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# FRAGMENTS OF REGIONALISM: The Limits of Southern California Governance

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**ABSTRACT:** *This paper explores the manifestations of regional governance in Southern California. The author evaluates whether three regional public authorities, empowered to address areawide transportation and air quality constraints, fragment or integrate regional identity and vision. He examines the lessons of the Southern California experience for other US regions engaged in government reorganization. He argues that Southern California regionalism constitutes a shadow governance characterized by technical bias, single purpose compartmentalization, and institutional insularity. He concludes that the affiliation of regional planning with single purpose and systems maintenance functions has facilitated regionalism at the same time it has limited its potential by functionally fragmenting and submerging the regional public interest.*

**A**n increased interest in and redefinition of regional governance is occurring in the United States. This interest in multijurisdictional governance by public, private and non-profit sectors is being spawned by two main factors. First, international economic competitiveness is focusing our attention on the urban economic region, not simply individual municipal units, as the proper scale of intervention (Peirce, 1993; Cisneros, 1993). Regions or "citistates" competing in an international economy may not be able to afford the costs of internal divisions (such as central city-suburbs) that dampen overall regional health (Savitch, 1993; Rothblatt & Sancton, 1993; Voith, 1992). Second, infrastructure deficiencies

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and gridlock produced by local government NIMBYism is encouraging the creation of more decisive regional entities able to site and finance region-serving NIMBY facilities such as highways, airports, and sewage disposal (Wallis, 1994; Kaplan & Cuciti, 1993).

Frequently, today's discussions concerning regionalism focus not on the traditional question of whether to have a metropolitan area government or not, but on how policymakers can develop alternative means of metropolitan governance and collaboration. Downs (1994), calling the establishment of metropolitan area governments a politically dead issue, nevertheless argues strongly for regional powers capable of "offsetting fragmented land use powers", including public-private cooperation, functionally specialized regional agencies, voluntary interlocal agreements, state government creation of a broader framework for local growth policy, and regional governance inspired through federal government incentives. Wallis (1994) and Grell and Gappert (1993) describe a new "regional civic infrastructure" emerging in many cities that consists of cross-sectoral alliances that pursue collaborative visions for the region. RuBino (1994) describes an evolutionary change in governance consisting of creative intergovernmental programs that take advantage of economies of scale, further mutual interests, or avoid conflicts.

This type of metropolitan cooperation is seen as more innovative, politically possible, and responsive than the wholesale creation of comprehensive, multifunctional metropolitan government (Parks & Oakerson, 1989; Oakerson & Parks, 1988). Political support for this type of regional governance is seen as more forthcoming because it is more circumscribed (often single function) and less a threat to existing general purpose governments. Cooperation, occurring when participants "pursue their own self-interest without the aide of a central authority to force them to cooperate with each other" (Axelrod, 1984, p.6), may strike a chord with metropolitan residents who favor self-reliance and detest bureaucratic solutions.

Before we abandon comprehensive metropolitan government as a viable option, however, it is worth evaluating a case, Southern California, where these more politically palatable forms of regional governance have been used. Indeed, the idea of local governments banding together in assemblages to address common multijurisdictional problems is not new. Thus, we may be able to learn lessons about such metropolitan cooperation that will add to discussions about contemporary regional governance.

This paper investigates the anatomy of modern day regional governance in Southern California through three case studies: Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD), and the Transportation Corridor Agencies (TCA) located in Orange County. Each of these agencies was established, or empowered to address contemporary physical resource and infrastructure threats to the region's welfare. I relate these regional strategies to the set of organizational options used in the US to reform local and regional governance. These three regional responses in Southern California, along with that of the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), are examined in terms of whether they fragment or integrate public power in the face of threats to the maintenance of the urban system. In other words, are they, together, able to articulate an effective regional vision and strategy? This is a fair standard to use because both schools of regionalism (those proposing strong metropolitan area governments and those proposing a combination of collaborative arrangements) would likely agree on this standard as a preferred regional result. Then I

evaluate the implications of such government organization in terms of the amelioration of growth problems in the Los Angeles region and the future shape of regionalism in metropolitan America.

## **REGIONAL GOVERNANCE ALTERNATIVES**

There is a diverse set of alternatives for creating regional governance in the US. I derive the following typology from U.S. Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR, 1974); Florida ACIR (1991); Rusk (1993); Wallis (1994); and Downs (1994).

### **Functionally Specific Regional Agencies**

Such agencies can be established either through state law and/or through the voluntary participation of local governments in joint powers (or service) agreements. They are frequently constituted as special districts with substantial administrative and fiscal independence from general purpose governments. They tend to focus on specific physical infrastructure needs: highway and transportation, sewage disposal, water supply, and port development and management. Examples include the Port of New York Authority, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, and, in Southern California, the Metropolitan Water District. An interesting example of this approach extended to a social equity issue is the Capitol Region Fair Housing Compact on Affordable Housing in the Hartford, Connecticut area. Downs (1994) states that the advantage of such ventures is that they are seen as less threatening to local governments than comprehensive regional government because they are single purpose and can be created through voluntary assemblages of local governments. Two of the case study manifestations of regionalism in Southern California are within this classification. Both the Los Angeles County MTA and the TCA of Orange County involve multiple jurisdictions and each focuses on a specific government function—transportation.

