonas and Ward 2007). Critical regionalists examine the processes through which regions emerge as political-economic spaces and how they are defined with respect to other scales of political and economic action---cities, states or provinces, the nation-state and the global economy. This approach, which puts emphasis on how economic institutions and political power shape how territories are defined and governed, has significant implications for policy and practice.

The approach is embedded in a discourse which recognizes the power of regional path dependencies, the importance of specialized regional labor markets, and the dominance of embedded and localized institutional networks (Christopherson and Clark 2007c). This literature draws its empirical grounding from a body of “critical case studies” in regional studies, economic geography, and planning. The research focuses on the industry in the region, and as a consequence, often uncovers the nuanced and detailed infrastructure of the regional economy from firm networks to labor market intermediaries to occupational structures to the inter-and intra-regional spatial organization of production. There is of course, a methodological tension here as critical regionalism is deeply invested in the "qualitative turn" of economic geography and thus exposed to the (valid) critique that such "thick description" comes at the expense of clear policy recommendations (Markusen 1999; Peck 2003; Chapple and Lester 2007).

Critical regionalism positions itself in contrast to the "new regionalism" in economic geography which focuses primarily on competitive regional policies, and on the success stories of high-technology regions and innovation-driven industries.[i] This tendency to "search under the lamp light" leads to a *best practices* approach, encouraging "lagging" regions to emulate the leadership styles and "entrepreneurial ethos" of successful regions and to employ regional benchmarking to track their progress. As a consequence, researchers and practitioners are oriented toward divining new metrics to measure regional capacities and mark progress (Shapira, Youtie et al. 1996). Critical regionalism, however, is oriented toward a multi-scalar political-economic approach that leads to the evaluation of how public-private policy affects (both indirectly and directly) the propensity of firms to invest in one region rather than another (e.g. trade policy, defense expenditures), and of regional capacity to respond to changing economic conditions (education and health policy).[ii]

An analysis of the forces constructing inter-regional inequalities has been almost completely missing from the "new regionalism" discussions despite evidence of persistent spatial inequality (Silva and Leichenko 2004; Glasmeier 2006). The reason behind this absence can be found in the narrative interpreting regional growth or stagnation in the global economy. This narrative attributes the inability of regions to develop as centers of quality jobs and innovation to their lack of endogenous characteristics like 'entrepreneurial spirit' and the absence of functional networks like 'inter-firm cooperation' rather than to more broadly defined economic and political environment that produces patterns of uneven development (Smith 1984).

Critical regionalists have responded skeptically to the "new regionalism" not because they want to undermine the utility of the region as a political action space but because they question a depiction of the global economy as exclusively oriented around autonomous regional economies. In fact, one of the major concerns of the critical regionalists is that the assumption that decisions regarding economic vitality and socio-economic viability are taken at the regional scale, blinds policy makers to the ways in which state and national policy decisions affect regional capacities and possibilities.

The construction of the region as seemingly autonomous from the broader national and global economy leads to the celebration of successful regions and the castigation or pitying of those whose economies lag the leaders. "By this means, regional problems are conceptualized, not as problems experienced by regions, but as problems, for which, somehow, those regions are to blame"(Massey 1979). This construction also prioritizes an inward focus on regional development strategies rather than an outward focus on market governance policies or claims to the resources of state and national government.

Todd Swanstrom critiques the vision of an autonomous region, pointing to the context within which local governments in the U.S. function:

> …federal and state laws have constructed an artificial system in which resources are systematically segregated from needs, fiscally hamstrung governments engage in a "beggar-thy-neighbor" competition for tax ratables, and citizens construct their interests around parochial political boundaries. Swanstrom 2006:254

That there are choices to be made, with implications for spatial and social equity is demonstrated in research on comparative national responses to the pressures of "globalization" (Pontusson 2005). As Swanstrom notes, there is a role for national and state governments in shaping responses to global economic transitions other than simply to prescribe an "every ship on its own bottom" approach to cities and regions, typical in the United States. Critical regionalists advocate a return to analysis of uneven development and inter-regional inequality on the assumption that there are broader processes at work constructing regional inequalities and affecting the capacity of regional actors to respond to globally integrated markets and the expansion of potential production locations.

While leadership and initiative play a significant role in the ability of regions to capitalize on the advantages that accrue to them as a result of national expenditures, trade policy, and deregulation, national and state policies are more important to what separates Biloxi, Detroit and Buffalo from San Jose and Seattle than the capacity to adopt best practices (Bluestone and Harrison 1982; Markusen 1991). For example, trade liberalization policy encourages firms to outsource production while deregulation raises the cost of transporting goods and people from small and medium sized markets outside the megalopolitan regions (Treado and Giarratani 2008).

In this article we explore the possibility for a different vision of regionalism in the knowledge economy. This new vision requires "re-placing" the region in a political-economic context, understanding that the regional scale is being created, both politically and discursively. Our intention is to stimulate thinking about the political processes and policies constructing the region, not only *in* the region but at all scales where political action is instrumental in constructing space.

