Spaces of dependence, spaces of engagement and the politics of scale, or: looking for local politics

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Introduction

This is a paper about the politics of scale and, in particular, its social construction. This is a topic commanding increasing attention in political geography. Scale is central to political discourse, both lay and academic. A dominant way in which the various sciences of politics—political sociology, political economy, political geography and political science proper—divide up the subject matter of politics is in terms of various spatial qualifiers: local, sometimes regional, national, etc. These ideas are also expressed in the world of politics itself: there is reference, *inter alia*, to regional planning or neighborhood conflicts. There is, in other words, a scale division of politics.

The central institutional locus of the political is the state. For it there is a similar scale division, this time in terms of its division of labor. This will include local and central branches, but perhaps also metropolitan or more regional branches. Geographically this corresponds to a nested hierarchy of discrete, enclosed jurisdictional spaces.

Sometimes, and importantly, these two concepts of scale are elided. There is an old argument that local politics is what local governments deal with. Clearly this is not totally without warrant. In politics state agencies are mobilized and they have spheres of jurisdiction. And in attempting to mobilize state agencies to realize a specifically local interest then it might seem logical to approach local branches of the state. But just how watertight is that relation and how necessary is it? Can one, for example, have local politics without local branches of the state?

This brings us to the two questions which form the crux of this paper. The first has to do with content and form in the politics of space. Specifically, is it reasonable to define the scale character of a politics of space in terms of its spatial form? Is a politics that engages with local government necessarily local, with central branches, necessarily national, and so on? What might the *content* of a (e.g.) local politics of space look like as opposed to its form? We can accent this question by an interrogation of the (widely noted) phenomenon of 'jumping scales'. An example of this comes from David Harvey in his discussion of nineteenth century class struggles:
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Those who built a sense of community across space found themselves with a distinct advantage over those who mobilized the principle of community in place. Politically, this meant increasing ruling-class reliance upon national and, ultimately, international power sources and the gradual reduction of the sphere of relative autonomy of urban-based class alliances. The more the bourgeoisie lost control over urban centers, the more it asserted the dominant role of the nation state. It reinforced the authority of the spaces it could control over the places it could not. This was the political lesson that the bourgeoisie learned from the rise of the industrial city as a powerhouse of accumulation and a crucible of class struggle (Harvey, 1985b, pp. 200-201).

This is a useful idea. But what happens to the spatial qualifiers we use when talking about politics? Is, in this case, the politics in question any less local once scales have been jumped? By analogy, class politics can assume diverse forms: ethnic, racial, geographic. But in terms of its fundamental conditions do those forms of appearance make it any less a matter of class?

In addressing this question of content and form in the politics of space I define what I believe to be a crucial distinction. This is the distinction between what I will call spaces of dependence and spaces of engagement. Spaces of dependence are defined by those more-or-less localized social relations upon which we depend for the realization of essential interests and for which there are no substitutes elsewhere; they define place-specific conditions for our material well being and our sense of significance. These spaces are inserted in broader sets of relationships of a more global character and these constantly threaten to undermine or dissolve them. People, firms, state agencies, etc., organize in order to secure the conditions for the continued existence of their spaces of dependence but in so doing they have to engage with other centers of social power: local government, the national press, perhaps the international press, for example. In so doing they construct a different form of space which I call here a space of engagement: the space in which the politics of securing a space of dependence unfolds. This may be at a more global scale than the space of dependence, as per the idea of 'jumping scales' but it may not be. On the other hand, we can understand something of the conditions for one form rather than for another.

My second, and related question, is this: Typically in discussions of its politics the scale form is characterized in areal terms. For instance, the idea of 'jumping scales' also brings with it connotations of 'arena', of closed spaces defining a set of enclosures each with their own politics: local politics within the territorial bounds of local governments, national politics within those of the nation state, etc. But given that politics engages specifically with state agencies is it defensible to conceptualize the scales of activity so constructed in areal terms? Obviously the jurisdictions of state agencies exist but what is their actual significance for the politics of scale? A more appropriate metaphor for the spatiality of scale, I am going to argue, is that of the network.

I am by no means the first to argue for a greater attention to networks of associations in understanding the politics of space. Murray Low has laid out the problem in general as well as discussing from this standpoint the dilemmas of democracy in a globalizing world (Low, 1997). A contribution which comes closer still to what I have in mind and which explicitly addresses the question of the construction of scale is that of Murdoch and Marsden (1995). Although their purpose was different from mine the concept they have of the construction of networks of associations as the means through which to realize interests is one that I have liberally drawn on here.

Networks signify unevenness in the penetration of areal forms. They are also rarely
entirely contained by areal forms; boundaries tend to be porous. The territorial reach of state agencies is imperfect. Even in the case of the most totalitarian of states, there are always spaces of resistance. The same applies to other agents with territorially defined powers like the utilities, political parties and labor unions. To be sure, they all enjoy power, in the sense of rights, with respect to particular bounded areas or enclosures, but it is a formal power which is affected in its actual application by contingent conditions. Conversely, agents, in the associations that they can form and indeed do form, are by no means limited by particular enclosures. Local government policies can be appealed to higher levels of authority. Networks of association are created across national boundaries, as in the fight against apartheid.

Resolving these issues about the spatiality of politics, issues of content and form and the precise spatial expression of that form—areal or networked—has the potential to disturb many of the taken-for-granted assumptions typical of writing on the topic. Among others, I hope to bring critical leverage to bear on following beliefs:

1. that issues are clearly definable in scale-exclusive terms, as local or national or regional or whatever.
2. that particular scale divisions of labor of the state are somehow necessary; just how necessary, for example, are local governments and what does that do for those literatures, like the marxist theory of the local state, that assume some local institutional forms?
3. that one can equate different branches of the state's scale division of labor with particular, spatially defined, forms of politics: that there is an equation of local politics with local branches of the state and of national politics with central branches of the state. This sort of simplicity, I wish to argue, is a serious over-simplicity.
4. that the phenomenon of 'jumping scales' is unidirectional: that attempts to gain leverage over antagonists through colonizing different levels of the state invariably results in an upward shift, a greater centralization, of politics. I will wish to argue here that the world of politics is much more open than this and that there are numerous empirical instances which confound this sort of secular trend.

Finally in these prefatory remarks the alternative title to the paper—'Looking for Local Politics'—also requires some explanation. I address the question of the politics of scale but largely in terms of what it means for our understanding of local politics. This has nothing to do with concerns about the applicability of my arguments to other geographic scales less recognizably 'local' in conventional understandings of the term. Rather it is entirely a result of my own interests in local politics.

The paper is divided into three parts. In the first part I address the content of the politics of space: precisely why is it that spatial arrangements are contested and how can we characterize the interests at stake? I place at the center of my argument here the idea of local interests, interests in what I will call spaces of dependence; and their relation to broader fields of events and forces. It is these which provide the necessary context for the construction of spaces of engagement: in other words, for 'jumping scales' if that is indeed the form which the construction of a space of engagement will assume in any particular case.

The second and longest section of the paper addresses the question of the construction of spaces of engagement. It starts out with five brief case studies. Each of these examines the way in which agents, experiencing a problematic relation to a space of dependence, construct through a network of associations a space of engagement through
which to achieve some mitigation. These case studies are quite varied in their substantive content. They range from the absorption into national party politics of homeowners in depressed local housing markets in Britain; to the construction by black activists in South Africa struggling against forced relocation of a space of engagement of international proportions. This is followed by an interpretation of the case studies. In particular I am concerned with the general conditions for the construction of the networks of association which go to constitute a space of engagement. This allows me to understand the contingent nature of their spatial forms. Finally I draw out the general implications of the argument for locating local politics.