### **Federally Inspired Regional Agencies**

These are agencies created in response to federal air quality or transportation standards. They are not federal agencies per se, but local and regional ones inspired by federal law and regulations. For example, the SCAQMD, although established by the state, is actually a means of helping the region meet stringent federal air quality standards set forth in the Clean Air Act. Another example is the requirement of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) for a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), approved by the state governor, engaged in transportation planning for each metropolitan area over 50,000. In Southern California, the MPO is the regional council of governments, Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG).

### **Regional Councils of Government**

These councils of government (COGs) are voluntary regional associations of local government, represented in the case study area by SCAG. There are over 300 regional COGs in the US of which 10% serve regional populations above one million people (National

Association of Regional Councils, NARC, 1988). They differ from other voluntary forms above in two respects: (1) they are multipurpose but (2) limited in independence and statutory power.

### **Public-Private Alliances**

Wallis (1994) calls these regional forms the “third wave” of regional governance. They are coalitions of public, private, and nonprofit sectors that come together out of mutual interest to form a consensus, develop a regional vision, and plan a strategy of action. Examples include Cleveland Tomorrow, Greater Houston Partnership, Greater Philadelphia First, the Bay Vision 2020 Commission (San Francisco), and in the Southern California region, the 2000 Partnership.

### **Regionalism Through State Oversight/Regulation**

Regional governance here comes through changes to state-local relations rather than through structural changes to local government (Bollens, 1992.) Some states use a planning approach which mandates or encourages local comprehensive plans to be consistent with state and regional growth standards and goals. Examples include Oregon, New Jersey, and Vermont. Other states employ a regulative framework which utilizes direct state control over certain types of growth or in certain areas of a state. Examples include Florida, Hawaii, and California (although in only two distinct locations: Lake Tahoe and the coastline.)

### **Comprehensive Metropolitan Government**

A regional government body is created and assigned activities requiring some degree of centralized policy and decisionmaking authority. U.S. ACIR identifies options here as: (1) metropolitan federation, such as in Toronto, (2) metropolitan multipurpose district, such as in Portland, Oregon, and (3) state supported regional council, such as Minneapolis-St. Paul. Interestingly, metropolitan area governments have been proposed by private sector alliances in Los Angeles (2000 Partnership) and San Francisco (Bay Vision 2020), but to no avail.

## **REGIONAL GOVERNANCE IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**

The existence of over 160 cities, in addition to hundreds of special district governments, in the Los Angeles, Orange County, Riverside-San Bernardino, and Ventura metropolitan statistical areas, supports the region’s image as the fragmented metropolis (Fogelson, 1967). Yet, significant growth shaping metropolitan resources, such as transportation, water supply, air quality, and water quality, are controlled by strong regional governments in Southern California. The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) has control over one of the largest public works project in the US over the next 30 years: the construction of a regionwide light rail and subway system. Meanwhile, the four county South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) has one of the strongest mandates of any regional government in the country: to clean up the dirtiest air in the

United States. This growth of regional governance in Southern California is occurring during a time of severe service cutbacks faced by many cities due to the recent recession, property tax limitations, lessening state support of local government functions, and, in the case of Orange County, aftereffects of public bankruptcy.

Despite its image as a *laissez-faire* showpiece, consolidation and reorganization of government power is not new to the region. Indeed, in the City of Los Angeles' development in the turn-of-the-century, government power was instrumental in helping the city overcome physical limits to its growth capacity. Erie (1992) points out that during the Progressive Era (roughly 1906-1932) there was significant public sector activism and reorganization involved in overcoming two growth obstacles: a limited water supply and the lack of a port to facilitate regional economic development. Erie (1992, p.520) contrasts the reality of this statist activism with the myth of *laissez-faire* growth, and argues that "an unusually large, powerful, and autonomous local-state apparatus...was constructed after the turn of the century to provide the necessary infrastructure for metropolitan growth."

Today, the metropolitan region that includes Los Angeles is facing physical constraints to growth but now they are centered on two other factors: the capacity of transportation infrastructure and the quality of the regional air basin. Similar to the turn-of-the-century City of Los Angeles, contemporary growth constraints have stimulated public sector activism in infrastructure development. In both cases, the presence of regional growth constraints stimulated increased concentration of government power. Unlike the early 1900s, however, current government activism is occurring on the scale of the metropolitan landscape, not simply within one municipality. Whereas Erie (1992) contrasted "statist activism" with the "*laissez-faire*" myth, we are able now to contrast "regional activism" with the myth of local government home rule.

The Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA), consisting of Los Angeles, Orange, Ventura, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties, grew more than 25% between 1980 and 1990, reaching approximately 15 million people in 1990. This growth is not expected to stop. Population forecasts by SCAG (1995) estimate a population of 20.5 million people in the year 2010, 70% due to natural increase. These numbers reflect downward adjustments due to the severity in the early 1990s of the regional economic recession and increasing outmigration from the region. With this significant forecasted growth, there are serious questions about the future quality of life, especially with respect to traffic congestion and air pollution.

Population growth will add significant numbers of automobiles to an already saturated freeway and arterial road network. The number of motor vehicles registered in the five county region will increase from 7.5 million in 1984 to 10.6 million by 2010. Daily trips during this time will rise by 42% to 57 million trips (SCAG, 1989). Today's average freeway rush hour speed is 29 miles per hour. With no scheduled improvements, average speed would drop to 17 mph in 2010 (Zamichow, 1993).

In terms of air quality, the numbers are even more astounding. The South Coast Air Basin, composed of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, and nondesert San Bernardino Counties, has the dirtiest air in the nation. It is the only "extreme" nonattainment area designated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Air pollution in the Basin exceeded federal health standards 131 days of the year in 1991 (down from 219 days in 1989), with peak ozone levels two and a half times higher than the health standard of the South Coast Air

Quality Management District (SCAQMD, 1991, 1992). A combination of burning fossil fuels in power plants, heavy reliance on automobiles, and natural mountain barriers are the primary causes of such intensive pollution levels.

Whether the Southern California region can continue to grow and remain healthy will depend, in part, on how local and regional policymakers respond to these two crucial growth constraints: transportation and air quality. Several regional governing bodies have been empowered through funding and statute to address these constraints: the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) to construct a new mass transportation network in Los Angeles County, the Transportation Corridor Agencies (TCA) to build additional highway capacity in Orange County, and SCAQMD to address air pollution in the four county air basin. This paper necessarily focuses on regional transportation and air quality governance. Discussion of regional water governance by the Metropolitan Water District and the Regional Water Quality Control Board are considered in Gottlieb and Fitzsimmons (1991).

### **Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority**

The Los Angeles County Transportation Commission, a predecessor to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, (MTA), was created by state statute in 1976 to provide the county a degree of transportation planning and programming authority relative to SCAG, the six county metropolitan planning organization. Over the past ten years, the Los Angeles County MTA (created from the merger of the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission and the Southern California Rapid Transit District) has amassed significant new sources of independent funding and thus authority. The MTA has the leading role in the most ambitious public works project in the country. Its 1992 plan proposed development over 30 years of a \$183 billion, 300 mile light rail, subway, and commuter rail network, plus the addition of 4,200 new buses.

MTA's Metro Rail project is funded primarily through local sales taxes approved by voters in 1980 and 1990 (about \$500 million annual revenue). This local funding base increases MTA's independence vis-a-vis SCAG's Regional Transportation Plan because SCAG has only indirect influence, through its oversight of state and federal funding matches, over locally funded projects. State funding for the Metro Rail includes two bond issues in 1990. The 1991 Federal Transportation Act provides \$880 million, 1992 through 1998, for transportation in the county. In addition, MTA receives a portion of state gasoline tax for the purposes of coordinating cities' efforts at congestion management (Fulton & Newman, 1992). Plummeting local sales tax revenues and voter rejection of rail bond measures since its original plan have forced the MTA to downsize its goals. In 1995, it proposed the development over 20 years of a \$72-billion, 95-mile rail network, and 300 new buses (*Los Angeles Times*, 1996).

MTA is an example of single purpose regional organizations established in many metropolitan areas to provide and manage specific types of infrastructure (Kaplan & Cuciti, 1993). Despite such power (or possibly because of it), members of the authority's governing body are not directly elected by the voters, but are appointed from among elected county and city representatives. The MTA Board is composed primarily of county supervisors and elected city council members chosen from within their own ranks. This method of representation (the appointment of elected officials) is a common practice in single-function authorities.

MTA represents functional regionalism based on a single type of public service: transportation improvements. Such a focus has liabilities in a time when there is growing recognition of the important spatial and policy linkages between transportation and land use patterns. MTA is empowered to deal with transportation infrastructure but not with those regional and community land use issues (such as compactness and compatibility of growth near corridors) that can have a dramatic effect on the eventual success of mass transportation in Los Angeles County. The extent of MTA's planning activities is restricted to the corridor and station locations. Elsewhere, in surrounding blocks and neighborhoods, MTA must rely on local jurisdictions' current and proposed land use designations and restrictions (Gilson & Francis, 1993). This reliance on municipal discretion is problematic because it has been estimated that transit stations, upon completion of the system, will be within walking distance of only 11% of the population (Zamichow, 1993). Another difficulty confronted by the downtown centered mass transit system is that only 5% of the region's workers have jobs in downtown Los Angeles (Zamichow, 1993).

