

Policy boosterism, policy mobilities, and the extrospective city

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Abstract

This paper develops the notion of ‘policy boosterism,’ a subset of traditional branding and marketing activities that involves the active promotion of locally-developed and/or locally-successful policies, programs, or practices across wider geographical fields and to broader communities of interested peers. The paper argues that policy boosterism is: (1) an important element of how urban policy actors engage with global communities of professional peers and with local residents and (2) a useful concept with which to interrogate and understand how policies and policy knowledge are mobilized among cities. The paper develops a conceptualization of policy boosterism and its role in global-urban policy-making by combining insights from the burgeoning ‘policy mobilities’ literature with those of the longstanding literature on entrepreneurial city marketing. It then outlines illustrative examples of policy boosterism in Vancouver: the city’s Greenest City and Green Capital initiatives, the use of the term ‘Vancouverism’ among the city’s urban design community, and demonstrations of new urban technologies during the 2010 Winter Olympics that were used to market a particular vision of the city’s governance to people from elsewhere but also, crucially, to local audiences. The paper concludes by highlighting four areas of focus that might frame future work at the intersections of policy boosterism and policy mobilities.

O Canada ...

During the 2009 Copenhagen Summit on climate change, Canadians received daily media updates on the country's global reputation. Canada was repeatedly singled out by NGOs and activists as a climate villain; accused of foot-dragging in negotiations over emissions targets while promoting the exploitation of the Alberta tar sands. The country featured prominently in the Climate Action Network's much-publicized Fossil of the Day awards and was named Fossil of the Year, or Colossal Fossil, as the Summit ended (Climate Action Network, 2009). Yet, to speak of 'Canada' in this regard is problematic. Copenhagen 2009 underscored divisions in the country over attitudes and responses to climate change. The Fossil of the Day awards vilified Prime Minister Stephen Harper's federal government specifically, while delegates from the Ontario and Quebec Provincial governments openly and forcefully criticized the federal government's negotiating position.

Two other critics of Harper's approach who attended the Summit were Gregor Robertson and David Miller, who were at the time the mayors of Vancouver and Toronto respectively. Both like to flaunt their green credentials: Robertson is an avid bicyclist, founder of the 'Happy Planet' juice company, and the sponsor of a number of what are touted to be green initiatives within the City of Vancouver and Miller, whose mayoral term ended in 2010, championed public transit and energy efficiency and is now an advocate for urban sustainability (Hopper, 2011). Like their Ontario and Quebec counterparts, Robertson and Miller set themselves apart from federal Canada's position in Copenhagen. Indeed, Miller went so far as to attend a Fossil of the Day ceremony and collect one of Canada's awards. "Canada certainly has received some scathing criticism here for ... positions I've been very critical of," he said. "It's really quite damaged Canada's international reputation." On the other hand, Miller continued, "[o]ne of the things we hear constantly here is how Toronto's reputation is terrific" (quoted in Weese, 2009). Vancouver's Robertson, a mayor who counts a new 'Greenest City' initiative as one of his first official actions, dubbed Canada a "miserable" failure with a "despicable [record] on carbon emissions for the last decade" (quoted in CBC British Columbia, 2009) and hoped aloud to pressure the federal government for "a strong national commitment to greenhouse gas reductions if we want Canada to remain competitive and able to take advantage of opportunities in the emerging green economy" (quoted in David Suzuki Foundation, 2009).

What insights might urban studies scholars gain from a consideration of the actions of these mayors in Copenhagen and the ways they and other urban policy actors engage with global policy communities? Can we usefully understand this particular example of urban-global interaction as

emblematic of widespread, yet understudied, practices of policy teaching, learning, and mobilization? If so, what conceptual frameworks might we usefully bring to bear on these sorts of political and policy-making activities? Moreover, what implications might the ‘extrospective’ (Peck and Tickell, 2002) practices of urban policy actors have for the character of, and for our conceptualizations of urban-global relations, urban policy-making, and urban politics?

I argue that urban actors’ involvement in the Climate Summit and in other engagements with policy-making communities and institutions beyond their city limits does indeed speak to a wider set of practices that beg further study. In general terms, their actions provide an opportunity to further develop a conceptualization of what have been called ‘policy mobilities’ – the socio-spatially produced and power-laden inter-scalar process of circulating, mediating, (re)molding, and operationalizing policies, policy models, and policy knowledge (McCann, 2008, 2011a, 2011b; McCann and Ward, 2010, 2011). In more specific terms, I argue that the mayors’ explicit promotion or ‘talking up’ of their cities’ ‘best practices’ and policy models is emblematic of a common, yet largely unstudied, practice of *policy boosterism* that, among other things, plays a crucial facilitative role in the mobilization of policies from place to place around the world. The purpose of this paper, then, is to build upon, but also fill a gap in the burgeoning policy mobilities literature by delineating the character of policy boosterism and teasing out its conceptual and material implications for the study of cities-in-the-world. It develops our existing conceptualization of city branding – the overarching strategies intended to distinguish cities as part of inter-urban competition of which advertizing, sloganeering, and marketing tactics are part – by showing how urban policies, as well as places, are constructed as commodities to be marketed. In turn, it contributes to our understanding of policy – guidelines and models for action in governance that range in their level of formal codification or specificity and in the degree of power with which they can be enforced (Martin, 1997) – as dynamic, relational constructions that emerge, not from specific policy-makers and places of invention but, rather, from the articulation of these people and places with audiences and places elsewhere (Peck and Theodore, 2010b) and that actively shape urban politics.

The paper is based on a research project that investigates Vancouver’s extrospection in the field of policy-making – the various ways in which policy actors in the city are tied to a range of national and global policy-making communities and institutions and to various cities elsewhere as they teach and/or learn about innovative policies. Since I am primarily focused on elaborating the conceptual character and implications of policy boosterism in this paper, I will present a number of illustrative examples of the practice without developing any one as a deep case study. Together, the

examples show the complex ways in which policy boosterism relates to policy mobilities and the diverse but interrelated ways in which Vancouver is a global city in terms of policy. Therefore, I will use details from policy documents, media accounts, and direct observation that crystallize and efficiently summarize the key themes of each example. It is worth noting that while my examples are of policy boosterism in action at ‘mega-events’ – the Copenhagen summit, the Winter Olympics – these are intended to illustrate policy boosterism as a common, not exceptional, practice; as a mode of engaging with policy and with the world that has been internalized by a range of policy actors and that is an everyday element of their activities. The next section of the paper develops an initial conceptual framework for analyzing policy boosterism and its role in policy mobilities. It does so by combining insights from the burgeoning policy mobilities literature with those of the longstanding literature on entrepreneurial city marketing. The paper then turns to three sketches of policy boosterism in contemporary Vancouver that focus to differing degrees on the actions of policy boosters, like mayors, and on the substance and manifestations of the policies involved. Based on these cases, I subsequently identify a number of areas of further consideration at the intersection of policy boosterism and policy mobilities and I highlight insights that we might gain from the study of these activities.