The politics of space: questions of content

The contributions of David Harvey (1982, Chapter 13; Harvey, 1985a and Harvey, 1985b) to an understanding of the politics of space have been seminal. He locates the essence of that politics in the contradiction between mobility and immobility: between capital in its mobile forms on the one hand and capital in its immobile, spatially fixed forms as factories, worker skills, social and physical infrastructures, etc., on the other. Value must continue to flow through capital in its fixed forms if industrial capitalists are to continue to realize profits, landowners rents, and workers wages, in particular places. If there is to be capital in more mobile forms, then value must first be appropriated in factories, through the application of labor skills, and appropriate physical and social infrastructures. Yet capital in its mobile form, through its constant search for higher levels of profit, continually threatens to radically devalue capital in these fixed forms. A politics of space emerges in order to ensure that this contradiction can be suspended. This is an argument that I have developed and applied to the topic of growth coalitions with 'the three Andrews', Jonas, Mair and Wood and it is now one which I seek to deploy in understanding the politics of scale.

Diverse forms of spatial fixity commit agents—capitalist firms, workers, state agencies, landowners—to securing those conditions in particular places that will allow them to go on (e.g.) making a profit, earning a wage, appropriating a rent, saving for retirement, appropriating tax revenues, etc. Firms may be dependent on the same local or regional economy but for very different reasons. For a utility it will be a matter of a service area outside of which it cannot sell gas, electricity, or whatever. For banks it may be a branching structure that is limited to the region. And for developers it will be a local knowledge that is not portable elsewhere and which significantly raises the opportunity costs of relocation.

For workers a particular local labor market may be a necessary condition for them being workers. But for one it may be a question of spousal employment, for another a house that would be difficult to sell and for yet another, an age close to that of retirement, which makes not simply leaving a particular place but a particular employer highly problematic.

But typically agents are participants in a much more spatially extensive set of exchange relations than those contained within the bounds of a particular place. Furthermore, these more global fields of forces and events are by no means constant. As a result the realization of local interests becomes inextricably linked to their changing geography. From the standpoint of commodity relations Storper and Walker (1989)'s 'inconstant geography of capital' is emblematic. It defines a field of uncertainty, both constraining and facilitating, with respect to which strategies must be developed if local interests are to be realized: plant closures and expansions, outmigration and immigration, the rise of
competitors elsewhere, etc. This is an inconstancy to which the state also contributes. This occurs not just through the way in which its regulatory actions help define the surface of investment opportunities for capital but also through its location of facilities: state offices, state research centers, prisons, universities or branches of universities—a contribution which, with the expansion of state activity, has become all the more important to the unstable nature of economic geographies.

The problem for the locally or place-dependent, therefore, and expressed abstractly, is ensuring that value in its more mobile forms continues to flow through their social relations; and as far as capital is concerned, on an expanded scale. In other words: Agents have local interests. These are interests in appropriating/realizing profits/rents/wages/taxes in particular places. Changing economic geographies at more global scales threaten the realization of these local interests.

Precisely how are we to grasp those local social relations within which agents are embedded and through which value must flow if they are to realize their place-dependent interests? I want to propose here the idea of a space of dependence: a space within which it is possible to substitute one socio (-spatial) relation for another but beyond which such substitution is difficult if not impossible. Most housing developers, particularly those working at the higher end of the housing market, acquire a knowledge of markets, of subcontractors, and a reputation with lenders and builders, if they are not building themselves, that is spatially circumscribed: circumscribed, in fact, by respective local housing markets. Precisely where they develop within that geographical area is a matter of indifference to them. But it has to be within that area since their knowledge and reputation are not portable elsewhere. Similar logics apply to utilities and state agencies. A utility can substitute one consumer of electricity or gas for another so long as it is within the area it is franchised to supply; but it cannot substitute a user outside that area. State agencies are the same in terms of their relation to taxpayers in different jurisdictions. Movement or some sort of locational substitution is possible within spaces of dependence, but impossible or at best, difficult, between.

In some instances the boundaries of these areas of substitutability, spaces of dependence, are somewhat blurred. The probabilistic nature of the boundaries of local housing and job markets is widely appreciated. But even so there are sharp breaks in the likelihood of substitution. The likelihood that a firm will replace a worker from the City of Columbus and its contiguous suburbs with another one from the same area is much higher than the likelihood of replacing with someone from nearby towns. If this was not the case then it would be difficult to talk about local housing and job markets at all. In other instances the boundaries are very sharp indeed. This is the case with the service areas of the utilities and the jurisdictions of local governments. Prior to inter-county and then inter-State banking the market areas of banks also used to be highly circumscribed.

Spaces of dependence occur at diverse scales. And for some agents there may be more than one. The spaces of dependence of utilities are clearly larger than those of local governments. Since their service areas are usually multi-county in extent they are also larger than those of developers, though developers will usually acquire a knowledge that allows them to spread beyond the confines of any one local government jurisdiction into a more extended metropolitan area. An important effect of this variation is that the mobility-fixity problem itself acquires a variably scaled character. In terms of decisions as to where to develop housing subdivisions builders define a field of mobility with respect to local governments: which, incidentally, helps towards an understanding of the various inclusionary and exclusionary policies deployed by local governments. Examples of this could be multiplied many times. One is the way in which multinationals define a more
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global field of events and forces for those industrial firms that find it difficult to extend their divisions of labor beyond a particular national base.

Likewise, for a particular agent there can be several spaces of dependence. These correspond to different moments in the (spatial) circulation of capital. For a homeowner looking to the appreciation of a home value the circulation of value through the local housing market as a result of, say, enhanced inward investment or the location of a major employment-creating public facility is important. But there is also a smaller space of dependence defined by the immediate neighborhood since it is this which helps determine the micro-geography of value flows: whether, that is, the particular land use juxtapositions with respect to which a neighborhood is situated will facilitate the flow of value through housing in that area. A similar logic applies to developers: the state of the metropolitan housing market is important but so too is what happens on adjacent sites, or in the respective local government jurisdiction, once subdivision commences and capital is committed to fixed forms.

This immobilization in particular spaces of dependence—local economies, job markets, local government jurisdictions, etc.—is something that is shared. It is this sharing on the part of firms, workers, residents, other organizations like state agencies, that creates the possibility of local classes and specifically local interest groups organized along lines defined by the social division of labor. As we have argued, workers may be locally dependent on a particular local labor market for very different reasons but they all share an interest in the terms defined by that market. The same applies to firms that, again for diverse reasons having to do with considerations like their size, subcontracting relations with other firms, dependence on a local knowledge, are dependent on that same labor market. In a similar way local economies throw off their own realtor organizations and building trade associations, both with stakes in the expansion of that economy. At still smaller geographic scales neighborhood organizations of residents represent the same sort of effect.

In these terms it is possible to identify a set of distinctly local conflicts around (e.g.) labor markets (Warde, 1988), taxes, local government spending, land use, local economic development and attendant identity formation. In American urban areas it is common to find a set of local firms and state agencies with strong interests in the expansion of the local economy organized around various initiatives designed to make the area more attractive to inward investment: in particular the utilities, the developers, and local governments (Cox and Wood, 1997). Often arrayed against them have been workers and residents with their own forms of local dependence and concerns: concerns for the dilution of labor law, concerns about levels of taxation or deteriorating urban amenity and, frequently, more neighborhood-specific impacts of enhanced development (Cox and Mair, 1988).4

Complicating this localized politics, indeed, converting it into a politics of space, is the fact that the spaces of dependence of different agents, those spaces within which they enjoy powers of movement, or at least of locational substitution, vary. This variation can be conceived as ranging all the way from the neighborhood market of the local mom-and-pop store, through the local government’s jurisdiction, the developer’s metropolitan housing market and the homeowner’s local housing market, to the utility’s region all the way to the more extensive spaces of dependence of larger industrial firms: firms, that is, that enjoy mobility within nation states but not beyond, to the world of the multinational.