MTA does not have the authority to require that certain growth guidelines be met surrounding transit stations (regarding density and diversity of land use and reduction in parking requirements, for instance) that would increase the use of mass transit. Although MTA does have eminent domain, its use has been confined to transportation purposes rather than extended to the condemnation of surrounding blocks that may facilitate public control of land development and the subsequent capture of anticipated land value increases. Instead, MTA is seeking to leverage its substantial planned rail transit investment to bring about private development conducive to transit and community needs (Gilson & Francis, 1993.)

An alternative vision of how transportation planning and improvements could be used as a catalyst in the comprehensive reorientation of the city and region was presented by the former head of the Southern California Rapid Transit District. He laments that the rail system design has been a failure because it has been done by engineers, not planners and architects (Patsouras 1992). In a "bill of community rights", he lays out how transit policy "levers" could be used to improve adjoining neighborhoods, upgrade and beautify boulevards, create a master greenbelt system, enhance historic settings, and stimulate the regional economy.

Based on a promise by then-Mayor Tom Bradley that with the transit system, "we are going to have paradise in this community", the transit system has been viewed as the "scaffolding for the re-urbanization of Los Angeles" (Zamichow, 1993 p.A16). However, these outcomes are unlikely to occur because of the constraints on MTA's mission. It is not, after all, an organization that fully encompasses land use and social planning concerns.

### **Transportation Corridor Agencies, Orange County**

South of Los Angeles County, Orange County is an increasingly independent metropolitan region that contained about 2.5 million residents in 1990. The county grew 25% during the 1980s after a 36% growth rate in the 1970s. Population has more than tripled since 1960. Counter to the old image of Orange County as a bedroom suburban county to Los Angeles, 82% of county residents are employed within the county's borders (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1993). Along with phenomenal growth has come Los Angeles-sized trans-

portation problems. Large segments of major interstates and arterial roads operate at inadequate levels of service at peak and other times of the day.

Anticipating future growth pressures, two major new arterial routes, the San Joaquin Hills and Foothill/Eastern transportation corridors, that would traverse the County were included as part of the Orange County Master Plan of Arterial Highways adopted by the County Board of Supervisors in 1976. The corridors were placed on the State Highway system in 1983, making them eligible for state and federal funding. The Federal Aid Highway Act of 1987 established in Section 120 a pilot program permitting federal participation in seven toll facilities, including Orange County. Soon thereafter, the State of California passed legislation creating the Transportation Corridor Agencies (TCA) composed of the San Joaquin Hills and the Foothill/Eastern corridor agencies, and providing them with the authority to construct three toll roads, the first of their kind in California.

The corridor agencies were established by joint power agreements among cities in Orange County and the County to plan, finance, design, and construct the corridors. The boards of each agency consist of elected officials. The Board of Directors for the San Joaquin Hills Transportation Corridor Agency, for instance, is composed of nine city council members and two county supervisors. Funding for the toll roads comes from a unique combination of special assessments against new development in the "area of benefit", developer impact fees, toll revenue, and small state and federal grant contributions.

These two corridor agencies represent a special type of single purpose functional regionalism. Not only are they focused on a single government service (transportation), but each of their missions is dedicated to the building of a single road. This type of institution not only isolates government functions from each other, but it also institutionally separates the planning of road segments within a regional network. Indeed, the corridor agencies are independent from the county transportation commission mandated by the state to comprehensively address transportation issues.

Taking as an example the case of the proposed southern corridor, the San Joaquin Hills Transportation Corridor Agency has a single purpose: the planning, financing, designing, and constructing of the corridor identified in the Regional Mobility Plan as a mixed-flow and high occupancy vehicle facility. The road project, opened November 1996, is a 17.5 miles-long toll road which crosses six different cities and unincorporated county land. This single focused mission (building of a specific road), together with relative freedom from state and federal officials because of its predominantly local funding, has allowed the corridor agency to exercise significant discretion to address several obstacles that have had to be overcome in pursuit of its goals.

The corridor agency has successfully taken several preemptive and unprecedented actions by a public agency to accomplish four major tasks. First, it sought and achieved an exemption to the 1991 federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) from federal restrictions on federally funded highways intruding upon publicly owned land (called 4(f) evaluation).

Second, it successfully obtained a ruling from Interior Secretary Babbitt that the proposed road would pose "no jeopardy" to the coastal California gnatcatcher, which at the time was undergoing U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service review that eventually led to its listing as a threatened species. This ruling by Babbitt was made despite the fact that the toll road

was predicted to remove more than 150 acres of coastal sage scrub habitat, the habitat for the California gnatcatcher.