Policy boosterism and policy mobilities

The mayors’ activities in Copenhagen resonate with longstanding literatures in urban studies. For example, there is a sense of ‘municipal internationalism’ in the stories from Denmark (Saunier, 2001, 2002). Also, there is a sense that Vancouver, Toronto, and the other cities that participated in the two-day Climate Summit for Mayors see themselves as global or world cities to some degree or another and that this ‘urban-globalness’ (McCann and Ward, 2010, 2011) is defined not only in economic terms but also in environmental, progressive-political, even moral terms. Therefore, their actions offer scope for continued discussion in the social production of scale and world/global cities literatures. Moreover, a focus on policy boosterism which emphasizes that policy boosters’ activities are fundamentally about comparing, contrasting, and ranking cities for specific purposes can offer insights into the burgeoning discussion about relational and comparative urbanism (Dear, 2005; Nijman, 2007; Robinson, 2002, 2006; Ward, 2008, 2010) and particularly on what Clarke (2009) identifies as the everyday comparative practices of city governments. Furthermore, the specifics of the particular case of boosterism discussed here – one that emphasizes urban sustainability and

considers mayors' claims to 'greenness' through good governance – also intersect with ongoing work on urban and regional 'sustainability fixes' (While, et al, 2004; Temenos and McCann, Forthcoming).

Here, however, I want to draw upon two other related literatures: (1) the longstanding body of work on city branding, marketing, and boosterism spurred largely by Harvey's (1989a) influential paper on urban entrepreneurialism and the rise of what he called the 'new boosterism' (see also Clarke and Gaile, 1989; Leitner, 1990); and (2) a burgeoning literature on policy mobilities (McCann, 2008, 2011; McCann and Ward, 2011; Peck and Theodore, 2010a), conceptualizing how, why, and with what consequences urban actors engage with, shape, and learn from global circuits of policy knowledge. In Harvey's (1989a) account, urban entrepreneurial policies provide a business-friendly urban milieu upon which increasingly mobile capital could 'touch down.' While apparently indicating the relative autonomy of the local state, these policies are almost entirely reactive to, channeled, and constrained by the external, "naked requirements of capital accumulation," he argues (*ibid.*, 15). Given that the purpose of Harvey's paper is to highlight the connection between changing urban policies and the external coercive forces of global capitalism, it is understandable that it does not examine in any detail how, even within certain powerful constraints, policy and governance *get done* in cities. A driving commitment of the emergent policy mobilities literature, inspired in some ways by attempts to combine insights from neo-Marxian and neo-Foucauldian analyses of governance/government, has been to empirically investigate urban policy and governance in action and to understand them as dynamic assemblages of practices that, while 'locally' situated also project and resonate 'extra-locally' in complex and contested ways (Peck and Theodore, 2010a).

This extra-local projection of policy models represents an understudied empirical nexus of these two literatures despite the fact that boosterism characterizes many contemporary discussions of policy innovations. Certainly, the connections between boosterism and contemporary interurban policy engagement have been posited conceptually before. For example, Peck and Tickell (2002, 47) identify "an extrospective, reflexive, and aggressive posture on the part of local elites and states," which leads cities to, "actively – and responsively – scan the horizon for investment and promotion opportunities, monitoring 'competitors' and emulating 'best practice'" Yet, more could be done to unpack the relationship. The post-1989 city marketing literature has identified key actors involved in selling cities and the key audiences to which these boosters address their marketing efforts (Harvey, 1989a; McCann, 2009). The interests most involved in branding and marketing cities are members of the local growth machine. These locally dependent rentiers, or structural

speculators, and their allies must boost their city in order to increase profits from their land and property holdings (Logan and Molotch, 1987; Cox and Mair, 1988). They are joined by local politicians (whose activities are largely funded by local rentiers) because politicians' interest in increasing jobs, tax base, and their own careers predisposes them to boosterism. Key audiences for the booster's pitch are potential business investors, certain groups of coveted workers, granting agencies, and tourists. Another crucial audience is the local population, not because most of its members will bring much in the way of new revenue to the city on their own, but because the growth agenda of local rentiers needs general support in order to be politically viable. Thus, branding as a strategic approach to the commodification of cities and marketing as a particular element within a brand strategy are ideological, political projects that seek to create a general sense of local common purpose, to naturalize the notion that certain types of development and growth are good for everyone, in one way or another, and to marginalize any group or individual who questions this myth.

Policy boosterism can be thought of as a subset of traditional marketing activities, with its own interests, strategies, audiences, geographies, and consequences. It involves the active promotion of locally-developed and/or locally-successful policies, programs, or practices across wider geographical fields. The related purposes of these promotional activities are: to boost the policies' reputation among geographically-extensive policy-making communities; to enhance the professional reputations of those policy actors who were involved in developing the policies; to burnish the image of the city where the policy was developed, not only among policy communities but, in certain cases, where a policy orientation or goal (e.g., increased urban sustainability through planning and design) dovetails with a perceived economic opportunity (e.g., the development of an urban-regional cluster of green technology R&D and manufacturing). Undoubtedly, there is also a genuine conviction among most policy boosters that, by telling stories of their successes, they can improve the governance and planning of cities and regions across the world (McCann, 2004, 2010). That is the 'supply side.' On the 'demand side' there are motivations and conditions that lead certain policy actors to be receptive to and to actively pursue policy models from elsewhere. The 'extrospective' orientation of the consumers of policy boosterism is, to a great extent, driven by structural conditions including tightening budgets and increased demands on city staff to quickly implement 'what works.' This leads to the sort of global 'scanning' that Peck and Tickell (2002) describe, whereby a market is created for policy boosters in which 'hot' policies, 'sure bets' and 'off-the-shelf' solutions are prioritized. Yet it can be argued that more is going on. Many policy actors

who consume policies from elsewhere do so out of a genuine belief that their cities can benefit from 'best practices' developed beyond their boundaries. They have a commitment not (only) to instrumentalized versions of policy *transfer* but also to social learning (Friedmann, 1987), characterized by an openness to different and novel forms of policy expertise.

