



Cityscapes and Capital: The Politics of Urban Development

Michael A. Pagano, Ann O'M. Bowman

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As American cities seek to revitalize their urban centers and surrounding region, planners and politicians often look for quick-fix schemes. But cities that have achieved success, Michael Pagano and Ann Bowman claim, have done so through an alliance of politics and economics focused upon a long-term vision of what the city can be. Arguing that "politics matter," Pagano and Bowman demonstrate the critical role played by political leaders in molding a city's future and in forging coalitions to ensure success. They contend that market failure does not explain why city governments get involved in subsidizing development; rather, governments intervene in response to changing fiscal conditions and political leaders' perceptions of their city's image and its place in the hierarchy of cities.

Pagano and Bowman draw on comparative data from ten medium-sized cities, which they divide into four categories: survivalist cities (high distress, high activism), expansionist cities (low distress, high activism), market cities (high distress, low activism), and maintenance cities (low distress, low activism). Examining forty city-supported development projects within these four categories, they show how city investment in, and regulation of, development projects is the most effective way for political leaders to control and shape the future of their city. The book also emphasizes the importance of comparing initial expectations and goals to results in evaluating the success of city-supported development.

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