Third, in order to assure adequate toll revenue flow over the pay-back period for the project bonds, the corridor agency signed an agreement with the State Department of Transportation that creates a “no competition zone” around the proposed toll road. In this zone, the state would be restricted from planning new rail or highway projects that might undermine the financial success of the toll road. Finally, in order to speed up litigation filed against the project by four environmental groups, TCA sued these opposing groups in order to expedite an anticipated federal court challenge.

The single function, single mandate focus of legislation establishing the corridor agencies has created aggressive public entities that lack the capacity for self-evaluation. Wildavsky (1979) labels self-evaluation as the ability of an organization to determine how well it is meeting its objectives and to evaluate the appropriateness of the objectives themselves. In other words, such an organization would be able to critically evaluate both means and the ends themselves. Because the effectiveness of the San Joaquin corridor agency will be judged on whether it accomplishes its single purpose (the construction of the toll road in the designated geographic corridor), it makes it unlikely that it would change, or even reevaluate, its road building goal, despite opposition to the building of toll roads in the county by 60% of those surveyed in one poll of Orange County residents. On the other hand, if the toll road project was under the control of a regionwide transportation agency, ongoing consideration would be more likely of project modifications, such as different transportation modes or alternative regionwide road network configurations.

A minimal level of accountability exacerbates the fragmenting effect of the San Joaquin corridor agency on regional growth governance. As is true of many single purpose authorities, the corridor agency’s board of directors is not directly elected. Rather, directors are city and county elected officials appointed by their peers. There are no citizen oversight boards or committees. Thus, the corridor agency board acts at one level removed from county citizens. The creation of an independent road-building agency effectively separates “toll road” matters from fuller public deliberations at county supervisor and city council meetings capable of addressing multiple societal objectives.

The corridor agency for the San Joaquin Hills toll road in some ways is an organizational model for aggressively planning and constructing needed regional infrastructure. Its regionalism is focused on a concrete task and it is built from the ground up through the use of joint power agreements among cities and the county. On the other hand, minimal public oversight, its aggressive pursuit of federal and state exemptions and special clauses, and its constrained ability to evaluate its organizational ends point to potential problems with such a model. The corridor agency’s institutional independence and single purpose mandate isolate it from those public forums where wider regional tradeoffs can be addressed concerning transportation improvements, environmental protection, air quality, and recreational needs.

### **South Coast Air Quality Management District**

SCAQMD was created in 1977 and is a regional government agency responsible for achieving clean air health standards in a 13,350-square-mile area encompassing Los Angeles, Riverside, and Orange Counties and the non-desert part of San Bernardino County. As

early as 1946, Los Angeles County established the nation's first air pollution control district. In the mid-1950s, the state legislature created the first agency to monitor and control motor vehicle emissions. After the state required countywide air pollution districts throughout the state in 1970, the legislature in 1976 combined four existing county air pollution districts into one regional body for the South Coast Air Basin, the SCAQMD. The air district is governed by a 12 member board composed of nine elected county supervisors and city council members from within its four county jurisdiction.

The air management district derives its authority from federal and state clean air acts. The California Clean Air Act, more stringent than the federal act, requires a 15% improvement in air quality in three years, with 5% annual reductions thereafter (Kamieniecki & Ferrall, 1991). Both clean air acts require the district to develop and implement an Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP) that will bring the region into compliance with clean air standards by the year 2010 (SCAQMD, 1992). The air management district, together with the regional council of governments (SCAG) and the state air resources board, developed and adopted such a comprehensive 20 year AQMP in 1989 and subsequently updated it in 1991 and 1994. SCAQMD has primary authority in implementing the plan and its regulations have the force of law. The agency regulates direct pollution sources, such as power plants and oil refineries, and indirect sources, such as employment centers that do not directly pollute but act as a magnet for automobiles that do. In late 1993, the air district adopted an emissions trading program (Regional Clean Air Incentives Market, RECLAIM) that utilizes market incentives instead of command-and-control methods for some large pollution sources in the air basin.

The SCAQMD in the past has gone beyond traditional emissions monitoring and permitting of direct, stationary pollution sources and sought to modify urban travel and land use patterns through local government and employer mandates. The 1989 plan, for example, recognized the effects of land use planning and development patterns on regional air pollution and recommended a set of proposals to modify local planning practices (Kamieniecki & Ferrall, 1991). These local land use actions include the integration of land uses and densities to support transit corridors, matching of housing developments with employment opportunities, and the management of parking supply to encourage vehicle trip reduction goals (SCAQMD, 1990). In addition, Regulation XV aimed at increasing the region's average vehicle ridership from 1.13 to 1.5 by requiring all large employers to undertake programs that will encourage ridesharing and other forms of vehicle trip reductions.

