

## In Through the Back Door: Social Equity and Regional Governance

Scott A. Bollens  
*University of California–Irvine*

### *Abstract*

A leading impulse for new regionalism in the 1990s was the sense that suburban and central cities are economically interdependent and should work cooperatively toward common regional welfare in the face of globalized competition. If this is so, we should witness an emergence of regional policies that combat concentrated poverty, segregation, and place-based inequalities that impose significant economic costs. This article assesses the extent and types of metropolitan equity efforts under new regionalism, the pathways through which they arise, and their prospects.

Research finds that equity-based regional policies are increasing; they take diverse forms and are commonly shaped by state or federal programs, but they are not explicit and primary parts of regional agendas. While regional entities have not advanced explicit discussions about equity, a confluence of intergovernmental programs and quality of life issues has added regional equity to the portfolio of metropolitan goals.

**Keywords:** Growth management; Poverty; Urban policy

### **Introduction**

Scholars studying regionalism increasingly argue that there is economic interdependence between suburbs and central cities and, therefore, a metropolitan collective interest (Downs 1994; Pastor et al. 2000; Peirce 1993). This paradigm, associated with the perspective called “new regionalism,” views intrametropolitan divisions as self-defeating in an internationally competitive economy. A basic premise of this perspective is that regions should be pursuing policies that reduce racial segregation, concentration of poverty, neighborhood distress, disproportionate exposure of the poor to environmental risk, and interjurisdictional inequality because these conditions undermine the economic competitiveness and overall well-being of a region.

This article investigates the record thus far of whether, and how, metropolitan governing bodies seek to promote equity across subareas and subgroups of urban regions. I canvassed the academic and professional literature on regional governance and intergovernmental planning to identify specific regional programs, state legislation, and federal spending programs that bear on the metropolitan equity issue. I also consulted published reports and proceedings by regional organizations, along with leading regional experts. Of interest were those policies

that aspire to improve the mobility of poor residents, assist distressed neighborhoods, and/or reduce tax and service disparities. I define regional governance broadly to encompass diverse organizational alternatives (Downs 1994; Rusk 1993; U.S. Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations 1974; Wallis 1994):

1. Functionally specific regional agencies established through state law or joint-powers service agreements
2. Regional agencies created in response to federal transportation or air-quality requirements
3. Regional councils of government (COGs) that are multipurpose and voluntary associations of local governments
4. Regionalism through state oversight and standard-setting
5. Comprehensive metropolitan governments that exert some decision-making authority over local governments
6. Coalitions of public, private, and nonprofit sectors that come together to develop a regional vision and strategy of action

Past studies of regional governance have painted an unflattering picture of regionalism's engagement with metropolitan equity and social justice issues. Dodge (1996) calls the widening gap within regions the "Achilles' heel" of regional decision making and states that regional governance has "either avoided economic, racial and fiscal disparities or pretended that they were unimportant" (145). Peirce and Johnson (1998) conclude that social equity is a "third-rail issue" avoided by regional leaders and that race remains a perplexing metropolitan problem. Adams and Parr (1997) found variability across 10 metropolitan regions in the degree of explicit regional discussion about disparities. Even regions that have undertaken reform in metropolitan governance—such as Miami-Dade County or Minneapolis-St. Paul—have been found to score low in social policy and in addressing disparities (Savitch and Vogel 1996). Stephens and Wikstrom (2000) assert that regional governments have not served as innovative and effective redistribution structures. And regional officials at the national organization level observe that interjurisdictional and interpersonal equity issues are commonly excluded from the policy agendas of regional councils of government (phone interview with Pat Atkins, research director, and William Dodge, executive director, of the National Association of Regional Councils, February 2000).

This article seeks to move the discussion beyond the blanket indictment of the equity performance of regional governance by identifying whether there are particular types and characteristics of equity policies that do pop up—either in the form of regional discussion and analysis or actual policy implementation. Further, I explore the reasons why these policies arise on regional agendas. In particular, I am interested in whether the consideration of regional equity is due to the recognition by local and regional actors of a mutual interest—a key plank of “new regionalist” optimism about metropolitan governance (Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom 2001; Orfield 1997)—or rather to indirect or external influences supportive of regional equity that affect an otherwise psychologically partitioned metropolitan area. Finally, I investigate the prospects of these equity efforts for broader adoption by regional agencies in the future.

### **New regionalism and inequality**

A renewed interest in multijurisdictional governance on the part of public, private, and nonprofit sectors occurred in the United States during the 1990s as economic globalization positioned regions as the new economic motors of the world economy (Scott 1998; Storper 1997). In this new regionalism, international economic competitiveness increasingly focuses the attention of policy makers and investors on the urban economic region, not simply individual municipal units, as the appropriate scale of intervention and analysis (Cisneros 1993; Peirce 1993). At the same time, scholarly studies illuminated the interdependence of suburban and central cities, such that suburban and metropolitan welfare (in terms of population and income growth) is linked, in part, to the health of the central city (Adams et al. 1996; Ledebur and Barnes 1992; Pastor et al. 2000; Savitch 1993; Voith 1992, 1994). [See, however, Blair and Zhang 1994 and Hill, Wolman, and Ford 1995.] In contrast to regional efforts in the 1960s and 1970s that sought to redistribute public resources from the suburbs to the central city, new regionalism seeks to improve central-city health as part of a “win-win” strategy that enhances the ability of the entire metropolitan area to compete economically (Friskien and Norris 2001; Norris 2001).