INVESTMENT REGIONALISM:

Investment regionalism (IR) is a set of development strategies focused on firms and industries with the emphasis on wealth generation and job growth as measures of success (see Table 1). The IR focus on firms and industries is consonant with conventional regional economic development programs in the U.S. although some more progressive coalitions, for example, including union participation, cross traditional boundaries. Conventional economic development practice, attributes job creation to incentives provided to individual firms and a favorable regional "business climate." However, IR incorporates a broader perspective on the scope of effective development activities. Investment regionalism includes traditional U.S. economic development practices rooted in export base theory and competitive advantage along with agglomeration economies (industry clusters and the regional innovation systems discourse associated with the new regionalism in economic geography (Porter 1990; Scott 1998).

In the U.S., local economic development policy historically has taken two inter-related forms: 1) tax-based subsidies to individual firms intended to influence their location decisions, and 2) redevelopment incentives to increase property values (Malizia and Feser 1999). In the first case, that of firm specific subsidies, results are measured in terms of jobs created. In the second, the measure of success is an increase in the local tax base. Redevelopment has been particularly favored in cities because of its potential to increase property values (Sagalyn 1997; Fainstein 2001).

The efficacy of these strategies has been critiqued for sixty years and, as many critics have noted, they rarely achieve their stated objectives (Bartik 1991). More recently, ideas counter to this economic development practice have gained popularity within the IR perspective. They include concepts in regional innovation systems, the rise of the creative class, and industry clusters (Porter 1998; Cooke 2002; Florida 2002) These strategies tend to emphasize regional solutions to shared problems and a reorientation of investment to innovative institutions and human capital rather than direct firm subsidies.

The first of these counter ideas of what constitutes a good regional business climate, was initiated by corporate leaders for whom a different set of factors are central to profitability and success in global markets. An example of this new approach to investment regionalism is that advocated by the Alliance for Regional Stewardship (ARS). The ARS serves as an umbrella organization for regional economic development organizations and is oriented around solving the problems caused by diseconomies of scale. Their goal is to improve the quality of life in metropolitan regions and to make the region a more efficient place to do business (ARS 2007). The Bay Area Council, for example, emphasizes a parallel and complementary investment approach: the need to construct regional capacity for innovation and attract and retain a high technology labor force (Bay Area Council 2007). The goal of both these investment approaches is to grow successful new firms in the export sectors of the regional economy and to make regions attractive to high-skilled workers.

These organizations do not completely eschew the cost-driven model that dominates economic development policy but they advocate for other ways to evaluate the regional business climate. They emphasize corporate leadership and commitment to making the region work along with a "business" – based rather than political approach (Kanter 2000) . The regions that serve as models for this kind of regionalism are the high-technology regions of the West Coast, such as Seattle and San Francisco, rather than the older, industrial regions of the Northeast like Pittsburgh or Cleveland. These regional organizations are distinguished by a major asset, a group of corporate leaders who identify with, and are committed to, the regional quality of life in the places in which they operate and live. They recognize that the region's image affects their corporate image and that the quality of life and services in the region affects their ability to attract and retain skilled workers and effective managers. In many respects their regional commitments and reformist orientations are a contemporary version of historical business-led civic reform movements and corporate paternalism (Jacoby 1997).

What is different this time around is that the focus is on the region (rather than on the city) and emphasis is placed on investments, such as in public transportation, which requires public commitments rather than private investment by the firms themselves. Notably missing from the agenda of these organizations are explicit efforts to advocate for federal, state or regional policies that are directed at providing the region's poorer citizens with a higher quality of life or access to good jobs. While some members of these organizations may recognize the need for such initiatives, the political perspectives of private sector and corporate leadership at the core of these coalitions preclude movement in more socially inclusive and progressive directions.

The second counter idea within investment regionalism advocates public investment in innovation capacity, particularly in universities, but also in publicly supported regional research centers, such as the "Centers for Excellence" in New York and "Innovation Centers" in Georgia (Wolfe 1999; Christopherson and Clark 2007a). These innovation strategies make a direct connection between public investment and job creation. Underlying the rationale for public investment in innovation is the argument that research and development capacities in regional institutions will produce new, high-technology firms in industries like nanotechnology or biotechnology *within the region*. As such, the rationale for innovation strategies is a two-pronged justification for public investment in applied research ---science and technology and economic development.

The economic development rationale underscores claims for state and local public sector investment in regional research and development capacities. However, empirical evidence indicates that technological change and public investment in research and development produces a wide range of economic impacts – employment growth is only one scenario. As a result, the question of whether innovation is connected to job growth is hotly contested within regional studies circles (Christopherson and Clark 2007c). Critics of the innovation and job creation link, such as John Lovering, argue that claims that innovation in export base industries will lead to regional job growth should be met with skepticism since the evidence doesn't back up the relationship. This skepticism has its origins in two characteristics of innovation-based production: 1) a potential disjuncture between the location of innovation and the resulting production, and 2) the significance of process innovation (such as lean production methods), which can slow job growth in knowledge-based industries (Lovering 2001; Dicken 2003).