It is in this context that policy boosterism connects with policy mobilities, a term that evokes the social production and circulation of knowledge about how to best design and govern places. Policy mobilities develop in, are conditioned by, travel through, connect, and shape various spatial scales, networks, policy communities, and institutional contexts (McCann, 2011). As the literature on inter-local policy mobility shows, formally drafted policies, best practices, and certain forms of policy expertise circulate among cities around the world in ways that both reflect and reshape local geographic, cultural, and political-economic contexts. Thus, we see the global proliferation of specific policy models, addressing welfare (Theodore and Peck 2000; Peck and Theodore 2001), Business Improvement Districts (Cook, 2008; Hoyt, 2006; Peyroux, 2008; Ward, 2006, 2007, 2011), policing (Mountz and Curren, 2009), creativity (Peck, 2011), planning, design, and development (Harvey, 1989b, Ch.4; Surborg et al., 2008; McCann, 2011a; Guggenheim and Soderstrom, 2010; Bunnell and Das, 2010; Robinson, 2011), and drug use (McCann, 2008, 2011b), that impact numerous cities while often having their roots in particular ones. These models and their mobilizations are: (1) conditioned by the socio-spatial contexts of their development, travel, and reception; (2) facilitated by 'informational infrastructures,' ranging from professional organizations, to supra-national institutions, to the global 'awards industry,' to the popular media, that frame, translate, and legitimize their claims to truth, efficacy, and global applicability; and (3) carried from place to place by cadres of experts, consultants, gurus, and activists, ranging from global stars to "mid-level technocrats" (Larner & Laurie, 2010) and political activists (McCann, 2008).

In this conceptualization, policy models are relationally produced since they cannot be the product of one group of innovators or one particular place. First, they are learned, borrowed, and modified from knowledge of the prior practices of others elsewhere and, second, they are relational in that policy models only become models when they acquire and articulate 'outside' disciples and admirers who are, most commonly, located elsewhere. Policy boosterism's role in the relational construction and mobilization of policy models is, like all forms of boosterism, to draw and direct attention (cf. McFarlane, 2010). It is to channel and facilitate circuits of knowledge and transfer by creating an uneven landscape of 'teacher' and 'learner' cities by extolling the virtues of certain places and policies and thus creating a 'market' for their solutions to problems that have themselves been

socially and selectively defined (Peck and Theodore, 2010b). In this sense, the inter-urban contexts, logics, and hegemonies to which Harvey alludes reappear here as important counterpoints to boosterist narratives of local innovation and the inherent ‘specialness’ of particular centers of innovation.

Extrospective Vancouver: Policy boosterism in action

Policy boosterism’s powerful role in the process of extrospective urban policy-making and politics is nonetheless understudied. There is relatively little known, in specific and detailed terms, about how this particular type of boosterism frames the ways in which policy communities conceive of the global landscape of policy through the constant repetition of certain narratives of ‘success.’ There is more to discover about how a small number of cities become commonly understood as being those worth emulating and, therefore, how they become the focus of attention of policy communities that stretch across the globe. At the local level, there is scope for research on how policy actors of various types seek to promote their ‘home grown’ policies to wider communities and tend to do so in a competitive, boosterist way, even when they are motivated also by a desire to cooperate and share insights with their counterparts elsewhere for a perceived greater, common good. In this section, I will use examples of policy boosterism associated with Vancouver to illustrate the practice itself and its links to policy mobilities, policy-making, and ‘urban’ politics.

A competitive suffix: Boosterism in urban environmental policy

As I have already indicated, Mayor Robertson’s Copenhagen trip was a boosterist exercise. He claimed that Vancouver has North America’s lowest per capita greenhouse gas emissions (a figure very much dependent on how one defines ‘Vancouver’) and outlined his “goal to be the greenest city in the world.” *Greenest*. Those three little letters speak volumes. They comprise a fundamentally competitive suffix that takes a straightforward local policy goal – the shaping of a ‘green,’ more environmentally sustainable city – and transform it into a competitive, extrospective, boosterist agenda. Robertson continued:

I’ll be laying out the next step, this goal to be the greenest city in the world, basically challenging all these other mayors and their cities to do the same. ... I want to see this as a friendly but spirited global competition to be the greenest, where we can share our best practices. And really for Vancouver it’s an excellent opportunity right now to stand out from

the crowd (quoted in CBC News, 2009).

The planning and design of dense, residential downtown neighborhoods, intended to encourage walking, cycling, and transit use instead of auto-dependency is central to Robertson's "Greenest City Initiative" (City of Vancouver, 2009a). The Initiative is a visioning and planning exercise aimed at reducing the city's negative environmental impacts. It is intended to identify specific policy changes at the regional, provincial, and federal levels that will help achieve this goal and to implement and change policy by developing coalitions of business, non-governmental, and state actors. Specifically, the Initiative lists the following as "priority issues" to be addressed: "tackling climate change; improving the transportation system; reducing pollution and waste; promoting local food; conserving water; protecting citizens' health from environmental hazards; supporting neighborhood sustainability initiatives; stimulating the development of green jobs and the green economy; and protecting nature and green space" (City of Vancouver, 2009a).

An early report from the 'Greenest City Action Team' makes a case for combining efforts at local change with a global, competitive orientation. It emphasizes the links between economic boosterism and policy boosterism: Vancouver aspires to "be the best in the world. To be a source of inspiration, optimism, and hope" (Boyd, n.d., 4). It continues in an altruistic tone: "[w]e only have one Earth, and Vancouverites are well positioned to show the world how to live, and live well, within its limits" (ibid., 6). The report then turns to the global, competitive context:

Vancouver is not alone in its quest to be the greenest city. We face fierce competition. For example, in July 2009 London Mayor Boris Johnson pledged to make London the "cleanest and greenest city in the world." Sydney, Copenhagen, New York, Portland, Seattle, San Francisco, Chicago, Toronto, Berlin, Paris, Stockholm, and others have joined the race. Becoming the greenest city is more than an environmental objective: it's also a savvy economic strategy, for it will offer a competitive advantage in attracting highly mobile investment dollars, businesses, entrepreneurs, and talented workers (ibid., 11).

Vancouver's environmentally conscious, 'living first' approach to downtown development and planning has a long history (Ley, 1980; Punter, 2003). Its turn to extrospection – to an explicitly-stated global orientation that encourages both competition and cooperation with other cities for

‘greenest,’ most ‘livable’ status – is relatively recent, however. It now entails the travel of public officials and private actors – including former and current politicians, planners, architects, and other experts – from the city to places elsewhere. They draw their credibility – and, in some cases, the justification for their fees – from the city’s growing reputation among certain policy communities; one bolstered by the growing number of popular and specialist publications extolling the city’s planning virtues. At the same time, their engagement with other places and their repetition of the ‘Vancouver story’ to their clients, audiences, and the media serves to enhance Vancouver’s reputation still further (McCann, 2011). The effect is cumulative.