Regions or “city states” competing in a globalizing economy find themselves facing a dilemma. On the one hand, globalization can cause urban economic polarization and social segmentation (Sassen 2000; Scott 1998). On the other hand, regional leaders may not be able to afford the costs of interjurisdictional and interpersonal disparities that dampen overall regional health and, thus, competitiveness. One significant source of intraregional inequalities is the concentration of poverty

found in many American metropolitan areas (Goldsmith and Blakely 1992; Massey and Denton 1993). In 1990, 8.5 million people lived in census tracts having poverty rates in excess of 40 percent, compared with 4.2 million in 1970. These areas of concentrated poverty are commonly places where people of color reside—one-half of the population is black, one-fourth is Hispanic, and one-fourth consists of non-Hispanic whites (Jargowsky 1997). Fully 33 percent of the black poor in the United States live in these high-poverty neighborhoods; almost 30 percent of such neighborhoods have a population that is at least 90 percent black (Jargowsky 1994). Concentrated poverty constitutes a significant source of future disadvantage and relative deprivation (Massey and Denton 1993). The location of households and individuals in segregated, poverty-stricken neighborhoods significantly influences the quality of their schools, the level of municipal services they receive, their tax burden, their access to work, and their level of safety (Orfield 1986).

The perception of a metropolitan area beset by distressed central-city neighborhoods and significant interjurisdictional and interpersonal inequalities is not one that energizes interest on the part of potential investors and residents. The costs of intraregional disparities are beginning to be examined empirically. A study commissioned by the National Research Council calculated that high levels of racial segregation result in a 3 to 6 percent decline in metropolitan-level productivity while also increasing the public costs of policing a disadvantaged population that perceives it has been denied opportunities (Altshuler et al. 1999). Segregation also can impose substantial economic costs in the form of an unevenly educated workforce created by interjurisdictional disparities in educational opportunities (Roisman 1998). At the same time, there has been empirical evidence that increased regional coordination can lead to higher levels of economic prosperity (Nelson and Foster 1999).

## **Regional equity strategies and policies**

I looked for policies and programs formulated or implemented at the regional level that seek to facilitate residential relocation of the poor, increase equality of opportunity for those living in distressed neighborhoods, alleviate disproportionate burdens on poor residents, or equalize fiscal capacity and spending on public services across a region's cities. The research identified different types of regional equity strategies, listed in figure 1.

Figure 1. Regional Equity Strategies

1. *Require “fair share” affordable housing in the suburbs.* Efforts, usually by state governments, seek to deconcentrate the poor throughout metropolitan areas by requiring that non-central cities plan for, or promote, low- and moderate-income housing.
2. *Connect regional economic development strategies to antipoverty goals.* Public-private economic strategies seek to promote jobs that match the skills of existing residents, improve the skills of low-income families, ensure that large regional infrastructure projects do not neglect minority areas, and establish community development financial institutions.
3. *Manage regional growth and investment to restrict suburban sprawl.* Land use regulatory tools and state and federal public expenditures are used to channel growth inward to keep economic and social opportunities closer to the urban core and increase access to urban opportunities by poor households.
4. *Use federal programs that connect the inner-city poor to suburban opportunities.* Federal government efforts aimed at housing mobility, together with large, expensive commitments to improved transportation mobility and clean air, provide regional authorities with the ability to exploit federal initiatives and spending for purposes of social equity.
5. *Analyze equity impacts of growth across metropolitan neighborhoods.* Demographic and socioeconomic data at the neighborhood, subregional, and regional levels are analyzed to address concerns over environmental justice and to support efforts aimed at stabilizing multicultural neighborhoods.
6. *Address fiscal reasons behind unbalanced municipal planning.* Tools such as property tax base sharing and stricter municipal incorporation thresholds are used to discourage practices suburban cities adopt to protect their fiscal and socioeconomic status and, ultimately, create metropolitan landscapes of unequal opportunity.

### *Require “fair share” affordable housing in the suburbs*

State and metropolitan governments in New Jersey, Massachusetts, Oregon, California, and Minneapolis–St. Paul have intervened to promote affordable housing on a more regionally distributed basis. In New Jersey, following the *Southern Burlington County NAACP v. Township of Mount Laurel* (92 N.J. 158; “Mount Laurel II”) decision in 1983, builders of affordable housing projects denied by a local government as not meeting its fair-share responsibilities can appeal directly to a three-judge panel to overturn the local decision (Buchsbbaum 1985). Since 1985, the state has had an executive agency with the authority to

determine municipal fair-share obligations, to approve regional agreements on the interlocal allocation of affordable housing, and to review and approve local housing plans. The New Jersey State Planning Act, 1985 (NJSA 52:18A–196 et seq.), encouraged all local governments to plan for their share of projected growth, using a state-local negotiation process to address conflicts between local growth-limiting prerogatives and the state’s development objective of absorbing the full amount of state population and employment growth projected to 2010 (New Jersey State Planning Commission 1988). A builder’s remedy approach is used in Massachusetts. The “antisnob zoning act” (Chapter 40B) exempts from local zoning laws a developer proposing a housing project in a town where less than 10 percent of the housing stock is “affordable,” provided 25 percent of new units are reserved for affordable housing. The state estimated that this program has resulted in 400 projects and 20,000 housing units over the first 20 years (Massachusetts Executive Office of Communities and Development 1989).