Recent studies of the computer, telecommunications, and watch industries all tell complex stories about the reorganization of production processes and job growth (Angel and Engstrom 1995; Glasmeier 2000; Wolf-Powers 2001). For example, in the U.S., science and technology research has been supported historically by the federal government. The devolution of research support to the state level and the shift in regional economic development toward emerging technologies calls into question whether and to what extent that investment of local dollars is retained in the region and increases jobs, income, or productivity.

Regions may have innovation capacity in their universities but lack the labor market skills to attract firms looking for locations to produce the commercialized product (this is sometimes called "absorptive capacity"). Even in cases where firms are established proximate to the innovation source, they may be forced to move away from the innovation source and closer to their investors if they accept venture capital or when they reach a critical size and need to tap a deeper labor pool (Florida and Sambar 1999).

Secondly, the presence of a regional innovation system, including production facilities, may not produce large numbers of jobs. Small firms subcontracting to transnational corporations with global markets are under intense competitive pressure (Christopherson and Clark 2007b). They frequently cannot locate workers with the skills they require because the skill base of the regional labor market has been eroded by worker exit and poor basic education. For these reasons, as well as cost competition, small specialized and innovative production firms turn to lean production methods in order to remain competitive. As a consequence, they create few jobs, although the (few) jobs they create may be good jobs (Harrison 1994; Harrison 1994; Christopherson, Brown et al. 2007).

Because of its emphasis on productivity and innovation capacity, however, investment regionalism has focused positive attention on the labor market through its attention to high-technology skills. As a result, IR has created opportunities for labor market intermediaries, including unions, to play a role in training and representing a new generation of skilled workers. This opens the door to new bargaining and training arrangements that could give the workforce in regional labor markets and labor market intermediaries more bargaining power.

Finally, however, despite its considerable strengths in marshalling regional assets in the service of innovation capacity and high-technology skills, investment regionalism is not sufficient to the task of long-term regional development. That task requires more attention to the entire labor market and, by extension, to questions of distribution in and across regional economies. In addition to questions about its ability to create significant employment, IR is limited in its ability to address regional inequality.

The contemporary IR agenda tends to obscure the fact that public investment in export industry innovation and jobs for the college educated is more likely to produce inequality than to “lift all boats”. In a critique of “the creative class” perspective on regional economic development, Eugene McCann notes that innovative centers in the U.S. economy are also those most likely to exhibit high levels of inequality. His analysis of Austin, Texas demonstrates:

> …an unresolved disconnect between creative city discourse and the pressing concerns of those whose incomes did not benefit from and whose quality of life was undermined by the rise of the 1990s new economy. While late-twentieth century Austin gained an image as a high tech

> boomtown and a creative hometown where creatives could 'live the life', the city's politics and policy were dominated by ongoing negotiations between the local state and various activist groups aimed at mitigating the negative effects of rapid urban growth on fragile landscapes and on low-income people.
>
> McCann (2007: 193)

While growth in knowledge-based industries may spur regional employment, much of the additional employment occurs in the retail and service industries (Drennan 2002; Markusen and Schrock 2006). As a consequence, critics see increasing income divergence, not employment growth, as the principal outcome of innovation-driven IR (Martin and Sunley 1998; Lovering 2001). Empirical work, particularly in regions formerly specialized in conventional manufacturing, reinforces this concern, suggesting that the presence of successful regional innovation capacity may not translate into wider and deeper economic development unless steps are specifically taken to "spread the wealth" created by a regional innovation system (Pendall, Drennan et al. 2004; Rutherford and Holmes 2006; Christopherson and Clark 2007c; Rutherford and Holmes 2008).

DISTRIBUTIVE REGIONALISM:

The concept of distributive regionalism (DR) has its origins in the worlds of planning and community development practice as well as in planning theory. Theoretical underpinnings for distributive regionalism emerged from advocacy planning and its associated concerns with equity and distributional justice (Davidoff 1965; Markusen 1985; Markusen 1987) and from the concept of "progressive cities" in which concerns for equity, community empowerment, and governance are intertwined (Clavel 1986; Clavel and Wiewel 1991; Krumholz and Clavel 1994). From a broader perspective, the regional question in planning is rooted in the continuing interest and concern of planners with metropolitan and urban governance and the challenges of urbanization, exemplified by the work of Clarence Stein, Lewis Mumford, and other metropolitan planners and regionalists (Sussman 1976; Friedmann and Weaver 1979; Weir 2000),

Distributive regionalism also draws from a literature in political science focused on metropolitan and urban governance. In its contemporary manifestation, DR is concerned with transparent and participatory governance. Its substantive agenda includes growth management to encourage efficiency through density, affordable housing, and tax base sharing to facilitate equitable access to services, such as schools and transportation, and to the amenities that urban regions can provide, such as parks and cultural activities (Orfield 1997; Dreier, Mollenkopf et al. 2001). DR emphasizes the need to build institutions and place-based capacity and, in both research and practice, is deeply engaged in questions of access, opportunity, and equity. At the heart of DR are concerns about how planning practice and political decisions affect people, communities, and neighborhoods.