In this way the contradiction between mobility and fixity is confronted, albeit at different geographic scales. The local struggles between development lobbies and residents, between employers and employees become spatialized. For the development lobby the problem is one of overcoming or suspending internal resistance to those policies it sees as making the city more attractive to inward investment. Locally embedded firms and
hence local labor are subject to the disciplines of a law of value that is now experienced as flow through a much more extensive space economy, concretized in the form of shifting markets, the rise of competing firms elsewhere and the like. The renegotiation of contracts may be sought now so as to facilitate competition within that wider space economy; and, where the employer happens to enjoy a more extensive space of dependence, on pain of relocating that employment elsewhere.

These tensions between fixity and mobility, moreover, are often internalized within the same agent. For while (e.g.) the utility has a space of dependence that makes it vulnerable to the mobility of some industrial firms, it also has a power of locational substitution with reference to the spaces of dependence of various local governments. A different form of internalization results from the fact of multiple spaces of dependence. This allows collaboration for some purposes—collaboration among the local governments of a metropolitan area around, say, joint marketing of the area for purposes of inward investment; and then antagonism subsequent to achieving that purpose as attention shifts to the precise location of the new plants and the new residents coming into the area.

What is at stake here are local interests. The ability to realize them is critically conditioned by the ability to exercise territorial power. The goal is to control the actions and interactions of others both within and between respective spaces of dependence; the means is control over a geographic area. The most obvious candidates for this purpose are the various agencies of the state and though territorial powers are not exclusive to the state, those of other agents, like the utilities or the political parties and labor unions, are underpinned by its own territorial power.

The problem then becomes one of influencing state agencies. This in turn requires the construction of a network of associations either incorporating state agencies directly or incorporating those who can exercise some indirect influence through (e.g.) their command of resources critical to them. It is this network which defines what I termed earlier a space of engagement. To some degree the subsequent politics may unfold entirely within a space of dependence that is shared by the various antagonists: the protagonists of development and their antagonists among local taxpayers struggling, through their respective coalitions and organizations, to influence local government policy—policies that will make the locality attractive or otherwise to inward investment, for instance.

But in yet other instances, what one finds is a process of 'jumping scales'. This may assume the form of mobilizing not local state agencies but more central branches of the state, and constructing spatially much more extensive networks of association, and hence spaces of engagement, in order to accomplish that end. On the other hand, we need to remember that spaces of dependence exist at multiple scales. This may mean that 'jumping scales' is not a jump from the smaller to the larger but in the reverse direction. In order to accomplish their purpose of attracting investment into respective service areas, for example, utilities have to construct networks of association linking them to local governments and chambers of commerce at much smaller scales. So jumping scales may amount not so much to the construction of more global networks of association but to a strategy of a more localizing kind. We now turn to consider some instances of this process of constructing spaces of engagement.

Constructing spaces of engagement

Case studies

A land use conflict in England In the first case study I draw on a land use conflict in England discussed in a recent paper by Murdoch and Marsden (1995). I disregard here
the particular purpose for which they constructed it. They are interested in it for the light it sheds on the nature of locality but their position on that question is, implicitly at least, somewhat different from mine. The specific instance that they review concerned an attempt by the state to implement a national landuse plan, specifically with reference to the exploitation of deposits of sand and gravel (so-called 'aggregates'). From the start there was an assumption of a national interest in the context of which any local opponent of these plans would have to work. The national landuse plan was predicated on forecasts of demands for aggregates which were then broken down by region. Murdoch and Marsden talk about a topdown constitution of 'new actor spaces drawing them (local actors) into a network in a controlled way.' (p. 373). Any opposition to the specifics of the plan had to address this discourse of demand and its legitimation. This resulted in the representation of localities in certain ways: as important to national mineral needs, for example.

The location in question was close to the village of Chackmore in Buckinghamshire and just outside Stowe Park. Stowe Park is the site of a famous British boarding school, Stowe School. The park was designed by Capability Brown, a noted landscape architect of the eighteenth century and is regarded as an exemplar of his work. The site was originally chosen, however, partly on grounds of interregional equity. In particular it was believed that the more southern part of the county was already heavily impacted by aggregate development as compared with the area in which the Chackmore site was located.

The immediate effect of the announcement of application to develop was the formation of a local opposition group: Chackmore Against Gravel Extraction or CAGE. The aims of the organization were, first, to bring about a public inquiry; and second, in that inquiry, to contest the application successfully. But in order to meet those objectives and hence quite specifically local interests and perhaps identities, it could not fight purely within a local space: a space more congruent with its space of dependence, for instance. The space of engagement had already been chosen by its antagonist and that was a national one. This was because justification for choosing that site could be made by appeal to a national landuse plan formulated in the light of supralocal interests.

Accordingly CAGE attempted to construct, and in the event quite successfully, a national level network of agents in support of its opposition: a network whose members, by virtue of their interests, social positions, or distancing from the local could defensibly contest one construal of the national interest with another. Crucial to this process, and quickly realized by CAGE, was the need to establish a case for potential damage to Stowe Park if the site—two miles away—should be developed. A friend of a member, a hydrologist was asked to evaluate the site from the standpoint of its impact on Stowe Park. He was able to show that it could indeed, if developed, lower the water table to the point at which the ornamental ponds in the park might be drained, thoroughly ruining, of course, the effect of Capability Brown's work. This opened the way for CAGE to build a national-level network around an alternative representation of the site: not much important to the national economy as to the national heritage. The steps taken included:

1. the mobilization, on behalf of the opposition, of those with more direct access to the organs of the central state. These agents, included, obviously enough local MPs. But less obviously there were a number of former Old Boys of Stowe School sitting in the House of Lords whose support could be effectively lobbied.

2. the recruitment of other Old Boys occupying seats of power in national-level institutions and forming part of the 'old boys network', members of whom shared some attachment to the locality by virtue of the location of the school.
3. drawing in the National Trust as an ally: As a revered national level institution charged with protection of sites important to the national heritage, it was a vehicle which could take the lead in constructing an alternative view of the national interest which would, incidentally, help secure the objectives of CAGE.

The campaign to prevent the use of the site for aggregates development was, indeed, successful: but only by virtue of the way in which 'a local dispute was turned into a national issue' (p. 371).

Homeowners, local labor markets, and national party competition The second case study is of particular note because it illustrates how the local character of the interests driving particular actions can be obscured by the nature of the networks of association into which people are incorporated. In other words, for various reasons having to do, perhaps, with the weakness of rival networks that might represent particular localities more directly, local interests may be organized by those appealing to quite different geographic identities and with much more varied social bases. Consequently while agents attempt to realize their interests in larger spaces of engagement they do so through some organization with an agenda which only partly overlaps with theirs.

The specific instance involves voting behavior in England and Wales in the 1983 election. Drawing on residuals from the regression of voting percentages on a number of socio-economic indicators Savage (1987) has suggested a new relation between locality and voting behavior. The context of his paper is the increased local variation apparent in British voting patterns since the 'fifties. The Conservative Party has tended to do especially well in the South and in rural areas and Labor less badly in the North and in urban areas. Savage examines several different explanations for this. But the one which seems to fit the empirical materials most convincingly emphasizes the increasing importance of local labor and housing markets as bases for political mobilization and particularly, of course, for home owners. In other words interests in local housing markets and therefore in local labor markets which derive from a particular form of local dependence are seeking realization through a national political project whose agenda has, ostensibly at least, nothing to do with variations in local fortunes.

Owning housing in Northern or central city housing markets had meant at the time Savage was writing stagnant or much lower rates of price appreciation than owning housing in the South or in the suburban and rural areas and this reflects different labor market experiences. Homeowners who wanted to move from relatively depressed housing and labor markets had difficulty doing so since buying into housing in a booming labor and hence housing market would be that much more difficult. Homeowners in the buoyant labor markets of the South or the suburban and rural areas faced no such problems.