California law (Section 65584 of the California Government Code) requires that all local governments and regional councils of governments engage in a regional housing needs assessment process whereby each locality must plan for its share of regional housing needs (both aggregate and low income). Housing elements of local general plans in California must not only meet existing and projected housing needs, but also must contain a planning adjustment to “reduce the concentrations of lower-income households in jurisdictions where they are disproportionately represented relative to their representation in the whole regional market” (Southern California Association of Governments 1995, 6–49). Without this adjustment, “households earning less than \$36,000 in most subregions would be locked into present locations by the planning process” (Southern California Association of Governments 1995, 6–50). However, the ability of the state to effect change in local planning activity appears problematic in California. Its 1989 housing element program resulted in only a 19 percent compliance rate by local governments in 1992 and a 58 percent rate in 1995. At the end of 2001, the compliance rate stood at 63 percent (California Department of Housing and Community Development 1996, 2001). Minnesota’s Livable Communities Act of 1995 enabled the Metropolitan Council of Minneapolis–St. Paul to establish a metropolitanwide fair-share housing program that attempts to link the council’s allocation of sewer infrastructure funding to suburban cities’ development of affordable housing plans. The inclusionary housing law of Montgomery County, MD, requires that all new housing developments with 50 or more units include between 12.5 and 15 percent moderate-priced units. This program created over 10,000 moderate-priced units from 1974 through 1999 (Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom 2001).

Innovations in regional fair-share programs include the use of market mechanisms that allow the interlocal transfers of affordable housing obligations. In New Jersey, municipalities can transfer up to 50 percent of their affordable housing obligation to other cities if financial arrangements between sending and receiving cities can be worked out (Eisdorfer 1991). With mutual consent, California law allows counties to transfer their share of housing to member cities. These laws seek greater regional provision of affordable housing by allowing payments to be made to those jurisdictions able to build more than their regional fair share of such housing. In New Jersey, this has meant that by 1994, \$75 million was sent from the suburbs to the central cities so affordable housing could be built there (Kirp, Dwyer, and Rosenthal 1995). Problematically, this regional increase in affordable housing stock occurs along with the persistence or deepening of the geographic segregation of the poor.

*Connect regional economic development strategies to antipoverty goals*

A number of public-private regional collaboratives, aimed at increasing regions' economic competitiveness, exist across the country. They are usually business oriented and in this way are expanded versions of chambers of commerce, but they also become involved in major infrastructure, work force preparedness, and local government issues (Wallis 1994).

In Cleveland, the regional Greater Cleveland Growth Association is addressing mismatches in skills, location of jobs, and job information in the urban region; the Greater Cleveland Roundtable cosponsored a Federal Reserve Bank effort to eliminate potentially discriminatory practices in the home-buying process; and the major regional private foundation in the city created a commission on poverty and spawned an initiative addressing the city's persistent poverty (Parzen 1997). The regional economic leadership in Charlotte, NC, has maintained strong links to the downtown and central city, and this has facilitated efforts to address poverty and regional inequality. In Boston, contracting set-asides and social equity criteria were attached to major regional infrastructure projects; a regional program connecting education and job placement was forged among the city, the school system, and the business community; and affordable housing linkage requirements were attached to office development (Pastor et al. 2000). The San Diego Dialogue, a regional private-public collaborative of leaders from industry, government, media, academia, and nonprofit organizations, and its Forum *Fronterizo* Council are developing a binational agenda addressing

poverty, social networks, and education for the San Diego/Baja California cross-border region (2000). In the San Jose, CA, area, the Joint Venture: Silicon Valley Network, a consortium of business and government leaders, has recently addressed regional welfare more comprehensively than in its earlier years, tackling issues of unequal access to opportunity, housing choice, and concentrated poverty (1998).

Presently, there are hundreds of community development financial institutions (CDFIs) in the United States, including credit unions, development banks, microenterprise funds, loan funds, and community development venture funds. Because the market reach of these institutions can span the numerous municipalities of a regional economy, CDFIs can act as intermediaries between regional economic development and low-income communities more than local place-bound community development corporations (CDCs) can. In Philadelphia, the Reinvestment Fund has a \$100 million asset base and makes loans for housing, small business, and community facilities throughout the metropolitan area, in addition to operating a regional workforce investment program (Nowak n.d.). Similarly, there are cases where community-based organizations and CDCs have connected to regional employment opportunities, reconstituting those informal job networks weakened by the common spatial isolation of lower-income households (Harrison 2000).