A critical tension in distributive regionalism centers on the question of how to form and maintain multi-scalar coalitions that still represent the community. Indeed, contemporary community development practice takes two paths, one multi-scalar and one rooted in the neighborhood In the emerging practice of distributive regionalism, activists and advocates have worked to build equity and social justice coalitions between central cities and suburbs through several strategies including metropolitan governance, faith-based organizations, and labor-community partnerships (Orfield 1997; Benner 2003;

Pastor, Benner et al. 2006). Recognizing that regionalism is not politically possible in all places, the distributive regional project has also shifted to an advocacy agenda characterized by coordinated faith-based groups such as the Gamaliel Foundation at the national scale and MOSES (Metro Organizing Strategy Enabling Strength) in Detroit as a multi-scalar example. In another example, the Common Good Planning Council in Rochester uses a faith-based approach to advocate for regional solutions to shared problems.

Labor-community partnerships have also taken on a regional approach such as LAANE (The Los Angeles Alliance for the New Economy) in Southern California and Georgia Stand-Up (Georgia Strategic Alliance for New Directions and Unified Policies) which focuses on smart growth and economic justice in the Atlanta metro area. Perhaps the best known of these organizations, combing a focus on jobs with a regional approach brings labor directly into a cooperative effort to produce a skilled and diverse regional labor market. The Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership (WRTP) in Milwaukee organizes training in both basic and non-basic sectors. All of these organizations have begun to "jump scales" within the region, to connect equity oriented organizations in the city with social justice organizations in adjacent suburbs and across regions.

However, most community-based organizations remain defined by the neighborhood or urban scale. Highly visible community development programs, such as the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative in Boston and the East St Louis Action Research Project, exemplify three key characteristics of efforts in the inner cities: 1) equitable access, 2) community empowerment, and 3) community ownership, that is, ownership of the development effort and its goals, and ownership in the sense of taking control of community space (Medoff and Sklar 1994; Reardon 1998).

Distributive regionalism, as its name implies, focuses primarily on the consumption side of the economic ledger. Questions about how metropolitan areas develop economically or create jobs or build a tax base take second place to questions of equity and social justice (Markusen 2007). However, there are examples of community-based organizations that expand the model through concentrated programs to build job skills and extend opportunity and access to the labor market. One example, firmly rooted in a community advocacy tradition but specifically concerned with job creation and skill development is San Antonio's Project QUEST, originally founded by an offshoot of the Industrial Areas Foundation, Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS) (Osterman 1999). Another tactic involves combating wage stagnation though local living wage campaigns. The national coordination of a living wage campaign by ACORN has led to 140 ordinances at a variety of scales and covering various sectors and occupations (ACORN 2008). The recent development of an entrepreneurial agenda in the inner city has expanded the focus of urban policy makers and planners to markets in and of the neighborhood (Sutton 2006).

Despite shared interests in alleviating poverty, fostering upward mobility, and creating well compensated jobs, the path to a regional advocacy agenda remains complicated. Political scientists and public policy professionals, in the tradition of urban politics, have analyzed the barriers to regionalism and located them in fragmented governance and a growth coalition of politicians, developers, and unions that benefit individually and collectively from expansion of the metropolis on greenfield sites

(Mollenkopf 1983; Dreier, Mollenkopf et al. 2001; Swanstrom 2001; Weir and Rongerude 2007). In response, planners have not simply pursued the political path to advocate for regional solutions to metropolitan problems but also deployed the methodological skills of the profession to build the empirical case for regionalism.

As the political project of regionalism has ebbed and flowed, urban and regional planners have committed to their own regional project, documenting the problems of the city-region – social, environmental, economic, spatial – and the ways in which the failure to adopt multi-jurisdictional governance approaches within the region exacerbates the problems facing the metropolitan region as a whole. For example, the lack of affordable housing magnifies the effects of discrimination and poverty in urban neighborhoods but also increases the likelihood that job seekers will have to travel long distances to find jobs (Pendall 2000; Chapple 2006a).

The failure of regional policy to address issues of access and transportation contributes to a metropolitan form in which household location is determined by a combination of socio-economic status and racial and ethnic identity that dictates opportunity (Cervero 2001; Grengs 2002). While transportation services are perhaps the most regionalized, due to federal requirements for metropolitan transportation planning, they are flawed in their implementation as issues of equity and distribution take a back seat to questions of efficiency and engineering and opportunities for real estate development (Vogel 2002).