Despite its strong mandate and emissions controls, however, there are significant constraints on SCAQMD's policy reach. The agency's foray into land use controls as a means toward air pollution reduction is informative on this point. The 1989 plan set subregional jobs/housing balance ratios and boldly called for local governments to adopt ordinances that would spatially redistribute anticipated job and housing growth. Specifically, 9% of all new jobs created 1990-2010 would be redirected to "housing rich areas" and 5% of all new housing would be redirected to "job rich areas." By bringing residence and workplace closer together, the policy sought reductions in vehicle miles travelled and automobile emissions. However, SCAQMD found itself on difficult terrain in its effort to utilize a public power, land use control, held to be sacrosanct by local governments. The district government does not have any direct land use regulatory powers itself. The "jobs-housing

balance” policy was thus susceptible, and eventually gave way, to political pressure. In the 1991 plan two years later, the focus of the policy changed from balance ratios to “vehicle miles travelled” targets, providing local governments greater discretion in terms of how they meet these goals. This represented a subtle but important shift from SCAQMD outlining land use control implementation “means” to the setting of end goals and standards uncoupled from land use regulation. Successful efforts by the business community to weaken SCAQMD regulations during the California recession have further divorced the district from control over indirect sources of air pollution. The draft 1997 plan drops or weakens 12 future indirect source rules such as trip reduction and ride-share measures (SCAQMD, 1996).

SCAQMD’s circumscribed regional policy authority has left the regional council of governments (SCAG) with the responsibility to develop important growth management and land use elements of the regional plan. This division of tasks across agencies with different governance structures and agency missions has undoubtedly caused difficulties in policy formation and coordination. Finally, the AQMP does not contain specific controls on population growth and development (Kamieniecki & Ferrall 1991). This means that gains made from the imposition of strict pollution controls will, in many cases, be offset by the estimated 40% growth in population (with similar increases in number of vehicles in use and vehicle miles travelled) over the 1990-2010 period.

### **Southern California Association of Governments**

The three regional governments so far discussed are single purpose in nature and have strong authority and/or funding. In contrast, the regional Council of Governments (COG) for the area seeks to integrate numerous government functions, such as transportation, housing, growth management, waste disposal, and wastewater treatment. However, SCAG lacks sufficient authority or funding to effectively implement its regional vision. Rather, it is viewed as a deliberative regional forum, “voluntarily established by its members...for the purpose of providing a forum for discussion, study and development of recommendations on regional problems of mutual interest and concern regarding the orderly physical development of the Southern California Region” (SCAG bylaws, n.d., preamble).

SCAG’s jurisdiction includes Los Angeles, Orange, Ventura, Riverside, San Bernardino and Imperial Counties. This area comprises approximately 15.5 million people and consists of over 180 cities, nine census designated “urbanized areas”, and four metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs). SCAG was formed in 1964 pursuant to a state government-enabled, joint powers agreement of member county and city jurisdictions. It was subsequently designated in 1966 by the federal government as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for transportation planning and programming.

Because of its designation as an MPO, SCAG has statutory responsibility over mandated transportation functions in program areas such as federal and state highways, mass transit, rail transportation, and congestion management. It has authority to prepare long-range regional plans and short-term improvement programs, and to approve or reject specific projects, and it serves as the vehicle for pass-through of federal financial assistance from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (formerly the Urban Mass Transportation Administration). Through the years, SCAG also has assumed (through federal government actions) many nontransportation functions, for

example, (1) water quality planning (Section 208 planning agency under 1972 Federal Water Pollution Control Act 33 U.S.C §1288(a)(2)), (2) regional permit review pursuant to Presidential Executive Order 12,372 (1982), which replaced the old "A-95" review, and (3) air quality review (to determine conformity of projects under the Federal Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 42 U.S.C. §7506). In addition, California state government has used SCAG to implement state policy regarding housing, air quality, environmental review, and hazardous waste management. For instance, in the housing field, it is responsible for determining each city's "fair share" requirements working with the state Department of Housing and Community Development.

Since 1992, SCAG has been governed by a 70-member Regional Council composed of 63 District Representatives who are locally elected officials chosen from peers each representing a district of approximately 200,000 residents, and seven County Supervisors (one for each county, except two for Los Angeles). This regional council replaces the 20 member Executive Committee of mayors, city council members, and county supervisors and was established to increase the representativeness and responsiveness of SCAG. In 1995 SCAG adopted a Regional Comprehensive Plan and Guide (RCPG) for the six county area. The RCPG is a compendium of subregional plans developed by 13 different subregional organizations, based on a regional planning process described as "iterative, interactive, 'bottom-up'/'top-down' and cooperative" (Memorandum of Understanding, 1992).

Despite its engagement in numerous mandated federal and state programs and its recent restructuring, SCAG faces two significant obstacles to becoming an effective regional governing body: (1) the size and diversity of its jurisdiction and (2) its relationships with single purpose regional agencies. The SCAG jurisdiction, a superregion covering 38,000 square miles, bears little resemblance to the area where SCAG was formed almost 30 years ago. The region is now complex and multicentered. For example, Orange County, a bedroom and homogenous suburb of Los Angeles in the 1960s, is now an increasingly independent economic agglomeration of approximately 2.5 million people, one-quarter of whom are foreign born (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993).