These examples of economic development initiatives with antipoverty components may well be more the pioneers than the trend. In an otherwise positive evaluation of 10 regional public-private collaboratives, Peirce and Johnson (1998) conclude that downtown redevelopment too often sidesteps the concentration of poverty issues. Pastor et al. (2000) similarly find that regional economic initiatives dealing with transportation, industrial development, and small business generation in the Los Angeles area are generally disconnected from low-income communities. Further, Hughes (2000) discusses how the fragmented administrative geography of federal job training assistance (the Workforce Investment Act of 1998) aggravates uneven metropolitan employment opportunities.

### *Manage regional growth and investment to restrict suburban sprawl*

Suburban sprawl has been criticized for its excessive consumption of land, destruction of natural resources and farmland, regional inefficiencies in public facilities and infrastructure, and fiscal pressures on suburban governments (Bank of America et al. 1995; Frank 1989; New

Jersey State Planning Commission 1992; Real Estate Research Corporation 1974). [See, however, Gordon and Richardson 1997.] In addition, it is linked to economic disparities across racial and ethnic groups as suburban cities attract higher-income residents with large lots, high-quality housing, and community amenities and as sprawl increases the spatial mismatch between the metropolitan poor and suburban job opportunities (Altshuler et al. 1999; Downs 1994; Orfield 1997; U.S. General Accounting Office 1999). [See, however, Downs 1999.]

In pursuit of more equitable growth, governments have used land use regulations to channel growth and urban opportunities inward. State and regional standards on minimum density can increase the diversity of housing types and sizes offered throughout the urban region. The Oregon Land Conservation and Development Act (1973, SB 100, Oregon Statutes 197) requires that in their comprehensive plan, cities “accommodate a variety of housing types and plan to meet projected housing needs.” As part of its review of local plans, the state land use commission examines whether the amount of land zoned for high-density is sufficient, whether localities use zoning to discourage high-density development, and whether a buildable lands inventory and needs assessment have been completed (Knaap 1990). Impacts on local government actions after 15 years of this program were positive—the average vacant single family lot in the 27 Portland metropolitan jurisdictions decreased by 33 percent and land zoned for multifamily housing quadrupled to over 25 percent of net buildable acres (Hales 1991; Richmond 1990). However, actual built densities remained below allowed (planned) densities of new development (Knaap and Nelson 1992).

Oregon also uses another antisprawl mechanism—the urban growth boundary (UGB). Such a boundary is delineated to accommodate forecasted growth within its land area. Outside the boundary, public service extensions and annexations are curtailed, and land is zoned for nonurban use. Metropolitan-wide UGBs are required in many Oregon cities and most counties in Washington state and are used by the Metropolitan Council of Minneapolis–St. Paul. The Oregon program has been found to be effective in encouraging contiguous urbanization within UGBs (Weitz and Moore 1998). In the Portland metropolitan area, over 90 percent of new development has occurred within the UGB (ECO Northwest 1990; Knaap and Nelson 1992; Nelson 1994).

Several regions, such as Atlanta and Chicago, as well as the state of Maryland, have refocused public expenditures for capital facilities toward urbanized areas in order to contain sprawl and inner-city disinvestment (Pastor et al. 2000). Maryland’s Smart Growth Initiative

(Maryland Code Annotated, ch. 759, 1997) channels state spending on new infrastructure inside existing urbanized or serviced areas. Along the southeastern coast of Florida, two regional planning councils and over 60 local governments are cooperating to direct investment toward the established eastern urban corridor, which contains pockets of concentrated poverty and social isolation, and away from western agricultural and sensitive environmental lands adjacent to the Everglades ecosystem (National Association of Regional Councils 2000).

Federal transportation funds can be used to consciously shape regional spatial patterns for equity objectives because, since the early 1990s, federal law has incorporated goals broader than increased mobility. Under the 1991 federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA—Public Law 102–240) and its successor, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA–21), the significant social effects of transportation investment must be accounted for during metropolitan decision making. Federal law mandates that metropolitan transportation organizations consider “the social, economic, energy, and environmental effects of transportation decisions” (ISTEA § 134 (f)). And administrative regulations specify that there must be “consideration of the effects and impacts of the (transportation) plan on the human, natural and man-made environment such as housing, employment and community development” (23 C.F.R. 450.316 (13)). This language opens the door to opportunities for analyses of whether continued highway funding in outer suburban areas could exacerbate sprawl, metropolitan income segregation, and inner-city disinvestment as prestigious pristine areas are opened to development. It has also allowed regional advocacy groups and coalitions (such as Building Responsibility, Equality, and Dignity in Columbus, OH; Campaign for Sustainable Milwaukee; and the national Transportation Equity Network) to apply pressure on decision makers to redirect federal transportation funding to assist inner city communities and residents (PolicyLink 2000a, 2000b). In Pittsburgh, the Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission targets improvements to transportation corridors in older industrial areas and explicitly discourages sprawl (Crawford, Fetting, and McElwaine 1997).