Environmental justice has emerged as another research area supporting the move towards a progressive "distributive" regionalism. The concentration of environmental dis-amenities, like bus depots, sewage treatment plants, increased truck traffic, and power generation and transmission facilities in densely populated, poor and minority neighborhoods within the city limits adds health and safety concerns to the already uneven distribution of access and opportunities to regional amenities (Pulido 2000; Rast 2006).

Distributive regionalism, both as an analytical project demonstrating the pervasiveness and persistence of intra-regional inequalities (and thus, the case for a policy response to it) and as a project to marshal community-based organizations into multi-scalar coalitions, has produced movement toward a progressive regionalism. However, challenges remain. One challenge is the need for a broader political commitment to regionalism. As David Imbroscio noted in his recent critique of regionalist approaches, the regional strategy has met with stiff resistance from suburban counties and towns, who did not support annexation in the past or regional governance in the present (Jackson 1985; Imbroscio 2006). “It is not simply a question of having resources available to fund the equity agenda; the politics must also be supportive of redistributing these available funds” (Imbroscio 2006: 241).

Again, the question is not only how to get the scale right but how to get the politics, policies, and institutions right as well. For distributive regionalism, community-based organizations are central to successful projects that build labor market skills and access. The challenge, however, is to build on institutions and coalitions currently in place and expand their scope to the labor market as a whole. The second challenge is to actively pursue a multi-scalar approach which recognizes a regionalism which is not limited to the regional scale, neither in its advocacy nor its organizing. Todd Swanstrom and Brian Banks recently proposed mechanisms by which the community-based organizations can “scale-up” their activities and “go regional” without the prerequisite regional governance frameworks which have, at least in the past, proved so difficult to achieve (Swanstrom and Banks 2007).

CONNECTING INVESTMENT AND DISTRIBUTIVE REGIONALISM: FOCUSING ON THE LABOR MARKET AS WHOLE AND MULTI-SCALAR INITIATIVES

Within both regional practices, there are examples of programs and organizations that manifest an emergent, “progressive” policy agenda that addresses questions of growth, agency, sustainability, and equity. There is an argument to be made, however, that the success of investment regionalism has been limited by its emphasis on high-skilled jobs and skill attainment as the route to equity and sustainability. At the same time, distributive regionalism has failed to realize multi-scalar governance despite its focus on community and agency. A balanced reading of the history of investment and distributive regionalisms demonstrates that there are programs and organizations in both traditions which succeed in fostering a progressive regionalism which sees the labor market and multi-scalar coalitions as critical.

We argue that understanding why the region is emerging as the consensus scale for economic and social policy is the first step in developing a progressive regionalism. The preceding discussion of critical regionalism as a theoretical lens through which to view the trajectories of investment and distributive regionalism and the rhetorical, political, and economic underpinnings of the regional project, addresses that challenge.

The second step is establishing criteria for the claim of “progressiveness.” We argue that a progressive regionalism requires a focus on two elements which are central concerns of critical regionalism and incomplete projects in the practice of both investment and distributive regionalism: 1) policies and strategies aimed at the labor market as a whole, and 2) organizing and advocating through multi-scalar coalitions to make claims on resources and shape agendas beyond the region.

1) THE LABOR MARKET AS A WHOLE

Recent national policy initiatives focused on the labor market, such as the US Department of Labor's *Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED)* program, illustrate the evolving orientation of regional policy at the national scale in the distinct direction of investment rather than distributive regionalism. The focus on firms and innovation in administratively-defined regions rather than workers and skills in functionally-defined regions brings to mind a central point about regionalism, "First, it is crucial to understand that there is *nothing inherently progressive (egalitarian) or democratic about action at the regional scale*…Regional policies are just as capable of supporting a regional growth machine as a regional opportunity regime." (Swanstrom 2006).

Progressive regionalists can move investment regionalism in a progressive direction by developing and supporting policy strategies which focus on the labor market as a whole, not only on high skilled jobs in advanced technology and service firms. We advocate a labor market approach for five strategic reasons. A labor market approach provides: 1) a functional definition of the region; 2) a bridge between labor demand issues of economic development and the labor supply focus of community and workforce development; 3) a policy arena for sustainable investments in people in place; 4) an ability to tap an established stream of national and state funding and resources; and, 5) a site for exercising agency and differentiation within and across regions.

As we described in the section on distributive regionalism, it is not only business interests who have developed the ability to jump scale for advocacy or organizing. However, the power to define the region lies largely with those with multi-scalar political influence. A functional definition of the region, shaped by the scope of the labor market and not political jurisdictions alone is a necessary step in a progressive approach. The act of linking the definition of the region back to the empirical project pursued by academic planners enables an analytical rather than purely political assessment of the scope of the regional economy. In practice, planners and regional scientists have long depended on definitions of the region determined by federal and state government, usually using metropolitan statistical areas (MSA) as the standard for analysis of publicly available data. We are arguing that it is rhetorically and analytically important to place the labor market at the center of any discussion of strategies to move toward regional equity and sustainability.