A key element of this extrospective turn is its relationship to, and reliance on brand politics, which has at least two related elements. First, Robertson’s close identification with the Greenest City Initiative and a related ‘Green Capital’ brand – the city’s current economic development strategy which promotes its sustainability and livability policies as setting the ideal context for ‘green collar’ investment and jobs (City of Vancouver, 2009b) – epitomizes what Pasotti (2010) has characterized as mayoral brand politics. This involves “direct and emotional” appeals to constituents that “always transmit a message of great leadership, courage to innovate, and the ability to steer the city through crisis and change” (ibid., 18). While what a ‘mayor’ *is* is different from one institutional context to another, Pasotti’s study of contemporary Bogotá, Naples, and Chicago leads her to the general argument that mayors increasingly seek support by attaching themselves to carefully chosen, branded policy initiatives and idealized collective identities, thus allowing residents to see their own aspirations and self-image embodied in the mayor (see also Harvey, 1989a, 7). This argument certainly seems to resonate with the Canadian case I discuss here. Among other things, Pasotti (ibid., 19) argues that mayoral brands “offer an instrument to promote buy-in among civil society and the business sector, thus providing the coalitions necessary for policy implementation.” A second element of brand politics in the context of policy boosterism is, I would suggest, the use of sloganeering tactics as part of a larger branding strategy. ‘Greenest City,’ for example, acts as a filter through which the intricate policy framework that governs the city (see Punter, 2003 for a detailed account of the complex of policies involved in the ‘Vancouver model’) is simplified in a way that resonates with a global competitive ethos and that also provides an easily digestible appetizer for potential emulators elsewhere. In turn, policy-makers elsewhere might be enticed to learn more of a city’s approach through hard copy and electronic documents of various kinds and perhaps through ‘policy tourism,’ in which fact-finding trips to the city are arranged by delegations of policy

professionals, politicians, and others (Ward, 2007). In the context of policy boosterism, the city, mayor, and the policy are all commodified, branded, extrospective, and competitive.

'Vancouverism': Boosterism in design policy

A related policy brand in the city is 'Vancouverism.' "Vancouver, Vancouverize, Vancouverism: Building an Idea" is the tagline for an architectural exhibition held in London and Paris in 2009 and in downtown Vancouver before, during, and after the 2010 Winter Olympics – a boosterist event in its own right. The exhibit featured photographs, sketches, plans, scale models, and explanatory text of numerous iconic buildings in the city. Each was designed by local architects and/or built by local engineers and developers. The buildings were included because they represent one or more aspects of Vancouverism. The exhibit's brochure quotes the *New York Times* definition of Vancouverism as an urban design approach "characterized by tall, but widely separated, slender [largely residential] towers interspersed with low-rise buildings, public spaces, small parks and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes and facades to minimize the impact of a high density population" (Chamberlain. 2005.)¹. The exhibition's co-curators expand on the theme, elaborating again on what they see as the environmental successes of, and lessons to be learned from Vancouver(ism):

The word first entered the argot of American architects and city planners over the past decade, who began speaking of "Vancouverizing" their under-populated, un-loved urban cores, seeking inspiration from Canada's Pacific portal's re-development successes. Our city has become first a verb, and now, an ideology promoting an urbanism of density and public amenity. Vancouverism at its best brings together a deep respect for the natural environment with high concentrations of residents. Within condominium residential towers downtown and courtyard and boulevard-edging mid-rise buildings elsewhere in the city, Vancouverites are learning to live tightly together; a healthy, engaging - even thrilling place (Sharp & Boddy, 2008).

The term has indeed proliferated since the middle of last decade, promoted by a number of planners, architects, engineers, developers, politicians, consultants, educators, journalists, and authors (Price, 2005a and b), all of whom have economic, professional, and/or political interests in

selling the city's model of urban design and who frequently travel elsewhere to teach others of its merits.

Not only has Vancouverism become an “ideology,” as Sharp and Boddy argue, but it clearly has all the characteristics of branding. Like many brands, including ‘Greenest City,’ Vancouverism represents a complex set of commodities and practices in a simple, evocative shorthand. It also aligns with and serves certain interests – from journalists (always looking for an evocative shorthand) who have facilitated its recent proliferation, to the planners, architects, designers, and engineers whose work is encapsulated and valorized by its popularity, to the politicians who both support the policies to which it refers and also bask in its reflected glory, and, of course, to Vancouver's powerful development industry who in part funded the exhibit (for a trenchant critique of Vancouverism as rhetoric and practice see Ingram (2010)).

The importance of *elsewhere* in framing local city-building in global or extrospective terms is evident as the co-curators continue their description of Vancouver's model of compact urban design.

Not Asia, not Europe, not even North America, but a new kind of city living with elements from all of these - a hybrid that now demands to be taken on its own terms. In the language of city-building, “Vancouverism” is fast replacing “Manhattanism” as the maximum power setting for shaping the humane mixed-use city, important ideas for a new era of scarce energy and diminished natural resources (Sharp & Boddy, 2008).

In this case, the specific ‘elsewheres’ in question are not only important as places with which to compete or compare, as in the case of ‘Greenest City’ (although a distinct competitive edge is evident in the language about Manhattan). Rather, the vision of Vancouver as an innovative design hybrid, in which “parts of elsewhere” (Allen Cochrane 2007) are assembled in new, distinct, and innovative ways (Olds, 2001; Mitchell, 2004; Lowry & McCann, 2011), seems to give sustenance to policy boosters who see it as a unique assemblage and therefore as a competitive advantage that they can mobilize across wider geographic fields through their work as consultants with other cities, through their engagement with global communities of like-minded policy and design professionals, and through their contacts with the media. While those audiences might not be able to replicate the socio-spatial assemblage of cultures and expertise that produced the Vancouver model, they can be

helped, the boosters would argue, to learn from and mold its elements to their own context (McCann, 2004).

Recognition and plaudits from elsewhere also aid in the self-conscious, reflexive development of the city's idealized self-image as a wellspring of virtuous policy; the sort of self-image upon which mayoral brand politics thrives (Pasotti, 2010). Policy boosters frequently 'speak back' to Vancouverites about the global recognition Vancouverism has received (note the use of "our city" in the passage from the Vancouverism brochure's introduction, quoted above). This narration of the city as a policy exemplar indicates a desire to educate and build acceptance among the *local* population for the world-renowned benefits of the compact, high-rise model of city design that directs Vancouver's urban development and shapes the lives of the city's inhabitants. The importance of narrative in the branding and marketing of cities has long been a key concern of urban scholars, a focus that is particularly evident in Jessop's (1997, 1998; Jessop and Sum, 2000) analysis of the links between marketing, governance, and economic development policy. As I will discuss at more length below, the importance of narrating and managing a self-image and political support among the local population through an *introspective* politics of persuasion is a crucial task of policy boosterism. It forms what might be thought of as the ideological 'constitutive inside' of an extrospective engagement with policy mobilities.