*Use federal programs that connect inner-city poor to suburban opportunities*

There are important precedents pertaining to the obligation to use public money in ways that decrease concentrations of minorities. Demonstration programs subsequent to *Gautreaux et al. v. Chicago Housing Authority et al.* (265 R. Supp. 582. N.D. Ill. 1967) sought to

remedy past discrimination by increasing low-income housing opportunities throughout the Chicago metropolitan area (Vernarelli 1986). Studies summarized in Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum (2000) show positive social and economic effects on low-income blacks when they move from segregated housing projects to middle-class white suburbs. *Shannon et al. v. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development* (436 F. 2d 809. 3rd Cir. 1970) required the department to use a methodology to assess the racial impact of its funding decisions. Project selection criteria were subsequently established to guide funding of public housing, Section 236, and rent supplement programs. Similarly, site and neighborhood standards used in the Section 8 project-based certificate program state that (with exceptions) the site of a proposed project “must not be located in an area of minority concentration” or in a “racially mixed area if the project will cause a significant increase in the proportion of minority to non-minority residents in the area” (24 C.F.R. 983.6). Although these racial neighborhood standards have had some impact on the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD’s) actual decisions in individual cases, a more fundamental question is whether such a methodology can be effectively applied in the more typical contemporary environment in which there is proposed demolition or other loss of existing subsidized housing (National Housing Law Project 1999). Actions such as HUD’s 1995 agreement in *Hollman v. Cisneros* reinforce the government’s responsibility to reverse racially segregated pockets of poverty in assisted housing projects.

Regional agencies have an important potential oversight role in connecting federal programs to social equity. Presidential Executive Order 12,372 empowers regional agencies (often COGs) to perform an inter-governmental review of programs proposed for federal financial assistance and thus gives regional entities the authority to channel federally assisted housing (and other federal) expenditures in ways that lessen the concentration of poverty across the metropolitan landscape.

Since 1984, Cincinnati, Memphis (TN), and Dallas have attempted to initiate programs built on the Gautreaux model (Foster-Bey 1997). In 1990, Congress enacted the 10-year Moving to Opportunity (MTO) demonstration program, with housing mobility as a key element, in five cities—Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York. MTO provides extensive counseling to help people move from public and assisted housing in high-poverty inner-city neighborhoods to communities with poverty rates of less than 10 percent (Feins, Holin, and Phipps 1994). Approximately 5,000 families have enrolled in the program, and more than 1,600 former public housing families now live in private rental units. About one-half of these families have moved to low-poverty neighborhoods (Goering et al. 1999; Shroder 2001). This

demonstration project has led to some controversy, and white working-class opposition has been a significant element in Baltimore County, MD (Mollenkopf 1998). Dispersal criteria are now part of the way HUD evaluates local housing agencies. In its Section 8 Management Assessment Program (24 C.F.R. 985.3), HUD awards bonus points in its monitoring of the performance of local housing agencies based on the percentage of Section 8 relocators who move to census tracts with a poverty rate of less than 10 percent.

The MTO program is part of a larger pattern in which the federal government is moving away from project-based subsidies to tenant-based subsidies in the form of vouchers and certificates. As existing contracts on project-based programs expire and as public housing moves away from a project-based system, more and more low-income households are receiving portable subsidies (Turner, Popkin, and Cunningham 2000; Varady and Walker 2000). Regional authorities and organizations can play important roles in addressing regional deconcentration of low-income households. A leading example is the Leadership Council of Metropolitan Open Communities in Chicago, a nonprofit regional organization founded in 1966. It maintains four housing centers in inner-city and suburban Chicago to provide information and assistance to racial and ethnic minorities.

The federal government is seeking to stimulate such interjurisdictional approaches to housing mobility. HUD's Regional Opportunity Counseling Program funded 15 public housing agencies across the nation to develop metropolitanwide housing mobility strategies with other housing agencies and nonprofit organizations in the same metropolitan area. Because the ability to channel federal expenditures to increase desegregation would be enhanced by a regular monitoring of the racial and socioeconomic concentration of neighborhoods, cities, and subregions, regional mobility and counseling approaches highlight the need for regional agencies to monitor and analyze interneighborhood socioeconomic dynamics (see the next section).

Other regional equity impulses from the federal government are in the area of transportation policy. In addition to requiring that equity be considered in regional transportation investment decisions, federal transportation policy seeks to connect inner-city residents directly to suburban job opportunities. The five-year, \$650 million Jobs Access and Reverse Commute program in TEA-21 (Public Law 105-178, § 3037) is a program that provides grants to transit operators so they can better connect low-income or city welfare recipients to suburban employment. In contrast to housing deconcentration efforts, the intent is not to directly facilitate relocation, but rather the daily commuting connection between inner-city residence and the suburban job market. TEA-21

also allows federal transportation funds to be used on the assessment and cleanup of contaminated industrial brownfield sites that lie in the path of a transportation project or on the site of a former transportation project. The fact that brownfield sites tend to be centrally located and proximate to residences and businesses means that urban revitalization stimulated by transportation investment can occur with less traffic generated and with greater benefits to nearby poorer neighborhoods (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations 2001).