At the same time, we need to be conscious of alternative definitions of “the region” and what they tell us about critical processes and specific actors engaged in “making” regions. The process of constructing a new scale for the formal and informal negotiation of governance is not a neutral act. Participation in the “regional project” benefits some interests while it lessens the influence of others. For example , coalitions that draw their political support at the city or neighborhood scale --- community-based organizations, local governments, and public agencies --- see the region as a landscape that is determined by interests able to “jump scales,” to use the multi-jurisdictional character of most U.S. regions to evade democratic accountability. They recognize that regions may be defined to capture the political allegiance of local officials or to create new political bases. They are also designed to exclude or undermine the power of central cities. This exclusion enables regional political actors to avoid confronting the consequences of spatial or social inequality and to maintain a "coherent" power base (Rusk 1999; Katz 2000).

Rethinking the regional scale should move us away from the less challenging questions about the workforce, such as those embodied in the concept of "the creative class," to more challenging questions about the jobs held by the majority of people. Ideally, a labor market orientation raises questions about how the costs of employment are accounted for. Who pays for skill acquisition? Who pays for commuting costs? Who pays for health insurance? These are the questions we see asked by community and labor coalitions who use multi-scalar coalitions to lobby the U.S. Congress while leveraging their political and economic bargaining power in the local labor market.[iii]

A focus on regional labor markets has the potential to create a link between the job access and skill acquisition concerns raised in DR and the demand-oriented, firm-centered priorities of IR. A recent body of research examines these complex intersections between economic development and community development approaches to labor market intermediaries and job matching in an environment characterized by significant work reorganization and a "new psychological contract" (Theodore and Peck 2002; Benner 2003; Stone 2004; Van Jaarsveld 2004; Chapple 2006).

This research, which straddles the IR and DR approaches, addresses a key criticism of regional economic development organized around innovation systems – the failure to consider jobs beyond high-tech, export-oriented industries. A "whole labor market" approach focuses on the broad range of people in a labor market, their skills and long-term potential for sustaining a livelihood. This includes the intermediaries that connect people to jobs, careers, and training (Giloth 1998; Benner 2003; Giloth 2003; Fitzgerald 2004; Benner, Leete et al. 2007)

A whole labor market approach to regionalism also implicitly recognizes that labor market investments, just like labor market regulation, occur at the state and national scale. Indeed, funding for higher education, incumbent worker training, and technical up-skilling has been allocated historically to localities from state and national resources. A labor market approach prioritizes reclaiming those resources for the region and its workers.

Finally, a labor market approach leaves open the possibility for organizational and institutional differentiation across regions. In some regions, labor-oriented coalitions could play a central role while faith-based or community-based organizations might be more effective intermediaries elsewhere. Indeed, a whole labor market approach does not privilege a single model across or within regions but allows for differentiation across places, industries, and occupations. This enables the regional labor market the opportunity to develop its own distinct specializations, institutions, and character within a global production system (Herod 1998).

2) MULTI-SCALAR COALITIONS

The second element in a progressive regional agenda is the formation of multi-scalar coalitions to advocate and shape policy initiatives and claim resources at a variety of geographic scales. There are a number of examples of emerging multi-scalar coalitions in both investment and distributive regionalism (see Table 1). However, regional leaders intent on building economies with a capacity for sustainability as well as innovation and job creation must think beyond the region to understand how "global" processes, such as trade liberalization and deregulation, as well as the accelerating power of transnational corporations, are likely to affect what is possible within the region. This means going beyond references to "globalization" as an explanation implying that "there is no alternative," to the specific policies and processes in which regional resources are implicated in global projects.

Federal policies encourage rather than discourage inter-regional competition leading to the misallocation of public resources. Multi-national bond-rating agencies, empowered by the U.S. financial market governance regime, increase the pressure on local governments to privatize public resources and adopt fiscal austerity measures (Hackworth 2007). From a critical regionalist perspective, a progressive regionalism has to acknowledge and address the processes constructing and reinforcing inter-regional inequalities, the costs of inter-regional competition, and its beneficiaries. These processes not only lead to new forms of social peripheralization but sap the ability of regions to develop progressive intra-regional strategies.

A globally attuned progressive regionalism engages both distributive and investment "regionalisms" but also considers how the region's fortunes are shaped in a broader governance context and how the potential for regional economic development and distributive equity is affected by the dynamic processes beyond the boundaries of "the region." There are two key elements to engaging a multi-scalar strategy, 1) understanding inter-regional competition in a global context, 2) making broad claims on state and national resources.