This interpretation is supported by the patterns of residuals from regression. Most of the areas with negative Labour residuals were expanding prosperous areas. Workers there would gain from housing value appreciation. On the other hand, of the ten seats having the highest pro-Labour residuals only two have less than 50 percent owner occupation. Furthermore:

...most have high levels of unemployment... and are in regions of general economic decline. In these areas owner-occupation cannot be expected to lead to major capital gains without considerable state intervention to develop the economy. Further, insofar as owner-occupation gives people a stake in a locality, it may lead to more radical politics along these lines. (p. 71).

And as far as middle class owner occupiers are concerned, 'They have local as well as class interests, and the former may override the latter' (pp. 71-72).
So there were depressed local labor and housing markets in Britain and home owners there had strong interests in seeing them revive. According to Savage these local interests were the condition for support for the Labour Party which was bent, not on reviving those localities per se but on a macro-economic program that would have improved employment prospects throughout the country; whereas Thatcherite policies of the time had had geographically quite discriminatory effects.

I would like to suggest that this needs to be interpreted against the background of a local politics of development in Britain that has been extraordinarily weak when compared with that in the US. The sorts of local growth coalitions that one associates with American cities have for the most part been absent. This is explicable in part by the absence of those strong relations of local dependence that one associates in the US with the utilities, the banks and local government. In other words there was an absence in Britain of more local networks of association that might have organized home owners around programs of local economic development. The British Labour party could organize them by default and so, in effect, obscure the local interests driving political action.

Community builders and the Federal Government
Marc Weiss (1987) has drawn attention to the problems faced in metropolitan housing markets in the US by what he calls ‘community builders’ prior to the 1930s. Community builders developed on a relatively large scale: they purchased land, invested in fairly expensive infrastructural improvements, subdivided, and often built homes. They developed primarily for the upper end of the market. But in the housing markets of that time the success of their developments was threatened from a number of different directions.

Given the fixity and relatively long life of their infrastructural commitments they found themselves locally dependent but with respect to two different sorts of space. First, there was concern over the immediate environs of their developments and what incompatible land uses could do to their market prospects. Second, there were a number of different concerns that centered on the local housing market as a whole. Ease of entry into the subdivision and sale of lots for housing was one problem since it threatened to undermine the market for the developments of the community builders with their higher front end costs. Another was a general lack of confidence in the housing market on the part of buyers: a lack of confidence brought about by, among other things: the absence of strong subdivision regulations governing the housing that could be put up on adjacent lots in the same development; subdivision on such a scale that values were diluted; and a lack of planning for complementary public infrastructure.

What the community builders wanted was a strengthening of zoning, stiffer subdivision regulations and improved landuse planning procedures and infrastructural provision. But in pressing for changes in legislation that would bring these about they found that their agenda was not shared by all in local real estate industries. There had been some progress earlier inducing greater confidence in local housing markets. The establishment of local real estate boards and state licensing of realtors was important in regulating the worst excesses of realtor-client practices. But any local resolution of remaining obstacles was impeded by divisions between the community builders on the one hand and real estate brokers on the other. The community builders had a longer term interest in property covering large areas or related pieces of land. For many brokers, on the other hand, the main focus was commissions and fees. As a result they were interested in faster turnover and higher prices. In contrast to the interest of the community builders in both production and sales the interest of the brokers was purely in sales and of many spatially unrelated properties. This resulted in different attitudes towards zoning and public improvements.
Brokers, unlike the community builders, were willing to spot zone in order to promote the highest speculative value and fastest turnover for each property they owned or represented.

Brokers’ interests notwithstanding, there were local political movements calling for stronger landuse regulation and planning. But the community builders tended to fear rather than welcome them. This, according to Weiss, was due to a belief that ‘local politicians and planning commissions could not be sufficiently trusted to exercise power in ways that would clearly benefit realty business interests’ (p. 142). In the early 1930s, however, the federal interest in pump priming the economy out of depression through a vastly stepped up program of home building provided the community builders with their opportunity.

The vehicle seized on was the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) which was created with input from the House Builders and Subdividers Division of the National Association of Real Estate Boards (NAREB). The precise mechanism of enhanced control was the introduction of federal mortgage insurance. As far as the federal government was concerned this would enhance the demand for housing by increasing the security of mortgage lenders and so allow lower interest rates and longer periods for repayment. NAREB shared an interest in seeing the demand for private housing increased. But it also recognized that if its members were to make money then supply side issues would also have to be resolved.

The critical wedge here were the standardized appraisal procedures to be used by the FHA in evaluating insurance risk. These were linked in part to the presence of urban planning and landuse controls, deed restrictions and even consideration of the state of demand in a particular local housing market. The FHA, for example, retained the right to refuse to provide mortgages for property in subdivisions regarded as not warranted by local demand (p. 149). These procedures brought pressure to bear on local governments to change their landuse planning practices, and to strengthen both zoning and subdivision regulations.6

For the community builders it was interests of a decidedly local nature—the realization of value invested in immobile forms—that were at stake. Lacking local leverage to achieve their legislative program and so protect their fixed investments they looked to higher levels of the state where they believed, or perhaps more accurately discovered, that they could exercise the necessary degree of influence. Much depended on the vicissitudes of state policy. Without a federal commitment to increased housing production the resolution of the difficulties facing the community builders might not have happened, or at least not when it did. But with that commitment they found their interests complemented by those of an agency with the power to carry through its resolve.

Local economic development networks Andrew Wood and I have written on something that we have called ‘the local economic development network’ (Wood, 1993; Cox and Wood, 1997). An awareness of such networks emerged in the context of work that we were doing on the mediation of inward industrial investment in Ohio. What we found was that the mediation of this investment could be understood in terms of a network of trust joining together utilities, local governments and Chambers of Commerce. These networks have formed in different areas of the State within the service areas of the major utilities with, obviously enough, different ones coordinated by the gas and electric utilities respectively. The trust aspects are of no great significance here however. What is important is the way in which the network has been organized from above by the utilities.

Each of the agents in the network has strong local interests, if at different geographic
spaces. The goal of the utilities, or more accurately their local economic development departments, has been to attract investment into respective service areas. In this way they can enhance their ability to amortize investments of long life in the undertaking of which there is always a strong speculative element. Local governments are concerned with galvanizing their tax bases, while the local Chambers seem to be representative primarily of developers. Developers too are locally dependent by virtue of the significance to their operations of local knowledge—not just ‘knowing’ but also ‘being known’: a local knowledge that is built up slowly, which is non-transferable and which comes to represent a significant opportunity cost in relocating from one market to another.

Each of these agents fulfills a particular role in a division of labor. The utilities are the first ports of call for any industrial firm or its representative considering a site in the area. This is because their economic development departments have a monopoly on information regarding potential sites. Owners of industrial property in a utility’s service area almost invariably file information on their sites with the utilities. This is in part because of the utility’s own long standing interest in inward investment; and also because site searches tend to be carried out over areas considerably larger than that of a local government jurisdiction or the membership area of a local chamber of commerce. This monopoly is of crucial significance in assessing the centrality of the utilities to the functioning of local economic development networks.

Chambers of Commerce come into their own during site visits. It will be the Chamber that is charged with putting together a team of local business managers to talk with the prospect. Much of the discussion will range around labor issues which are not documented statistically. In addition the Chamber acts as a source of local knowledge: knowing what is feasible in a particular community, what is possible in terms of incentives from local government, likely zoning difficulties, etc.

Finally there is local government. Local government is important in the provision of needed items of infrastructure like water and sewerage extensions and new highways. Questions of landuse regulation may need to be handled. It is also local government which offers the financial incentive packages, though much of the money for these comes from the State.