Finally, in the integration of transportation planning and air quality management established in the 1991 federal ISTEA lies an opportunity to pursue regional equity. One method considered by regional transportation and air quality authorities in their clean air efforts is to seek a greater equalization of jobs and housing distributions across the metropolitan region in order to reduce regional commuting distances and air pollution. Although not an explicit goal, such jobs-housing policies can further equity goals by decreasing the spatial mismatch between the residential location of poor households and suburban job locations. The formulation of a jobs-housing initiative in southern California displays both its promise and political limits. The 1989 draft South Coast Air Quality Management Plan prepared by the regional air authority attempted to enact subregional jobs-housing ratios for local governments. Local zoning changes were to be encouraged such that 9 percent of new jobs to be created between 1990 and 2010 would be redirected to housing-rich areas, and 5 percent of all new housing would be redirected to job-rich areas. Because of opposition from local governments, such regional management of local land use gave way in the final 1991 plan. The focus of the policy changed to vehicle miles traveled targets that give localities greater discretion in terms of how they meet these goals (Kamieniecki and Ferrall 1991; South Coast Air Quality Management District 1989, 1991).

### *Analyze equity impacts of growth across metropolitan neighborhoods*

The increasing use of regional performance indicators is an important step toward using social impact analysis at the multijurisdictional level. A few regional governments are beginning to incorporate social data in their reporting. A 200-member public-private collaborative in Buffalo–Niagara Falls, NY, developed nine regional equity performance indicators, including ones tracking poverty distribution, minority homeownership, and housing discrimination (Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth 1999). Atlanta Vision 2020, developed by the Atlanta Regional Commission, includes benchmarks such

as births to school-age mothers, low-birth-weight babies, juveniles committed to state custody, and recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children.

Social impact assessment can be incorporated into regional agency review of projects having multijurisdictional effects. Many metropolitan or regional governments have the ability to review developments of regional impact or metropolitan significance that affect more than one city. For example, such review is provided for in the California Environmental Quality Act, and reviews of developments of metropolitan significance are done in Minneapolis–St. Paul pursuant to the Metropolitan Land Planning Act of 1976. However, such regional reviews commonly emphasize adverse environmental or infrastructure consequences instead of evaluating the effect of the proposed project on social equity grounds, such as forecasting the distribution of a project's costs and benefits across neighborhoods.

Social impact analysis of growth effects across neighborhoods can be used in pursuit of environmental justice. It is not just regional economic and demographic forces that can adversely affect inner-city communities of poverty or color, but also public policies that facilitate the overconcentration of noxious and troublesome “locally unwanted land uses” (LULUs) that destabilize these poor and minority communities. Examples include homeless shelters, regional waste-disposal facilities, major polluting industries, or an oversaturation of government-assisted or public housing in the community. Under forms of regionalism common in the United States today, cumulative LULU impacts are not considered, and poor neighborhoods pay the price. An example of a regional government attempting to address the overconcentration of pollution (hot spots) near minority neighborhoods is the regional air quality board for southern California. In 1997, it adopted a set of environmental justice principles and is monitoring whether its air emissions trading program is resulting in disproportionate buildups of pollution near poor, minority neighborhoods (South Coast Air Quality Management District 1999).

Analysis of changing demographic profiles across metropolitan neighborhoods is also important in efforts to nurture and stabilize multiracial and multicultural neighborhoods. Integration maintenance programs are municipal strategies intended to produce greater stability and racial integration of neighborhoods (Lind 1982; Polikoff 1986). They seek to encourage white home buyers to locate in racially integrated areas and black home buyers to locate in predominantly white neighborhoods. These location decisions are seen as uncharacteristic of persons of their respective races; that is, whites prefer near-homogeneous neighborhoods, while blacks have a much greater tolerance for racially mixed neighborhoods (Darden 1983; Helper 1969; McGehee and Watson 1977).

Integration maintenance programs have been most fully used in the Chicago and Cleveland suburbs (Helper 1986). Other neighborhood stabilization efforts can be found in Brooklyn (NY), Denver, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Washington, DC, Akron (OH), Hartford (CT), and Milwaukee (Saltman 1991).

Regional agencies have an important role in assisting local neighborhood stabilization programs because it is only at the regional scale of analysis that there is sensitivity to the interjurisdictional demographic dynamics that can shape the ultimate success or failure of local stabilization programs. Saltman (1991), in her comprehensive study of integration maintenance programs, concludes that local neighborhood efforts must be supported by external strategies requiring metropolitan and local coordination. On a related point, Kennedy and Leonard (2001) discuss the potential roles of regional agencies and CDCs in identifying neighborhood gentrification pressures early so that the displacement of original residents can be minimized and the benefits from revitalization equitably shared with low-income residents.

There are efforts to develop regional databases employing neighborhood measures of ethnic stability and change. Computerized neighborhood indicator systems are key tools in monitoring community health. The Urban Institute's National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership has 12 metropolitan affiliates engaged in indicator systems to help track and combat poverty, build local community groups, and increase local collaboration (Kingsley 1999). In the Boston case, the regional council of governments is an information partner. A separate effort, Chicago's Internet-based Neighborhood Early Warning System (<http://www.cnt.org/news>), created by the nonprofit Center for Neighborhood Technology, regularly monitors code violations, tax delinquencies, and buying/selling patterns, thus illustrating how readily available current data can be used to make assessments of neighborhood stability. Regional governments can develop model ordinances of residential racial diversity that municipalities could adopt, along with a list of proactive strategies local governments could undertake to achieve and maintain residential integration. In the early 1980s, the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission proposed A Suggested Fair Housing Ordinance: A Guide for Local Officials, a model ordinance that included an affirmative marketing element.