Examples of transnational corporations' (TNCs) use of regional resources to reduce their risks and enhance their competitive position in the global economy represent cautionary tales about the role of firm power in and across regions (Christopherson and Clark 2007b). They suggest that policy-makers concerned with the long-term future of the region need to pursue a complex, multi-scalar agenda that includes working in coalitions to reduce inter-regional competition and to ensure that the regional consequences of national policy are understood and confronted.

The role of firms as political actors is visible within the region and is particularly evident in the construction of inter-regional competition. In the U.S., a historically fragmented governmental system and devolution of responsibility for social welfare to states and localities create pressure to compete for "jobs" that can increase the tax base and pay for the ever-increasing burden of service provision. Within this context, an emphasis on regional winners and losers, and the importance of regional entrepreneurship has encouraged and accelerated local subsidies to TNCs willing to locate activities in a region.

Despite a broad awareness of the costs of inter-jurisdictional competition, subsidies to firms from sub-national state and local government have been steadily rising since the 1980s.[iv] A national policy initiative to curtail the interstate and inter-regional competition was proposed by a team of national economic policy experts and published by the Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank in 1996. They articulated both the problem of inter-jurisdictional competition and outlined the solution:

> Only Congress, under the Commerce Clause of the Constitution, has the power to enact legislation to prohibit the states from using subsidies and preferential taxes to compete with one another for businesses. Congress could enforce such a prohibition in a variety of ways. To name a few, it could tax real and imputed income from public subsidies, deny tax-exempt status to any public debt used to compete for businesses (there is already a limitation on the tax exempt status of certain kinds of state and local public debt) and impound federal funds payable to a state engaging in such competition.
>
> (Rolnick 1996)

Notable contributions to the national policy debate identifying possible solutions include the proposals to control inter-regional competition articulated in *the Economic War Among the States* and the changes in legal and institutional frameworks proposed by Gerald Frug (Rolnick 1996; Frug 1999; Frug 2002; Markusen 2007). .

Multi-scalar coalitions are not about “shaming the inside game” (Imbroscio 2006). They are about claiming a seat at the table where the cards are dealt.[v] Regions are places, not simply sites of production. At the heart of this discussion are normative questions about what regional policy should do. Joan Fitzgerald and Nancey Green Leigh have argued that economic development should increase standards of living, reduce inequality, and promote sustainable resource use and production (Fitzgerald and Leigh 2002). However, the conventional regional economic development discourse often conflates regions and firms, reverting to the now completely discredited axiom that *what is good for GM is good for Detroit*. This discourse ignores the fact that contemporary multi-national firms have the strategic ability to shift production from one region to another, to retool their processes and reorganize and re-orient their regional investments. This is fundamental to understanding the region in its global context. The partnership of multi-national firms with the region is on the firm’s own terms. In order to share the benefits, and not just the costs of competitive advantage, regions will have to set a new agenda for regional economic development policy. A progressive regional agenda would put the region's priorities above those of the globally-oriented firm. The power relationship---between production and place---remains at the heart of the region's competitive dilemma just as it was for the city. Only the scale has changed.

CONCLUSIONS: INTEGRATING REGIONALISM(S)

Distributive and investment regionalism both offer crucial dimensions to a progressive regional project. A successful and sustainable regional economy needs investments in its research and development capacity, physical and institutional infrastructure, and a skilled labor market. It also must reflect norms of equity and social justice as manifested in environmentally and socially safe communities, access to affordable housing, health care and high quality education. The two "regionalisms" have a number of factors working against their efforts. The first of these barriers is the fragmented character of urban governance in the U.S. Devolution has pushed necessary redistributive policy making to the local scale, where it is likely to produce conflict rather than solutions. As a consequence, distributive and investment regionalists talk past one another and create different audiences, advocates, and adversaries.

Second, although distributive and investment regionalists both see the region as the central scale of policy-making, they are limited by a political discourse that perceives the region as disconnected from other scales of action and encourages the evaluation of success in terms of cost competition with other "autonomous" regional units. This discourse dominates investment regionalism to a far greater degree than distributive regionalism; however, it collapses the universe of possibilities available to both constituencies by blaming the region and its inhabitants for processes and policies originating outside the region and proposing that responses to these processes must be limited to claims and conflicts *within* the region.

In working against these constraints, both regionalisms have developed initiatives which often have a limited relationship with democratic processes or existing social institutions. These initiatives depend on personal relationships and individual leaders and so, are fragile and difficult to replicate across space and time. Distributive regionalists have been particularly disadvantaged in this conflictual policy environment because their coalitions lack the power base that is associated with economic development. What they do have is the power to say no --- to obstruct and slow down what they perceive as disadvantageous regional initiatives (McCann 2007).

For planners, the tension between investment and distributive regionalism highlights an emerging challenge for research, teaching, and advocacy. As more and more universities invest in applied research on regional issues, there is an opportunity to articulate regionalism beyond a "silo approach." Indeed, there are a number of university-based applied research centers who effectively train cohorts of planning students to think simultaneously about the region and the neighborhood and understand planning and policy as implicated both in replicating and rectifying uneven investment outcomes.