Throughout the process of site selection it is the utilities that coordinate. The utilities are anxious to attract inward investment into their service areas, and so too are the local chambers and local governments, but only to the extent that the investment comes to lodge within their own more local jurisdictions.

There is, however, a fundamental asymmetry in the character of local interests. The utilities are interested in organizing throughout their service area but the local governments and chambers aren’t, or at least are so to a much lesser degree. In addition the transaction costs involved in the more local organizations coming together are much greater than those involved in topdown coordination by the utilities, particularly given the fact that the utilities control the essential site information. Accordingly the utilities have been the prime movers in forming the local economic development network.

The local politics of forced relocations in South Africa

The pattern of racially segregated townships in South Africa, at least as far as the law is concerned, goes back to 1923 and the Native (Urban Areas) Act. According to the terms of that act cities were invited to declare themselves ‘all-white’ but on condition that they establish a separate township for blacks which would then be recognized in law by the central government. This recognition was known as ‘proclamation’ and provided residents with certain rights, like the establishment of some sort of representative council and in their dealings with the
municipality creating the township. In the nineteen thirties this legislation was strengthened, making the establishment of townships— or locations as they were then called—mandatory. Accordingly, across South Africa there developed a pattern of 'white' towns with black townships immediately adjacent.  

Under apartheid, however, and subsequent to the decision to transform the old native reserves into independent homelands, a dramatically new policy towards the townships emerged. This was one of relocating them from sites near to 'white' towns to sites in, or adjacent to, nearby homelands (see Platzky and Walker, 1985). 'Nearby' could be anywhere up to 75 km, which was believed to be within commuting distance of the 'white' town. Subsequently the old township would be deproclaimed, residents moved, and townships demolished, perhaps replaced by hostels for those male workers who preferred to retain their old jobs not through commuting on a daily basis but by something more approximating to migrant labor.

If the new township was already in the homeland, then people lost their former rights to live in South Africa along with other protections like pension rights and access to (better) public services or, subsequent to the recognition of black labor unions in the late 1970s, rights to belong to unions. If it was not in the homeland then the homeland boundaries would be redefined to include it. The state agency responsible for deproclamation was the central government's (oddly-named) Department of Development and Cooperation (later absorbed into the Department for Constitutional Development and Planning) and that for the establishment of a new site, the South African Bantu Trust. Responsible for seeing that the removal was carried out was the local Bantu Administration Board, boards with full responsibilities for administering blacks with respect to employment, housing, schools etc., in 'white' South Africa. The Bantu Administration Boards were directly responsible to Pretoria and had replaced in terms of their functions the municipalities originally establishing the townships. Needless to say, all this was done without any consultation with the black residents so affected.

Typically some of them would resist removal. The Bantu Administration Boards therefore had to draw on a repertoire of tactics designed to 'persuade'. These included: sharply increased rents in the old township since all the lots and some of the structures on them would be state owned; neglect of its physical infrastructure; the demolition of houses as people left; prohibition on occupation of the empty lots; and later the hiring of vigilantes to terrorize the opposition.

In some cases local pressures were brought upon the central government to relocate townships. This was the case in Brits, a small town to the northwest of Johannesburg in which the white, dominantly Afrikaner population was just slightly exceeded in number by blacks (Stengel, 1993). During the 1960s, Brits was a location chosen by the central government as a reception site for the deconcentration of industry from South Africa's major urban areas. As part of the process of making Brits attractive land was annexed for an upmarket white suburb, Elandsrand. Unfortunately it happened to be located close to the black township of Oukasie. This led the city council to start its agitation for the removal of the township.

This agitation did not achieve fruition, however, until much later. For it was not till 1983 that the residents of Oukasie were informed that they would be moved to a new township, Lethlabile, being built some 25 km to the north. They were told that they would be reimbursed for their houses, subsidies would be available, and there was a promise that the township would not be incorporated into the nearby homeland of Boputhatswana. This led a few days later to the formation of an organization dedicated to resisting the move: the Brits Action Committee (BAC).
This spilt over into the workplace intensifying the resolve of an already militant black workforce. The management of a Firestone branch plant initially encouraged the move to Lethlabile but union opposition forced it to modify its position. In turn the labor unrest in the industrial area increased the desire of the Brits city council to achieve the relocation since as a result the town was acquiring an undesirable reputation among firms contemplating new locations.8

As part of its attempt to construct links with other organizations that might prove helpful in opposing the move the Brits Action Committee enlisted the support of the Transvaal Rural Action Committee (TRAC) and through Alan Morris, a TRAC worker, they were put in contact with an anti-apartheid lawyer working for the non-profit Legal Resources Center. In other words, the BAC mobilized on its behalf people who, while having no interest in the continued existence of Oukasie per se, identified with the residents as victims of apartheid. The BAC, therefore, saw that the particular configuration of circumstances that had led to the proposed removal meant that it could draw on the resources of the anti-apartheid movement.

Moreover, all this was occurring at a time when there was great uncertainty within the National Party as to what route to take to get out of the difficult situation which it found itself in. Subject to pressure both from within South Africa and from overseas the government was attempting to introduce various reforms while also contending with widespread township insurgencies. To be seen to be too repressive, to engage in actions that smacked of the old regime, like township removals, risked fanning the flames. This was a situation which TRAC sought to exploit. With respect to one of the protest meetings of BAC:

Part of TRAC's strategy was to generate as much publicity as possible, and Morris had alerted the local and international media. Suddenly Brits became a cause, a pushpin on the map of antiapartheid politics. 'Publicity is what TRAC is all about,' Morris says. 'During the 1960s and 1970s, hundreds of thousands of people were moved without anyone knowing. It wasn't documented. The government hates publicity. Our weaponry is pretty limited: publicity, foreign pressure, trade union pressure, and community pressure.' (Stengel, 1993, p. 123).

Indeed subsequent to the official deproclamation of the Brits Old Location (Oukasie) Brits became an international news story making the front page of the New York Times and the Washington Post. It also featured on two out of the three major TV network evening news broadcasts and on the BBC. ‘All the stories had the same theme: did what happened in Oukasie presage a return to the era of forced removals?’ (Ibid, p. 128)

Within a year the forced relocations of townships had been de facto abandoned by the South African government. In bringing this about, however, the Brits action was only one part of a larger puzzle. Forced relocations had been a staple of the apartheid landscape and the Brits case was one of many. There was a growing belief within the government that South Africa had to achieve some sort of modus vivendi with the pressures, moral, economic and political, coming both from within the country and from outside. Moreover, and responding to the broader retreat from apartheid that was then occurring, Brits Town Council was now dominated by the pro-apartheid Conservative Party and the National Party had written the town off electorally as a lost cause. So while the efforts of the Town Council to bring about the relocation persisted, the loss of an alliance with the center doomed them to failure.9
Interpretation

Constructing networks  In three of the cases discussed here some sort of organization is at the center of attempts to defend, enhance the interests of those dependent on some particular place-specific conditions—to defend or enhance a space of dependence. that is: Chackmore Against Gravel Extraction or CAGE in the case of the Murdoch/Marsden case study, the local Real Estate Board in the case of Weiss’s community builders and the Brits Action Committee in the case of the forced removal issue in South Africa. It is these that pursue the goal of constructing a network of associations—like the National Association of Real Estate Boards—through which to accomplish their goals.

In the two other cases organization is also apparent but this time the agents are seemingly organized by some existing organization into a network of associations, as in the case of Mike Savage’s homeowners and the role played in that instance by the British Labour Party; or the in the case of the local economic development network and the role of the utilities.