Demonstration events: Policy boosterism and public education at the Winter Olympics

The Vancouverism exhibit was not the only example of policy boosterism in the city during the Winter Olympic games of February 2010. Indeed, while it ran during the games, it was not closely associated with them in the way that other policy-related educational and boosterist initiatives were. The most prominent of these, and the one that represents the largest investment of city resources, was the Olympic Village. The Village was built over the previous four years on the Southeastern shore of False Creek, an ocean inlet bordering the downtown peninsula which has been the location of many of the urban development experiments that, collectively, have come to define both Vancouverism and also the city's ties to other parts of the world. The first purpose of the Village was to house Olympic and Paralympic athletes and officials. With the games completed, the units are being sold off as high-price condos to a mix of local and global buyers. While there has been, and could continue to be a great deal written on the difficult history of this development, particularly in terms of the risk assumed by the city in order to finance its development (Bramham, 2011), my

purpose here is to focus on the development's intended role as an exemplar of sustainable urban design and as another element of Vancouver's policy brand (Figure 1).

The city government's fact sheet on the Southeast False Creek development highlights some of its key attributes, beyond its compactness, links to transit, and attention to brownfield redevelopment and wetland rehabilitation:

Sustainable features and services incorporated into the site include rainwater harvesting for building use to reduce reliance on the municipal system, and a Net-Zero Energy Building that generates as much power as it uses through energy consumption monitoring, solar recovery and waste-heat capture (City of Vancouver n.d. a).

The most visible innovation on the site is the False Creek Energy Centre, part of the development's 'Neighborhood Energy Utility' (NEU), "the City's first renewable district heating system" (Robertson, 2010), with its five eye-catching, illuminated exhaust stacks rising above the Cambie Street Bridge, a major commuter portal into downtown. Using a system similar to that for geothermal heating, the NEU recovers heat from untreated sewage and returns it to buildings for heating and domestic hot water. The energy recovery system is backed up by inputs from solar panels, located on the neighborhood's buildings and "[o]n the coldest days ... [from] high-efficiency natural gas boilers." The city claims in a factsheet that the NEU, "outperforms most geothermal systems, thanks to a warmer heat source and lower installation cost," "reduces greenhouse gas emissions by over 50% compared to conventional energy sources ... [and] supplies approximately 70% of the annual energy demand" to buildings in a city where, "54% of greenhouse gas emissions come from buildings." In a more comparative/competitive tone, the factsheet also claims that the NEU is "the first utility in North America to use waste heat recovery from untreated urban waste water" (City of Vancouver, n.d. b).

~FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE~

During the first week of the Olympics, Robertson announced that the Olympic Village had become "the greenest neighborhood in the world" (quoted in Fowle, 2010). This shorthand description – another potential brand in-the-making – refers to a "LEED-ND Platinum, Stage 2" certification conferred on the development by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), which

has developed LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) into an international rating system to measure the ‘greenness’ of buildings and, more recently, entire neighborhoods (US Green Building Council, n.d.). The current LEED-ND (Neighborhood Development) rating system assigns points to a neighborhood-scale development, based on a USGBC committee’s evaluation of four sets of criteria: “Smart Location and Linkage,” incorporating factors such as infill development, reuse of industrial land, reduced auto-dependency, and the protection or enhancement of fragile ecosystems; “Neighborhood Pattern and Design,” including compact development, mixed uses and tenure types, accessible public spaces, and local food production; “Green Construction and Technology,” for example, certified green buildings, energy efficiency, waste reduction, and on-site, renewable energy generation; and “Innovation and Design Process,” under which points are awarded for “exceptional performance” in design or if the development’s design team includes a professional with a LEED certification or similar accreditation recognized by one of the USGBC’s partner organizations, the Congress for a New Urbanism and the Natural Resources Defense Council (for a full list of the criteria and procedures, see US Green Building Council, 2007). The ‘Platinum’ designation conferred on the Southeast False Creek development is the highest level of certification, indicating that the development has been awarded 80-106 points in the evaluators’ 106-point scale.

The “Stage 2” modifier in the development’s certification indicates that the neighborhood was, at the time of Robertson’s announcement, only at the second of a three-stage certification process and that what had actually been certified as ‘Platinum’ was *not* the built-out development at all but, rather, the *plan* for the development, as approved by local authorities. The purpose of the first two stages of the LEED process is to “provide developers of certifiable projects with some form of approval [from the USGBC and thus to] ... to ensure that great plans became great real-life projects” (US Green Building Council, 2007, 2). Only a subsequent, but not automatic, “Stage 3” designation of the complete, or near-complete, development (a designation that, by late 2011, Vancouver still had not achieved [US Green Building Council, 2011, 3]) allows the USGBC to, “issue plaques or similar awards for public display at the project site.” Yet, it is perhaps no surprise that while the Mayor’s written announcement of the LEED certification (Robertson, 2010) does mention the “Stage 2” designation, it does so without explaining what it means and it is preceded by the aforementioned headline-grabbing claim to global supremacy in green neighborhood design.

This language of policy boosterism also obscured the geographical details underlying the claim, but these were pursued by journalists attending Robertson’s public announcement of the

certification: “[Robertson added] that while the designation is officially limited to North America, he knows of no other community in the world that is comparable. ‘This is how we are letting the world know, through the Olympics in particular, that Vancouver is the green capital.’ [He continued that] the athletes’ village project is only the second to achieve LEED platinum status, after Victoria [British Columbia’s] Dockside Green. He added that the athletes’ village scored higher than Dockside Green [in the 106-point scale], and thus can be considered the greener of the two” (Fowlie, 2010, A14). Again, the careful delimiting of boosterist narratives is a classic feature of entrepreneurial city marketing (Jessop, 1997, 1998). For example, boosters like Robertson trumpet their city’s ‘best place to live’ rankings in universal terms (‘our city is a good place to live for *everyone*’), even when the rankings are largely generated by journalists and consultants with specific audiences in mind (e.g., best places to live for corporate executives or for retirees) (McCann, 2004). A second classic feature of city branding and marketing – the strategic management of how these designations are reported – was also evident in the mayor’s announcement. A USGBC document (US Green Building Council, 2011, 3) indicates that Vancouver was granted the LEED designation on February 3rd, 2010. Yet, the Mayor’s announcement did not occur until February 16th. While the delay may reflect a desire to accommodate the travel schedule of the chair of the USGBC’s board of directors, who attended the public announcement in Vancouver, it would be naïve to ignore the fact that the Olympic Games began on February 12th and that, as a result, the potential for global media attention was much greater for an announcement made during their first week, rather than for one made ten days earlier.