Because of the tremendous size and diversity of the SCAG governing area, there is a serious question as to how responsive such a large COG can be to subregional needs and differences. A report by the Governor's Interagency Council on Growth Management (1991, pp.18,21) has questioned this ability in concluding that, "SCAG cannot effectively address specific subregional issues" and that "super-regional COGs are too large to allow for direct regional representation and participation."

An additional obstacle in the way of SCAG's effectiveness is competition with independent single function regional entities such as MTA, TCA, and SCAQMD. Each of these single purpose agencies has been successful in obtaining a separate funding source or increased statutory authority. Locally approved sales tax revenue in Los Angeles County and developer fees and special assessment revenue in Orange County provide MTA and TCA, respectively, with increased policy and programming independence from SCAG's plans. Similarly, population-based disbursement of federal transportation money from SCAG to county transportation commissions (such as MTA) has eroded SCAG's authority as the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization under the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act. At the same time, SCAQMD has been empowered as a regional regulatory agency by federal and state clean air acts, leaving SCAG in the role of

consultant and reviewer of federal conformity. Fulton and Newman (1992, p.13) describe this evolving regional governance landscape: “While SCAG has struggled to define itself, a regional planning structure has grown up around it and almost in spite of it.”

## **SHADOW REGIONALISM**

This paper has examined institutional strategies in the Los Angeles region employed to address two significant constraints, transportation congestion and air pollution, to the region’s future development and well-being. These organizational responses have included transportation agencies MTA and TCA in Los Angeles and Orange Counties and the South Coast Air Quality Management district. At the same time that these single purpose regional agencies were empowered through funding or statutory authority, the preexisting comprehensive regional government continues to face significant obstacles that dampen its governability and effectiveness. Thus, the regional governance that has emerged in the last decade in Southern California is a fragmented and restricted type of regionalism. It is ironic that the affiliation of regional planning with single purpose functions such as transportation and air quality has facilitated and legitimized regionalism in Southern California at the same time that it has limited its scope and potential.

Three significant characteristics of southern California regional governance are apparent that restrict its scope and ability to affect meaningful change. These are: (1) its scientific technical emphasis, (2) its single-purpose compartmentalization of regional policy, and (3) its institutional insularity.

Recently empowered or created regional governments in Southern California focus on scientific-technical features of urban growth and development: transportation planning and air pollution management. Both types of planning are inherently complex in their emphases on quantitative and engineering measures. They provide particular values for judging the outside world (civil engineering and emission standards) that are not readily accessible to other types of planners, public officials, and the public at large. This paper has suggested that threats to the quality of life in the Los Angeles region (whether water supply and port commerce at the turn of the century or traffic congestion and air pollution today) have been framed as physical resource and operational issues.

In those times when urban threats have been defined in social terms, such as after the 1992 and 1965 Los Angeles riots, new government institutions and strategies are not as forthcoming as when urban threats are defined in physical resource or infrastructure terms. The main response after the 1992 riots—(creation of the Rebuild L.A. (RLA) organization)—was a private sector, corporatist one that has had limited effectiveness (Regalado, 1994; Mann, 1993).

Accordingly, regionalism has emphasized scientific and technical functions that maintain the physical operation of the metropolis, called “systems maintenance” government functions (Williams, 1967). In contrast, government functions pertaining to land use planning, residential location, and public education that affect people’s access to highly prized social amenities of the region (Williams’ “life style” functions) commonly stay localized and are thus left out of regional policy debates. Examples of regional authorities such as the Portland (Oregon) Metro government, which holds both transportation programming and land use planning powers are rare (DeGrove, 1992).

A second related characteristic of Southern California regionalism is its single purpose compartmentalization of regional policy. Institutional responses have tended to partition, not span, regional policy boundaries. The functional fragmentation of regional policy constrains opportunities for comprehensive regional policy discussions and tradeoffs. Lowi (1969) traces each functional fragmentation in government back to the progressive reform era, which replaced one type of fragmentation (geographic) with another (functional). These limitations of single-purpose missions have been apparent in each of the three case studies of recently empowered regional organizations. MTA's powers over transportation infrastructure do not extend to community land use issues that can dramatically affect the success of mass transportation in Los Angeles. The TCA in Orange County focuses solely on highway building and deemphasizes mass transportation alternatives and environmental and conservation issues. SCAQMD's stringent controls over direct pollution sources are in marked contrast to its powerlessness over land use controls that could significantly influence commuting distances and emissions.

This compartmentalization of regional policy can increase rigidity. Single purpose agencies provide a sense of institutional and occupational security and mission. However, because of their narrowly defined functional missions, they are unable to comprehensively evaluate their goals. They tend not to be self-evaluating organizations and may narrowly pursue organizational goals despite changing circumstances. In the end, functional regionalism linked to single constituencies and missions inhibits the promise of regionalism as a vehicle for forming a collective sense of identity.