To accomplish their goals agents, either as individuals or through organizations, have to construct a network of links with other centers of social power. Examples here include the Central Ohio local economic development network; or the links established with foreign governments and with the anti-apartheid movement in the instance of forced relocations in South Africa. This means, typically, drawing in centers of social power that have decision making capacities directly affecting the realization of the objectives of agents. And at the same time, or possibly as an alternative if those with decision making power are resistant, they need to create links with those that can exercise some leverage over that decision making—starkly illustrated by the case of the Brits Action Committee.

Given the territorial aims of agents and of their organizations, their desire to exercise control over the content of areas, the appropriate decision making centers are likely to consist of various agencies of the state. The fact that it was the Department of the Environment in London which would ultimately determine the fate of the application to extract gravel in the vicinity of Chackmore clearly affected CAGE’s strategy. It was that level of the state, central, that is, rather than local, that had to be influenced in order to counter the threat. Likewise in Savage’s study of British voting: the historic weakness of local government in Britain in the matter of influencing local economic development shifted attention to the powers of central government. Since the 1930s these have been considerable, not just in terms of macro-economic policy making but also in terms of area-specific initiatives like depressed area policy. Whatever the network of associations into which local homeowners were incorporated it would be central government that would be the primary focus of efforts at local economic revival. And finally, in the instance of forced removals in South Africa, powers to disestablish existing townships and create new ones rested with Pretoria and not with local government.

This suggests that in evaluating the strategies of individual agents and their organizations, as they construct the networks through which they hope to accomplish their ends, the spatial structure of the state, its scale division of labor, is an important consideration. This, however, needs to be qualified in at least two respects. In the first place the state’s scale division of labor is not an immovable horizon. Organizations may have as their goal changing that distribution of state powers and responsibilities rather than working within it. Likewise, although the powers and responsibilities accorded different, territorially defined, levels of the state are formally distinct there are sometimes, from the standpoint of the agents pursuing particular objectives, functional substitutes, if imperfect ones. A local government may lack the power to impose impact fees on a developer but it may be
able to preemptively purchase the land and turn it into a public park. Local school districts were subject to federal power in the matter of busing for racial balance, but they retained the power to stream within schools, which had the effect of preserving at a smaller scale much of the racial segregation that had formerly divided one school from another.\footnote{11}

It is also important not to exaggerate the strategic position of the state. It is true that it has decision-making capabilities with territorial implications and this makes it an attractive partner for all those with local interests or identities at stake. In most instances it will be the focus of the networks of association constructed by the locally dependent. But it is not the case that all agents with territorial powers/responsibilities are state agencies. The discussion of the local economic development network of Central Ohio underlined the immense power that the utilities wield by virtue of their gatekeeping role: a role that derives from their monopoly of site information. This is a power that is territorially defined since it is exercised purely with respect to the utility's service area. It is one, moreover, to which local governments in the area are clearly subordinated. Similar arguments may apply to the territorial forms through which (e.g.) churches, corporations, political parties, labor unions, organize their activities.\footnote{12}

Yet bringing influence to bear on the appropriate and ultimate decision making powers, whether state or otherwise, may in turn depend on building up a much more elaborate network of connections to other centers of social power: centers, in other words, that can exercise some leverage over that decision making. This may be by virtue of their combined numerical force. Alternatively, or in addition, it may be by virtue of their control of other resources significant to those directly controlling the levers of power. This can assume a diversity of different forms.

Organizations committed to realizing the interests of members in specific localities, say local growth coalitions, may be able to enter into coalition with other organizations elsewhere. This will be so if the conditions they are interested in influencing are shared and if changing those conditions would alter their ability to attract inward investment. In the US the States retain important powers with respect to the conditions influencing the competitive abilities of constituent localities: all those conditions which are commonly defined as contributing to the State's 'business climate'. These, of course, also contribute to the business climates of the constituent localities providing them with advantages or disadvantages relative to localities in other States.

An inter-locality coalition of a more implicit form, brokered as it was by the British Labour Party, was that between the homeowners of Britain's depressed local job markets. If returned to power the Labour Party aimed, through its macro-economic policies, to reduce unemployment wherever it was located in Britain. This would have included those particularly depressed labor markets in central cities and in the North of England where Savage argues middle class homeowners felt especially disadvantaged by Conservative policy.

In yet other instances network construction may be a matter of mobilizing those who identify with the goals of some agent or organization, if not sharing its interests. In the case of forced relocations in South Africa the Brits Action Committee was able to draw on the support of anti-apartheid groups in the region as a whole, in South Africa and even outside. These in turn could make available to the Committee a variety of effective tactics developed elsewhere in South Africa, like the mobilization of the foreign media, on their behalf. This was not due to the fact that they shared the goal of preserving the township of Oukasie and easing life for its inhabitants. Rather it was the arbitrary and racist character of government action that elicited a broader resistance: forced removals in general as an
expression of the injustices of the apartheid regime and also as producing a set of opportunities for galvanizing even wider support.\textsuperscript{13}

The importance of these broader social networks stretching beyond the locality and tying it into more widely held social identities is also underlined in the Chackmore gravels extraction case. It will be recalled that the help of old boys of Stowe School was sought in the attempt to prevent development. The critical leverage in gaining their interest was the impact if might have on Stowe Park. But most of the old boys would probably never set foot in Stowe School again, or rarely. A sense of identification with the school, however, school days as a repository of significant memory, perhaps, made them easy to mobilize on its behalf; and hence on behalf of the residents of Chackmore.

Finally, and overlapping with the two previous instances in various ways, are alliances with those whose ultimate ends are different but who share an interest in particular local conditions: local conditions, that is, which will realize simultaneously those diverse ends. Whether aggregates were developed at the Chackmore site was probably a matter of supreme indifference to local MPs. After all, they would not be immediately affected in their everyday life by changes in the landscape of that particular part of Buckinghamshire. But satisfying Parliamentary constituents, and being seen to satisfy constituents by a broader audience elsewhere in the constituency, \textit{was} important. Likewise the National Trust had no interest in the property values of Chackmore residents or in the natural amenities that they in particular enjoyed. And the concern of the latter for the ornamental gardens at Stowe School was considerably less than their concern over the use of local roads by heavy trucks filled with gravel, the creation of dust as a result of the workings, etc. But in its concern to preserve an instance of English heritage the National Trust was drawn to oppose that same development as CAGE.

We can see a similar effect at work in the NAREB/federal government case. What the community builders wanted was stability in the investment environments of respective local housing markets so that they could make money there. What the federal government wanted was a stimulation of the national economy through the boost to national demand that it believed would come from increased home purchases. For both of them the securing of conditions for housing investment in urban areas, the reduction of risk for the community builders, was an important and shared means, but to different ends.

In this discussion I have emphasized the construction of networks and hence spaces of engagement at scales more global than that which is of ultimate interest to its protagonists, i.e. more global than respective spaces of dependence. In securing those conditions through which local interests and identities can be realized, therefore, organizations often have to construct networks with centers of social power that lie beyond their space of dependence. But this is not a necessary feature of local politics. It depends on what is needed in order to accomplish the goals of the organization. Those who fought for black civil rights could never have accomplished what they did by constructing networks of influence purely within particular Southern cities or States. Rather a much broader network embracing federal officials and an alliance of civil rights workers throughout the country had to be put together. On the other hand, a school bond issue may be fought out entirely within the local school district through the construction of networks among (e.g.) Parent Teacher Associations, teacher unions, local realtors and developers. Failure to pass the bond levy may shift attention to State school funding mechanisms and the construction of more global social networks to accomplish change at that level. But not necessarily.