### *Address fiscal reasons behind unbalanced municipal planning*

The hemming in of poor and minority communities is due in part to restrictive practices by suburban communities to protect their fiscal strength and socioeconomic character (Fischel 1999). As long as the

fiscal capacity and well-being of suburban cities are tied to the amount and type of development within their borders, they seem likely to continue to resist metropolitan equity strategies and programs that could put fiscal strains on their local budgets. A sharing of the regional tax base can counter this “fiscalization” of land use decisions. The leading example is the Metropolitan Revenue Distribution Act (Fiscal Disparities Act), passed by the Minnesota legislature in 1971. The act requires that every local government in the seven-county Minneapolis–St. Paul area deposit 40 percent of the growth of its commercial and industrial tax base into a regional pool created to remedy interjurisdictional fiscal disparities (Lasser 1991; Lyall 1975). Martin (1998) reports that one political advantage of such sharing is its ability to create more winners than losers, with 74 percent of the 187 participating jurisdictions benefiting from the transfers. In Montgomery County, OH, which includes Dayton, the Economic Development/Government Equity fund collects a portion of increased property and income tax revenue from economic growth and distributes it to nongrowing jurisdictions based on property valuation and population.

A recent study found regional tax base sharing to be more widely used than commonly thought, although it was most often the sharing of specific taxes or user fees for earmarked functions (Summers 2000). This survey found 9 large urban areas where there was sharing of a general regional tax for a large bundle of services and 18 others where there was sharing of specific taxes or fees (Summers 2000). Another method that is applicable to some Sunbelt metropolitan areas and is useful in countering intersuburban competition is the use of stricter municipal incorporation requirements and more lenient central-city annexation rules arbitrated by regional boundary commissions (Rusk 1993; U.S. Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations 1982). With suburban fiscal motivations attenuated through either regional tax base sharing or stricter incorporation standards, regional social and economic needs would then have a greater chance to shape metropolitan growth patterns.

## Conclusion

This study uncovers a pattern of regional equity engagement that is more complex than is portrayed in the indictments of regionalism as insensitive to equity issues. This research finds that regional equity policies are undertaken in certain metropolitan areas, take diverse forms, and are often stimulated by influences at the federal or state government levels. There are numerous threads of equity-based regional intervention that appear widely scattered and are generally small scale, yet cumulatively they may have some measurable effect on

improving regional equity. However, these policies are commonly not advanced explicitly, nor are they part of comprehensive programs at the regional level.

Regional entities rarely independently pursue policies to reduce social and economic disparities, despite new regionalist arguments that it is in their best economic interest to do so. Instead, when such policies exist, they commonly come in through the back door, as a result of federal and state programs that may or may not be concerned primarily with social equity. In clear contrast to the impact of federal policy in promoting economic segregation and suburban sprawl since 1950 (Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom 2001; Wiewel and Persky 2002), several threads of U.S. policies now encourage integrated, compact growth.

Regional equity policies are advancing not in an integrated fashion based on local deliberation, but in piecemeal, secondary ways in reaction to a confluence of intergovernmental impulses and quality of life concerns. Rather than independently advancing a metropolitan equity agenda, regional entities appear as important conduits for the implementation of federal and state housing, transportation, and growth management initiatives. Some strategies have been enacted pursuant to state legislative action (such as in Oregon and New Jersey) and create important roles for regional bodies in their implementation. Many state programs have arisen because of quality of life concerns over suburban sprawl, but nonetheless have implications for addressing regional socioeconomic disparities. A number of strategies are driven by significant federal laws that are conducive to alleviating poverty. Federal programs such as tenant-based portable housing subsidies, transportation policies that include community equity and highlight access to suburban jobs, and the regulation of air pollution on the basis of environmental justice criteria may have measurable influences on the alleviation and deconcentration of metropolitan poverty. In contrast to these intergovernmental influences on regional equity policies, one function that regional agencies appear more willing to take on independently is the analysis and monitoring of intraregional demographic and socioeconomic patterns. Yet this function positions such agencies more in a support or technical role, rather than in a proactive one, in addressing metropolitan equity.

In addition to the uncovering of the general pattern and pathways of metropolitan equity policies, the findings of this study should advance the regional antipoverty discussion beyond the in-place (community development) versus mobility (deconcentration) debate of the 1960s and 1970s. Regionalism often has been equated with an “opening up the suburbs” integration agenda that is viewed as antagonistic to

in-place community development efforts, diluting of minority political power in central cities, and disruptive of existing neighborhoods and social networks. Goetz (2000), for instance, shows that efforts to deconcentrate poverty can open up fault lines within the beneficiary community itself, energizing opponents who perceive the benefits of spatial concentration.