The policy boosterism related to the Olympic Village development was largely extrospective in the way it trumpeted Vancouver’s world-class green credentials and set the city in a comparative/competitive relationship with places elsewhere. Similarly, the use of the City of Vancouver’s official pavilion, or ‘house,’ at the Games as a walk-through showcase of its new ‘Green Capital’ economic development brand was largely extrospective in the sense that the strategy is about competing with places elsewhere for investment. Yet, both the Olympic Village and Vancouver House combined extrospective and introspective politics since both also sought to educate and gain support for policy initiatives among the local population in a manner akin to Pasotti’s (2010) mayoral brand politics.

While policy boosterism always involves concurrent foci on learning and promoting beyond a city’s boundaries and also on public education intended to promote and legitimate policy models to those within the city, the balance of these elements is specific to each case. During the Games,

the introspective politics of persuasion weighed more heavily in demonstrations of public transit technologies and new forms of high-density housing. These were, to borrow some Olympic parlance, ‘demonstration events,’ or time-delimited exhibits or changes in standard operating practice that were partly or fully intended to educate the public about potential improvements in urban governance, planning, and design that had been either developed in the city or that were imported from elsewhere.

Space does not allow a discussion of the high-density housing and its promotion at the Olympics (but see Petrozzi, 2010 and Davis, 2010). Here I will focus on the transit demonstration, which consisted of two ‘European style’ streetcars that ran on a single track from the edge of the Olympic Village, west along the shore of False Creek to the tourist sites of Granville Island. Dubbed the ‘Olympic Line,’ the streetcars ran for sixty days during the Olympic and Paralympic Games, providing free transportation to a total of 550,000 riders. The 1.8 km line ran along an existing railbed, normally used on summer weekends by a small, tourist-oriented ‘heritage’ tram. Yet, in order to make the line viable for the streetcars, the City of Vancouver spent \$8 million (half of which it had gathered from fees paid by developers who built the Olympic Village and surrounding developments) and combined it with another \$500,000 from the federal Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, which owns and operates Granville Island (Bula, 2009; City of Vancouver, n.d. c). The cars themselves – white, grey, and black vehicles with a conspicuous gold trim, adorned with slogans like, “The Climate is Right for Trains” (Figure 2) – were built by Canadian corporation, Bombardier Transportation. The company paid for them to be trucked from Brussels, where they were in use, to Bremerhaven, shipped via the Panama Canal to the Port of Tacoma, then on to Vancouver and for them to be returned to Brussels after what a Bombardier press release called, “a unique streetcar demonstration project ... [of] accessible, environmentally friendly and sustainable transportation” (quoted in Bula, 2009; see also Bombardier, n.d.).

~FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE~

For the City of Vancouver, its massive investment in a two month “showcase” was justified as “help[ing to] determine the feasibility and future timing of building additional rail infrastructure” (City of Vancouver, 2009c, 2) and being “an important first step in realizing the City of Vancouver’s vision for the future of the streetcar – a clean, sustainable public transit option” (City of Vancouver, n.d., c) that, “would be an important element of a more accessible and greener transportation system

to support the Southeast False Creek (SEFC) [i.e., Olympic Village] neighborhood and Vancouver's other growing communities" (City of Vancouver, 2009c, 2). The intended audience for this demonstration was, as always, multiple. Certainly there was the extrospective element: there was a desire to present another example of Vancouver's sustainability planning to visitors from elsewhere but presumably visitors from cities like Brussels would be underwhelmed by the city's 1.8 km, two-car effort. It was, therefore, an introspective politics of persuasion that was the prime motivation for the \$8 million expenditure.

Recent years have seen ongoing debates about the merits and appropriateness of at-grade streetcar and light rail technologies in Vancouver and its surrounding region. While numerous study trips to cities in Europe and elsewhere have returned with stories of their utility, well-publicized skepticism about the impacts on traffic, pedestrian safety, and surrounding businesses of at-grade rail transit along streets (as opposed to in tunnels or on elevated tracks) persist, even as supporters point to recent polling that suggests that over eighty percent of tourists and local residents are in favor of a streetcar linking Granville Island and downtown (City of Vancouver, 2009c, 2). Therefore, the Olympic Line was seen by city planners and engineers as a chance to bolster stories from afar with tangible experience at home. Citizens would be able to *experience* what a 'European style' streetcar in Vancouver would be like. Thus, the opening of the line was given the full media-event treatment, the Line's two stations included informational signs explaining the significance and goals of the demonstration project as well as other signs with slogans like, "This Way to the Future," and the project was framed by a glossy factsheet and an accompanying website.

This marketing to the general public paralleled a perhaps more crucial element of introspective Olympic line politics: an attempt to convince Translink, the regional transportation authority with responsibility for planning, managing, and financing public transit and roads in greater Vancouver. Translink's conspicuous absence from the funding of Olympic Line, even as it engaged in numerous other quite successful efforts to increase transit use and reduce automobile trips during the Games, indicates that, as a local journalist put it when the scheme was announced, "Translink has always been uber-tepid about the idea, no doubt seeing it as some goofy little vanity project that the Big Heads in Vancouver city hall thought up. Given the budget mess they're in already," she continued, "it's hard to see them coming up with any money for this" (Bula, 2009). For Bombardier, the effort of shipping streetcars from Brussels and back was worth it to advertize their technology in a potential future market, for the Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation, their contribution supported a transit initiative that might, in the future, take pressure off of Granville

Island's congested parking lots, and for the City of Vancouver, the investment was aimed largely at convincing local tax-payers and funders at the regional, as well as provincial and federal levels, to consider supporting an expanded downtown streetcar network in the future: "After the 2010 Winter Games are over, the streetcar system could be made permanent or expanded, depending on studies during the demonstration and the funding partnership needed to complete the work" (City of Vancouver, 2009c, 1).