The relation between spaces of dependence and spaces of engagement, therefore, is a contingent matter. Scales may indeed be jumped in some instances in the classical sense of a shift to a more global scale. But by no means is that an essential strategy for those
bent on protecting particular spaces of dependence. Indeed, spaces of engagement may actually be smaller than spaces of dependence. From the standpoint of the utilities, this is true of the local economic development networks highlighted in one of the case studies. Their space of dependence is a service area. If they are to profit from the location of a firm, facilitate the amortization of their heavy fixed costs, then location has to be in their service area. But much of their local economic development activity has to be fought out in the jurisdictions of the local governments into which that space of dependence is subdivided so that spaces of engagement are at smaller scales. The utilities may not get involved in conflicts at the local level directly for fear of the adverse publicity that might come from seeming interference in local decisions. But that they tutor local government and chamber officials in how to deal with contention is beyond doubt. *!

There are many other instances. The Building Industries of Central Ohio is a trade organization consisting of developers, realtors, building sub-contractors like plumbing and electrical firms, and building supply firms. It is indifferent as to where development occurs in Central Ohio so long as it occurs: Central Ohio is its space of dependence. But over recent years it has felt compelled to get involved in the impact fee issue. This is invariably fought out in much smaller spaces of engagement: those defined by the jurisdictions of local governments. In a similar vein consider the involvement of the major oil companies in a California State referendum: a referendum whose effect, if passed, would have been to divert Highway Trust Fund monies away from the construction of new highways to mass transit (Whitt, 1982).

So the form assumed by a space of engagement is a contingent matter: it is possible in particular instances that it will be more extensive than the space of dependence it has to secure, but not necessarily. In part this reflects the sorts of conditions I identified earlier: first, the scale division of labor of the state on the one hand—the utilities need the local governments because of their power with respect to the provision of infrastructure and landuse permits for new firms. And second, the differing degrees of leverage that can be brought to bear on the various state agencies having the requisite territorial power: the community builders found that they could exercise an influence over the federal government that would have been greatly attenuated in the case of local government. 15

But this risks marginalizing the dynamics involved in the politics of scale. It is not a question of one agent or organization and one network of associations at a time but many. In consequence, leverage is not something that is static. Rather it is discovered in the process of conflict. As some options are foreclosed others may open up as yet other agents seek out allies for their particular objectives. And conflict and competition are inevitable as agents move to secure their spaces of dependence against the forces of disintegration and dissolution.

Local resistance to particular initiatives may mean that networks of a more global scope have to be constructed if sufficient leverage is to be marshalled. The case of the community builders and the FHA is an instance. But this is something played out on a very regular basis. For example: local growth coalitions, encountering resistance to their plans, look to more central agencies of the state for the necessary financial or regulatory support.

Alternatively, the networks of association that some construct in order to secure respective spaces of dependence are in their turn threats to those whose spaces of dependence are at smaller scales. Utilities have to manage, govern, as best they can the local economic development policies of the local governments within their service areas. They need their cooperation if they are to secure their goal of enhancing inward investment. But the pressures of the utility may be less than welcome with, say, local resident groups anxious over
amenity issues, or even with existing employers. The utilities have their strategies for securing that cooperation: they rely on, indeed tutor, local allies as eyes, ears and trouble shooters. They want to forestall the emergence of competing initiatives that might impede new development but they are not always effective in doing so.

On the other hand, the emergence of local-level initiatives seeking to realize goals within relatively smaller spaces of dependence may compel those with much broader spaces of dependence to get involved. I say 'compel' deliberately. The threat of impact fees in one local government in Central Ohio might be regarded as something to which developers and the building industry in general could be indifferent. But they very quickly grasped that if introduced in just one they could very easily prove contagious. This would be because other local governments would seek to protect themselves against the additional development subsequently diverted in their direction. In order to do this they would impose the same fees themselves.\(^{16}\)

Nor is the dynamics of the case simply a matter of adjusting spaces of engagement: shifting attention from those centers of social power that have not been able to do the job to those that can. It may also mean redefining 'the job': redefining, that is, what the concrete goal is through which one aims to protect the conditions for appropriating rents and profits, earning a wage, etc. Only in this way may it be possible to create the necessary political space. To the extent that local economic development projects around a particular niche in the spatial division of labor are not realized then new niches may have to be tried. But this may be at the expense of a redefinition of an organization's social base, at the risk of provoking alternative initiatives on the part of those marginalized by the new direction in local economic development policy, and so on.

**Locating local politics**

The result is a shifting geography of spaces of engagement whose scale often, though not always, can mislead as to the local nature of the interests and identities that are propelling people, firms and other organizations into action: the underlying geography defined by spaces of dependence. Local politics appears as metropolitan, regional, national or even international as different organizations try to secure those networks of associations through which respective projects can be realized. Alternatively as a result of the scale of the space of engagement defining it a politics may appear to be local. But when the spaces of dependence of some, at least, of the agents involved are examined this easy equation appears much more dubious.

In some instances the localness of the interests and identities driving the politics forward can be almost totally obscured. Such is the case with Savage's homeowners in the depressed housing markets of central cities and of Northern England. The same applies to the meeting of minds between NAREB and the FHA over mortgage insurance and underwriting guidelines in the 1930s.\(^{17}\) In other cases, however, the origin of a coalition of forces in locality-specific organizations is more apparent.\(^{16}\)

Furthermore the forms of these spaces of engagement preempt any easy reduction to some sort of areal concept of scale. They clearly do not have to equate to some form that is jurisdictionally bounded. This was apparent in the Central Ohio case where local governments anxious to attract inward investment were part of a larger network coordinated by the utilities. In order to bring pressure to bear on the central state in South Africa and so preserve their township the Brits Action Committee, drawing on the media, constructed a network of alliances that was international in scope. In still other instances decision making power rests within the locality but competing local interests build up broader networks that can exercise power over local government. These may include links with more central agencies of the state creating leverage through the possible threat
of some external intervention. Local interest groups may call on broader coalitions, associations, for technical assistance, including legal advice, or financial help. In short: The state does not define some privileged arena or set of arenas within which network formation must take place. 'Jumping scales' is not a movement from one discrete arena to another.

This means, furthermore, that we need to revise our concepts of how different sorts of, spatially-qualified, politics relate to the state's territorial organization. We qualify politics as, for example, local, metropolitan, regional, national. It is tempting to see each form of politics as having its own, territorially-defined, arena: local politics and local states, regional politics and regional states (cf. Saunders, 1985), etc. But clearly, based on the argument I have set forth in this paper, in order to have a local politics, you do not need local states. Likewise, and going back to the utilities, you can have regional politics without regional-level governments. Indeed the multiplicity of scales of spaces of dependence, the bewildering pattern they form with respect to each other risks making any claim for some relation between the socio-spatial bases of different political interests and the territorial partitioning of the state hazardous at best.

Local interests and related spaces of dependence are the necessary precondition for a local politics but the space of engagement for it is entirely contingent. The ultimate interest is in mobilizing centers of social power whose power is territorial in character but this can be any of a number of different ones, not only local, regional, or national. And to bring influence to bear on these agencies other associations may have to be constructed, perhaps of an international nature, as we found in my brief discussion of the politics of forced relocation in South Africa.

If there is some local branch of the state then it may be mobilized in order to protect some local space of dependence. In American metropolitan areas residents' organizations have pressed local government to protect them from the tax increases mandated by further residential development by passing impact fee ordinances. But there is no necessary relationship between the realization of local interests and a network of associations that incorporates the local state. Weiss’s community builders distrusted the landuse regulation and planning intentions of local government and so sought out the help of the federal government. The protestations of the Brits Action Committee to the local Bantu Administration Board were ineffective and what allowed them to stave off relocation was their ability to mobilize a broader network of forces, including national states other than the South African one.