I find, however, that regional equity policies are not predisposed to deconcentration as the sole method for combating pockets of poverty. Rather, regional policies can strengthen community development efforts through the shaping of metropolitan choices (such as spending on transportation and the location of environmentally adverse land uses) in ways that benefit neighborhoods with concentrated poverty. In addition, regional strategies have an important role in managing and controlling regional growth processes (such as metropolitan sprawl) that increase segregation and interjurisdictional inequalities. Regional forces in these cases are brought to bear to help, not hinder, in-place strategies. In other cases, regional strategies can result in either in-place enhancement of neighborhoods or deconcentration of poor households. For example, metropolitan tax sharing could redirect resources to poor neighborhoods and/or facilitate deconcentration through the lessening of fiscally driven, restrictive land use regulations. Similarly, addressing jobs-skills mismatches and labor force education or improving reverse commuting opportunities enhances the economic well-being of central-city residents, but it is left to individual choice as to whether this results in community development or deconcentration.

The regional equity strategies in this article illustrate that the choice between in-place and deconcentration strategies aimed at improving poor and minority households is likely a false dichotomy that is splintering antipoverty advocates unnecessarily. As Voith (1996) points out, both in-place and deconcentration strategies have strengths and weaknesses, and there appear to be distinct but complementary roles for each in improving the health of a central city and its region.

## Prospects

For regional governmental bodies, federal and state policy influences appear to be playing a more significant role in their engagement with equity concerns than their ability to act independently in the best interests of their urban regions. Regional policies are often the result of laws and administrative directives coming from the federal housing, transportation, and air pollution policy arenas, in addition to state programs (such as antisprawl) that are not explicitly equity-based.

Together, these numerous threads may make a difference in advancing metropolitan equity.

The fact that often there is no overt regional agenda that could be perceived as disproportionately benefiting poor minorities—in fact, it is more likely that regional entities are responding to intergovernmental directives—may work to the advantage of these programs in terms of their continued political support. Federal transportation policy emphasizing efficiency of investment, pollution regulations aimed at cleaner air, and antisprawl programs seeking improvement in quality of life all promise benefits that cut across economic classes and racial and ethnic groups. Such an approach can move policy deliberations from antagonism to cooperation. This approach might also facilitate the spanning of central-city and suburban constituencies needed for regional action to occur (Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom 2001; Orfield 1997).

Yet, such equity policies coming in through the back door are likely insufficient without the local formulation of an indigenous regional equity agenda based on the shared benefits of collective and cooperative action. Without a locally developed regional equity agenda, metropolitan initiatives relying on economic competitiveness as a rationale for restructuring policies may well encourage continued historical biases toward development-related objectives that will not improve and may even exacerbate the problems of the metropolitan poor. Kantor (2000) shows, for instance, how regional intervention can move away from considering equity to promoting market-driven patterns of regional growth.

Important to the future of regional equity agendas in the United States is the means by which political coalitions might organize. Orfield (1997) suggests that regionalism may increasingly emerge in metropolitan areas as self-interest-based coalitions of political leaders from the central city, declining older and inner suburbs, and fiscally squeezed developing suburbs catalyze fuller regional considerations of such redistributive issues as reallocating the tax base and distributing affordable housing. By contrast, Pastor (2001) and Valle and Torres (2000) point out in their studies of the Los Angeles region that poor socioeconomic status is a trait that links swaths of community areas that span municipal borders and the central city and suburban ring. In metropolitan regions like this, alliances for progressive regionalism may not come forth because of cooperation among city officials (as hypothesized by Orfield 1997), but rather may develop out of community-based movements and organizations that come together to offer solutions for connecting their neighborhoods and constituencies to regional dynamics. Three different approaches for such community-based regionalism have

been identified: neighborhood investment/linkage, organizing/advocacy, and regional economic reform (PolicyLink 2000b).

This article finds that at this time, regional equity policies are coming in through the back door more as a result of intergovernmental directives or broader quality of life concerns than through the conscious efforts of coalitions of political leaders or community-based organizations and institutions. Although scattered and indirect, these forays into regional equity may provide local officials with leverage for starting discussions on equity at the metropolitan scale. The regional alliances of private, nonprofit, and public sectors that have sprung up, likely stimulated by the need to cooperate in the face of global economic competition, are potential locations for more explicit discussions of regional equity.

To develop indigenous regional equity agendas that would include more than regional responses to federal and state directives, progressives will need to become more adept at jumping scales and increasingly assert their claims for equity policies at the regional, rather than city, level (Smith 1992). Instead of focusing exclusively on the local community symptoms of regional economic and political forces, progressives need to bring into public deliberations analyses of the regional influences themselves and how they may be modified in pursuit of social justice. As Starrett (1997) observes, the weakness of the current effort to revitalize distressed neighborhoods is not that it is place-based but because it is “place-based at the wrong scale” (7). In the long term, the maturation of regional equity as an issue will be measured by whether equity policies on the regional agenda transcend their current derivative and secondary status and emerge in primary and explicit ways.

### *Author*

Scott A. Bollens is Professor in the Department of Planning, Policy, and Design at the University of California, Irvine.

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