Discussion

These examples of policy boosterism can shed light on individual sites of policy-making, on wider fields of interconnected sites, and on the forces and connections that constitute these fields (Burawoy, 2000). Recalling Harvey's (1989a) discussion of how the 'new boosterism' is driven by a particular political economic context and how it facilitates the 'serial reproduction' of a narrow set of new urban forms, like festival markets and aquaria, allows us to see policy boosterism as a product of a particular regime of 'fast' and mobile policy-making, as a commonplace activity among many policy actors, and as facilitating the global proliferation of the sorts of policy models described above. Yet, this is not to suggest that local policy domains are passive in the face of global flows or logics. Rather, policy is actively made in sites of innovation, assemblage, and struggle by gathering and reformulating knowledge from elsewhere. Policy mobilization, then, does not occur through the one-to-one replication of pre-packaged 'solutions,' but through a complex socio-spatial process of emulation and transmutation that has uneven consequences for cities and citizens that cannot necessarily or easily be read off of the contexts from which they were spawned. Such an approach focuses attention on discourses/practices of assemblage, on actors and interests of various sorts, and on the role that policies themselves and their physical and social manifestations play in the power-laden processes of repetition and legitimation, competition and cooperation that constitute policy mobilities. More specifically, it highlights four potential avenues for continued scholarship on policy-making, politics, and 'mobile urbanism' (McCann and Ward, 2011).

First, while, by definition, the notion of policy *boosterism* highlights the competitive elements of the extrospective stance toward policy, what this competition entails might not be as clear or uni-dimensional as it seems. Certainly, policy boosterism and the standard forms of entrepreneurial boosterism analyzed by the post-1989 entrepreneurial city literature are directly linked and mutually

sustaining in many ways. Robertson's words in Copenhagen, with which I introduced this paper, certainly appeal to the role of sustainability policy innovation in economic development and the '*est*' in his 'Greenest City' initiative is an unabashedly competitive suffix. His other statements at the Summit seem to broaden the field, however. Rather than simply invoking an 'us first' mentality, where Vancouverism allows Vancouver to triumph in a zero-sum game of global competition, the rhetoric of policy boosterism is often inclusive and extrospective in the sense of looking to improve the world, not just the locality, both by setting an example for others to emulate and actively helping in that emulation (see McCann, 2004, 2011). Undoubtedly, the present neoliberal context seems to necessitate that even this cooperative ethos be expressed through a curiously discordant competitive vulgate – other cities are to be engaged in competition, even if that competition is to be 'friendly.' Indeed, cities like Vancouver continually and eagerly host delegations from elsewhere to teach them about their innovations, professionals from exemplary cities are happy to travel elsewhere – often on their own time and not always for handsome consultancy fees – to share stories of success at home, and city governments expend resources on their involvement in formalized city twinning, networking, and partnership activities in order to share best practices with others. Thus, a critical consideration of policy boosterism and policy mobilities cautions against the assumption that connections among cities necessarily stem either from pure competitiveness or pure cooperative spirit. Rather, many city leaders and other powerful urban policy actors seem to be driven by a desire to be leaders as well as winners. This suggests that there is a need to be open to how cooperation and competition work together in ways that, as Leibovitz (2003) has shown at a regional scale, have their own complexities, politics, and uneven consequences.

Second, just as Harvey's analysis of the 'new boosterism' aided the development of research into the local state's entrepreneurial activities and their uneven consequences (uneven in the way that certain cities become 'winners' in inter-urban competition for investment, in the way that certain neighborhoods in cities become the focus of development while others were left to decline, and uneven socially as certain interests gain from the new entrepreneurial stance while many others do not), further research on policy boosterism would allow a better understanding of the uneven opportunities for, and consequences of urban policy mobilities. In terms of opportunities to engage in global circuits of policy knowledge, we must begin with the understanding that urban actors' ability to *be* influential policy boosters is stratified by the social, spatial, political, economic, and institutional contexts in which they operate. 'Common sense' and widely-held understandings of what are best practices and exemplary cities reflect the access certain actors have to resources as

much, if not more, than they do the supposedly inherent (dare I say ‘natural’?) qualities of any specific city or policy expert. Crucial resources that help certain policies, forms of expertise, and narratives about cities to ‘go global’ fall into at least the following categories: (1) intellectual and ideological resources, including a familiarity and general agreement with the hegemonic definitions of policy challenges and solutions that allow access into a particular global policy community or circuit of knowledge; (2) cultural resources, including the ability to speak to others – often in English – and to comport oneself in a manner deemed appropriate, professional, or persuasive by the policy community in question and by members of the media, who frequently play a role in popularizing policy innovations (McCann, 2004); and (3) material resources, including travel budgets to allow access to conferences elsewhere and to help pay for visits by policy actors from elsewhere to an aspiring exemplary city, publication and technology budgets for the circulation of hard-copy and electronic documents, and funds for translation. Clearly, these resources are not evenly distributed through society or space. Rather, certain actors and places are more likely to gain global influence, given the need for these resources. Therefore, policy mobilities tend to serially reproduce a relatively narrow set of prescriptions that are based on the experience of a fairly limited number of cities.

The limited mental map of the world produced through the learning activities of global communities of policy actors – one produced through the repetition of stories about a small number of ‘cities upon hills,’ closely watched models raised above the policy landscape and clustered in certain world regions – has implications for the contemporary focus on comparison in urban studies. This discussion seeks to reposition comparative urban analysis more centrally in order to understand the transnational or global-relational character of urbanization and urbanism while avoiding or rectifying some of the conceptual and empirical shortcomings of previous work (Dear, 2005; Nijman, 2007; Robinson, 2002, 2004; Ward, 2008, 2009). It has been joined recently by Clarke’s (2009) work on what he calls ‘actually existing’ connections and comparisons among cities, whereby formalized inter-city and twinning partnerships both provide an infrastructure for policy learning and technical assistance partnerships and also allow urban policy actors to continually compare and contrast their cities to others in ways that have implications for governance and development. The boosterist activities of urban policy actors are relevant to these discussions because they play a role in directing attention to certain places and policy initiatives, helping them to be defined as exemplary and therefore to be defined as benchmarks for comparison and objects of competition and emulation. Policy boosterism, then, seems to play an important role in constituting uneven and power-laden

global fields of cooperation and competition in which, “it [becomes] possible to think of organizationally discrete and spatially disparate objects as comparable” (Larner and Le Heron, 2004, 214).