On the other hand, if there are indeed local states they may form part of the network of agents built up not by those defending correlative spaces of dependence; but rather by interests whose spaces of dependence exist at an altogether more global scale. Their purpose may become less that of defending local interests but more one of advancing the interests of agents that have an ability to substitute particular sites or locations at much larger geographic scales. In local economic development networks the powers of local government with respect to landuse regulation and financial incentives are necessary to the utilities if they are to be successful in bringing new investment into their service area but the space of dependence of the utilities is much more extensive than the jurisdiction of any one local government.

This is not to say that more local interests with spaces of dependence congruent with the territorial bounds of a local government may not also be present. But the world is far more complicated than an easy equation of state-defined territorial scales to variably scaled spaces of dependence would allow. Local governments may form part of networks that bring together not just local interests but agents which have a degree of locational
discretion between one local government jurisdiction and another. Residents’ associations, Parent-Teacher associations would certainly fight any threat to the powers of local government limited, as they often are, in their possibilities of relocation by investments in domestic property, the problems of disturbing the schooling of children, and the like. But so too would those more mobile elements of the American middle class whose distributional interests depend for their realization on the continued existence of the territorial fragmentation of state power.

Finally this suggests that among all the other oversimplifications we should resist there is another that suggests issues can be easily slotted into such pigeonholes as (e.g.) local or national politics. In the case of the community builders the FHA clearly had a national space of dependence in mind and was interested in promoting its interest in boosting the demand for housing in the United States. It just so happened that its policies in this regard could be designed to answer to the interests of the community builders: interests in securing conditions for their profitability in particular, localized, housing markets, that is. So politics can be both local and national, or local and regional as in the case of the differently scaled spaces of dependence behind the construction of local economic development networks.

Concluding comment

The question of scale is crucial in political geography. We do nothing without making some reference to it. A major advance has been to consider it from a social constructivist standpoint. I have tried to position my contribution with respect to this broader effort. What I have tried to show is that it helps us in understanding that process if we draw a distinction between spaces of dependence and spaces of engagement and that the relation between the two, contra the sense of ‘jumping scales’, is thoroughly contingent, though by no means beyond explanation. At the same time our task is made easier if we liberate ourselves from an excessively areal approach to the question. Spaces of engagement which have been the focus of discussions of politics of scale are constructed through networks of association and these define their spatial form. Viewing scale through these twin lenses has the potential to surprise as I hope I have shown when using them to look at the question of local politics.

NOTES

1. See in particular the recent (1997) Special Issue of Political Geography on the political geography of scale and edited by David Delaney and Helga Leitner: Political Geography 16:2.

2. Murray Low has nicely defined what I mean here by an areal approach: ‘Conceptualizing political spaces as areal, as a series of (mutually constitutive) arenas, privileges a way of thinking about political activity as a series of confrontations between agents. These arena occupants—which may be individuals or classes, groups, movements—square off, interact, struggle, compromise, constitute each other etc., in academic writing as though mutually co-present. Moreover, they act in, through, and around the state, conceived of as a kind of center of this areal space constituting politics’ (Low, 1997, p. 241).

3. More generally I am exceedingly grateful to Murray for pointing my own thinking in this direction and would like to acknowledge his influence.

4. This is not to say that this particular opposition of forces is inevitable. People are often organized into political projects, exposed to rhetorics, which are designed to suspend these conflicts, or to redefine them in such a way as to neutralize much of the opposition.

5. As Sack expressed it ‘By human territoriality I mean the attempt to affect, influence, or control actions and interactions (of people, things, and relationships) by asserting and attempting to enforce control over a geographic area’ (Sack, 1983, p. 55).
6. 'NAREB's community builders of the 1920s and early 1930s, who had feared the potential power of local planning commissions even as they lobbied in support of land-use regulations, found the perfect vehicle for subdivision and real estate market control in 1934 through the creation of a highly supportive federal real estate agency, the FHA, with its "non-coercive" methods of enforcing subdivision standards and restrictions' (Weiss, 1987, p. 157).

7. 'White' with scare quotes because the legislation did not prevent the residence there of Color-eds and Indians.

8. According to the manager of one of the larger factories, formerly owned by Firestone: 'Oukasie is seen by the whites in Brits as a rat's nest. Because of Oukasie and Brits's bad reputation for labor, companies want to move here like a hole in the head.' (Stengel, 1993: p. 93).

9. For a similar case see Hyslop (1996).

10. The Northeast-Midwest Congressional Coalition had precisely this as one of its objectives: abolishing that clause of the Taft-Hartley Act which gave States discretion with respect to the union shop, and advancing the federalization of the welfare state. Through this shift in the state's scale division of labor they hoped to reconstruct the field of opportunities for inward investment: the field, that is, which confronted local growth coalitions scattered across the Rustbelt (Markusen, 1987, pp. 160-171).

11. For the way in which the territorial structure of the state and the different degrees of leverage which groups have at different levels of the state combine to create a 'political opportunity structure' see the highly suggestive work of Byron Miller (1994).


13. A graduate student at Ohio State, Bae-Gyoon Park, has drawn my attention to a striking case of the role of these wider identities in South Korea. In South Korea geographically uneven development has become a major national issue and informs partisan division. An important vehicle for this differential advantage/disadvantage have been social networks connecting state and corporation. It is through these that the government attempts to regulate economic development in the country. The networks it has mobilized, however, are the alumni associations of major high schools. These connect people in particular localities with intense interests in local economic outcomes with government officials in Seoul. These officials do not share that interest but they identify with those who do, and so with their goals, by virtue of common membership in the same alumni association. Due to the geographically uneven nature of these networks connecting locality and state locally dependent interests in some parts of South Korea have found it much easier to mobilize national policy on their behalf than have those elsewhere.

14. Representatives of the utilities talked in interviews, in fact, about 'teaching them (local government and chamber officials) local economic development'.

15. There are many instances of this; indeed, this is the classic case of jumping scales. School boards and PTAs band together behind platforms of greatly expanded State funding of education. But typically this only happens subsequent to severe local resistance to the passage of operating levies. In similar fashion State growth coalitions in the Rustbelt turned to the federal government and a rewriting of the rules governing competition with growth coalitions in Sunbelt States. But this only happened once it seemed that relatively unionized workforces could not be persuaded by respective State legislatures to accept the sort of rewriting of labor law that would have allowed more effective competition for inward investment.

16. Proposition 18 in California in 1970 would have allowed voters in local areas the option of diverting up to 25% of the California motor vehicle tax and license fees originating in their area to mass transit purposes. It was fought vigorously by the major national oil companies. According to Whitt (1982, p. 122) over three quarters of the monies used to fight the issue came from that source. He continues: 'When I asked why oil companies such as Sun Oil (with headquarters in Philadelphia and no service stations in California) and Standard of Indiana saw fit to donate money to oppose 18, Morrison (general manager of the Western Oil and Gas Association) responded that the oil industry saw the campaign as a very important one. The issue had
symbolic value. If diversion could happen in California, it could, in Morrison's words, happen anywhere" (Ibid, p. 124).

17. The victory in South Africa of the National Party in the 'apartheid' election of 1948 is another striking instance. Although apartheid was presented as in the interests of whites everywhere the coalition of forces propelling the National Party brought together distinctly local interests. Through the greatly tightened restrictions on black movement that apartheid was seen, rightly, as heralding both white farmers and the mining industry saw their interests in particular, geographically defined, labor markets being protected: the interests of white farmers in maintaining the supply of black labor in the white rural areas and the interest of the mines in preserving labor in its migratory form. The white working class, on the other hand, saw restrictions on black movement to the cities as protecting their job prospects. In other words, the spaces of dependence of the elements making up the National Party coalition were localized and quite different. But the space of engagement was a national one which worked to obscure the local character of the interests driving apartheid politics.

18. Something like MILAN, for instance, or the British 'Motor Industry Local Authority Network', brings together local governments with significant employment in the automobile industry. Its purpose is to monitor policy developments affecting that employment and hence the respective localities of members.

References