To move ahead, a progressive regionalism needs to encourage policy measures that address the limitations of investment and distributive regionalisms and bring together their positive normative values. This will require moving beyond the agendas encompassed by the existing coalitions in order to re-think "the region" and the regional economy, and developing new coalitions oriented to a multi-scalar policy environment.

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TABLE 1: REGIONAL TRADITIONS AND THE EMERGENCE OF PROGRESSIVE REGIONALISM

Regionalisms:	Investment	Progressive	Distributive
Development Tradition	Economic Development	Critical Regionalism and "the Regional Question"	Community Development
Goals	Economic Growth	Sustainable Development and Quality of Life	Equity
Focus	Investment: export-base; competitiveness	1) Labor Market Institutions And Intermediaries 2) Regional Infrastructure	Distribution: Access, Opportunity
Constituencies	Firms Industries Sectors	Workers Universities Education and Training Institutions	Neighborhoods Communities Working Poor
Policy Tools	Firm subsidies, Real estate development, Regional innovation systems; Industry clusters	State and Federal Investments in Science and Technology, Education, Training, and Infrastructure in regional institutions	Metropolitan Governance (Growth Management Tax base sharing) and Community-Based Organizations (CDFIs, CDCs)
Examples in Practice	**National:** Alliance for Regional Stewardship; Council on Competitiveness **Regional:** Bay Area Council; Greater Rochester Enterprise; High Tech Rochester	Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership (WRTP) Milwaukee **University Applied Research**: CJTC at UCSD; The Regional Institute @ SUNY Buffalo; CQGRD @ GA Tech; CURA @ The Humphrey Institute	**National:** LISC; Gamaliel Foundation **Regional:** Common Good Planning Council (Rochester) Georgia Stand-Up (Atlanta); LAANE (Los Angeles) **Community:** ProjectQuest (San Antonio); Strategic Actions for Just Economy (Los Angeles)

Endnotes

[i] The orientation of "new regionalism" in planning is somewhat less directly connected to investment regionalism than the new regionalism that has evolved in economic geography and in disciplines that derive practices from the theories behind territorial innovation systems. See Wheeler, S. M. (2002). "The new regionalism: Key characteristics of an emerging movement." American Planning Association. Journal of the American Planning Association **68**(3): 267, Moulaert, F. (2003). "The New Regionalism in Western Europe. Territorial Restructuring and Political Change." International Journal of Urban and Regional Research **27**(1): 209, Moulaert, F. and F. Sekia (2003). "Territorial innovation models: A critical survey." Regional Studies **37**(3): 289, Simmie, J. (2005). "Innovations and Space: A Critical Review of the Literature." Regional Studies **39**(6): 789..

[ii] We include public/private governance regimes, such as those governing financial markets.

[iii] Todd Swanstrom discusses several examples of this (2006). The organizing and lobbying strategies of the Change to Win coalition demonstrate the beginnings of a coordinated effort among labor unions.

[iv] With increasing corporate bargaining power, the problem of inter-jurisdictional competition in the U.S. has worsened. Good Jobs First, an organization that tracks corporate subsidies, estimated that by 2004 Wal-Mart had received more than $1 billion in subsidies from state and local governments in the U.S. In a detailed study Good Jobs First found subsidies to Wal-Mart in the form of free or reduced-price land, infrastructure assistance, tax increment financing, property tax breaks, state corporate income tax credits, sales tax rebates, enterprise zone (and other zone) status, job training and worker recruitment fund, tax exempt bond financing, and general grants (Mattera *et al*. 2004). Although subsidies undermine market efficiency and are frequently fiscally irresponsible, corporations operating in the U.S. continue to seek incentive packages and play regions against one other to get "a better deal." Transnational corporations in both old and new industries, including Boeing, Intel, IBM, Dell, Ford, and Honda, are adept players of the subsidy game and among the top recipients of subsidy deals.

[v] Indeed, this is nothing new Kristensen, P. H. and J. Zeitlin (2005). Local players in global games : the strategic constitution of a multinational corporation. Oxford ; New York, Oxford University Press.. Many academic planners and practitioners have long played in the national, state, regional, and community-level policy games, advocating for policies that take a regional approach with attention to neighborhood impacts. The Regional Institute at the University of Buffalo which balances regional economic development projects such as regional economic impact assessments with community development issues such as inventories of vacant properties in distressed neighborhoods (see Table 1). Similarly, the Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development at the Georgia Institute of Technology focuses on the neighborhood impacts of regional transportation and park projects. Those impacts are not limited to land use or traffic congestion but encompass environmental issues like air quality and public health issues like obesity. At the University of California at Santa Cruz, the Center for Justice, Tolerance, and Community combines community advocacy with a regional agenda while challenging policy makers to make equity a priority. The Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute has balanced community-development and neighborhood needs within a regional policy framework for thirty years.