As an alternative, a regional agency that encompasses multiple and qualitatively different public functions would be able to make tradeoffs, compromises, and compensations across different public activities. For example, a regional agency with authority to site waste disposal facilities, homeless shelters, and other locally unwanted land uses (LULUs) could assure that no local government is burdened with multiple LULUs. Local governments have no such guarantee with functionally fragmented regional governance. If, in addition, the government could disperse funds for infrastructure or open space acquisition, it would be able to provide funding incentives to localities willing to meet regional goals pertaining to fair share low income housing. The SCAG COG in Southern California encompasses multiple planning functions, but its power to affect regional and local development policy is limited by its mission and voluntary nature.

The third characteristic of Southern California regionalism is its institutional insularity. The existence and significant implications of regional governance in Southern California are largely dismissed and disowned by citizens and political leaders psychologically attached to municipal self-government (Baldassare, Hassol, Hoffman, & Kanarek, 1996; Baldassare, 1989). At the same time, the means of representation on regional agency boards does little to create regional politicians and constituencies. Both the single purpose regional agencies and the regional COG are governed by public officials elected foremost to represent local, not regional, interests. Locally elected city council members and county supervisors are appointed by their colleagues to serve on regional boards. It is rational for these local officials operating in a regional forum to protect and enhance local interests to the possible detriment of regional goals and interests. An alternative would be to establish direct elections for regional agency boards (such as for the Portland Metro) that would encourage multijurisdictional policy discussions and metropolitan constituencies. The

Metropolitan Council of Minneapolis-St. Paul presents another means of lifting regional government policy debates above purely local pressures. The strong majority of regional council representatives are appointed by the Governor from metropolitan districts (Keefe, 1992).

In conclusion, the technical bias, single purpose structure, and political insularity of institutional responses in Southern California have constituted a shadow regionalism in the sense that it is an “imperfect and faint representation” (Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary, 1981; Axelrod, 1992). Shadow regionalism bears but a faint connection to the true potential of regional governance. A more robust regional governance would be a more democratic and broader regionalism that would elevate the level of intergovernmental discussions, overcome the distorting effects of single mandate regionalism, and integrate environmental, social, and economic policies on a metropolitan wide scale. Such regional vision can be developed based on deliberations of a public-private alliance, as suggested by Wallis (1994). We are still left, however, with the need for some type of government to implement such a vision. In contrast to Mumford’s (1938) description of a region as a “theater of collective action,” manifestations of regionalism in Southern California have *fragmented and submerged the collective regional interest*.

## **EVOLVING REGIONALISM**

The Southern California type of single purpose regionalism is the rule, not the exception, in other metropolitan areas where some type of multijurisdictional governance is present. The use of special district governments to address regional needs in the US is affiliated with a single purpose orientation. Of the 31,555 special district governments in the US, over 90% are single-function (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1994). Created because of their perceived greater responsiveness to specific urban problems, special districts also lead in the aggregate to new and uncoordinated layers of government.

It is fair to ask whether a functionally fragmented regional governance landscape is better or worse than no regionalism at all in terms of effectively addressing urban and metropolitan problems. This paper has argued that, in our desire to collaboratively address mounting regional problems, the creation of regional governance through issue-specific and functional incrementalism may result in uncoordinated areawide policies damaging to our metropolitan futures. Thus, such institutional incrementalism should not be relied upon as the sole means of regional governance in a metropolitan area. However, functional regionalism could play an important role as facilitator of more comprehensive and democratic regional governance in the future (Bay Vision 2020 Commission, 1991; Keefe, 1992). If shadow regionalism is a necessary first step to a fuller regionalism, what events or other influences will stimulate the transformation of fragmented regionalism into more integrated forms of regional governance: multipurpose federal or state mandates, urban crises such as riots, metropolitanwide economic decline inclusive of suburban areas? Is a fuller regionalism only possible in geographic areas having physically identifiable boundaries that can create and sustain a regional community of interest?

Another set of questions relates to how we might effectively define and institutionally respond to the growing social problems of urban areas. Cisneros (1993) describes this as the need for people-regionalism to balance our current strategies tied to things-regionalism.

Regional governance in the Los Angeles region has often been an infrastructure or operations-based concept linked to physical resource issues. Regional responses have thus focused on systems maintenance functions and deemphasized social and redistributive questions. How might we create regional governance responsive to, and inclusive of, social equity concerns such as racial and economic segregation and fiscal imbalances? If internal metropolitan divisions are truly self-defeating in an internationally competitive economy, then the introduction of social equity policies alongside infrastructure and physical resource policies within a comprehensive regional government would be consistent with the pursuit of economic self-interest.

Local governments wary of a more robust regionalism should realize that in many cases their authority has already been usurped by empowered single focus regional agencies. Indeed, incorporation of single purpose foci into an integrating "theater of collective action" may reintroduce general purpose local government to the decisionmaking table.

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