These first two points, which deal primarily with how we might conceptualize policy boosterism and mobilities, are complemented by two more that highlight the political elements of this type of research – both the ways that an attention to boosterist practices reveal various forms of politics at work and also how an attention to these forms of politics offers opportunities to question and intervene in them. The third point involves a consideration of the uneven consequences of policy boosterism and policy mobilities and the ways in which these uneven impacts are managed leads to a consideration of politics *within* the extrospective city. As growth machine theorists and others have long argued, one main audience of urban branding is the local population. The continuous pursuit of economic growth requires a general acceptance that growth is good for all, not merely for a small group of rentiers and their allies. Therefore, this idea must be continuously *sold* to locals since it is not self-evident. Similarly, an important but understudied audience for *policy* boosterism is local. The Vancouverism brochure’s prominent use of the *New York Times*’ description of the city’s urban form both reflects and also calls for pride among the city’s population in being noticed by such a prominent publication – a pride similar to what Logan and Molotch (1987, 62, after McKenzie, 1922) term ‘we feelings’ and what Cox and Mair (1988, 318) call ‘localist ideologies,’ where the local community is represented as “a *worthy* community ... as an exemplar of widely held values ... as a caring community, a producer of brave men, of great men and women, of ideas and inventions” (ibid., 317, their emphasis; see Pasotti, 2010). More attention needs, then, to be paid to how urban elites’ extrospective stance toward policy is balanced and bolstered by an *introspective* politics which seeks to generate pride in, and support for local policies by continually informing the local population of their global influence and praise (see Temenos and McCann, Forthcoming). It becomes more difficult – but not impossible – to criticize a policy, its creators, and the interests it serves when it has been anointed as ‘best’ by professionals, institutions, and publications elsewhere, by a growing international ‘awards and credentials industry’ (e.g., LEED), and/or by other politicians and professionals elsewhere who have sought to transfer the policy to their cities.

Another element of this introspective urban politics that is a necessary part of extrospective urbanism is the governmentalization of the local population through direct persuasion as well as indirect incentivization, working in combination with more ‘sovereign’ forms of power made

manifest in state regulations. Mayor Robertson's language of 'challenge,' which was directed toward other mayors in Copenhagen, has a different resonance in the Greenest City Initiative documents, which are directed toward changing the character of Vancouver and the behavior of its residents (Boyd, n.d.; City of Vancouver, 2009a). Rather than only resonating with a common understanding of inter-urban competition, the Initiative's stated objectives invoke a governmental approach to achieving Greenest City status: there is a focus on encouraging individual citizens to work on themselves, to work on their own conduct, in order to be more green and, in turn, to make the city more sustainable. Further research on global-urban policy mobilities will be rewarded by an attention to the intersections of extrospective and this introspective urban politics. This research also has two related political 'moments.' On the one hand, critically researching and unpacking or 'denaturalizing' discourses of crisis, responsibility, 'best practices,' and solutions, the interests with which they are bound up, and the contingencies and incongruities that underlie their often universalizing and boosterist rhetoric offers at least an opening for political engagement with, and questioning of their uneven consequences for urban development. On the other hand, the study of how advocates of alternative policy models have used similar forms of global-urban networking to achieve innovative policy change – for example, in urban drug policy (McCann, 2008; 2011b) – defetishizes the networks themselves and instead puts the emphasis on their fundamentally social and political character while pointing to ways in which elite circuits of knowledge can be inhabited by and turned to the service of marginalized groups.

Fourth, the political resonances of studying policy boosterism and mobilities can be seen at another scale. While the Toronto and Vancouver delegations had multiple purposes in their trip to Copenhagen, it is clear from the mayors' statements that one was to influence federal Canada's approach to climate change. The city leaders were, then, attempting to use their own reputations for sustainable practices to shape national policy while also setting their cities apart from existing national approaches. This is a noteworthy development in the Canadian context particularly, since municipalities tend to have little formal power within the structure of the Canadian state because they are, as the cliché goes, 'creatures of the province.' It is also notable because it indicates an extra-national extension of recent attempts among city mayors to assert themselves at the national level, often through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and particularly its Big City Mayors Caucus. Yet, I would suggest that the mayors' criticism of Canada's policies in Copenhagen resonates more widely than the Canadian context. First, it indicates the ways in which urban politics is not, and never has been, simply conducted within municipal boundaries. This is hardly an original

point, but it is one worth repeating. More specifically, the mayors' actions in Denmark point to the political power that exemplar status is perceived to confer. They clearly saw the opportunity to use their status at the Climate Summit to pressure Canada to change its policies. Such a policy shift would, presumably, free up federal funds for new public transit infrastructure, investment in 'green collar' job training, alternative energy technologies, much of which would accrue to their cities if Vancouver's Green Capital development strategy is to be believed.

This dependency on national state decisions and priorities, even for cities with growing international reputations in governance circles, speaks to a second way in which the mayors' actions in Copenhagen resonate with contemporary discussion of policy mobilities. While inter-urban policy mobilities have tended to be discussed as linking cities in ways that work outside or around more 'traditional' inter-*national* structures, institutions, and pathways, this is not to suggest that many of these connections no longer work in, through, and with the aid of national states. The Olympic Games in Vancouver, for example, was a locally-conceived marketing opportunity for the city (among other things), but it was funded to a great degree by the national government since the benefits of the event were expected to accrue nationally. Similarly, when architects, consultants, and developers based in Vancouver or elsewhere in Canada are seeking entry into lucrative markets overseas – in Dubai's property market, for example – it is national consulate and embassy staff in those locations that facilitate the 'inter-urban' connections. Ongoing work on policy mobilities and policy boosterism must balance a regard for the until recently overlooked inter-urban links that exist outside or around 'traditional' state structures with a continued acknowledgement of the role national states play in the governance and development of cities. This also has political implications since analysis that specifies the respective roles of local and national states in shaping urban development and urban life in the context of their connections to global circuits of policy knowledge is again likely to provide opportunities for engagement and questioning of the priorities of contemporary urban development regimes. I am not suggesting that a goal like sustainability is problematic *per se*. Rather, there is political purchase in the critical examination of the hegemonic framing of this goal in contemporary cities – a framing that cannot escape from a competitive vulgate, that hopes to incentivize market forces to produce sustainable solutions, and that has been less than successful in articulating what 'social sustainability' might look like alongside the environmental and the economic. In this sense, careful tracings of the rhetoric and travels of mobile urban policy models are fundamentally political.

These four points are intended to highlight areas for further consideration in the burgeoning literature on policy mobilities and the related literature of comparative urbanism. Generally, the literature on contemporary city branding and marketing has focused on an unchanging set of actors, strategies, and audiences. Policy boosterism has not been a focus of this literature, despite the fact that it is a widespread and common practice. Perhaps this is because the details of policy sometimes do not seem very interesting. Yet, I would agree with Peck (1996, xvi, his emphasis) that “policy work is never *just* policy work.” Instead, an attention to policy boosterism and policy mobilities offers a number of insights into the character of contemporary urban, regional, and global geographies and some avenues for further engagement with them. Policy boosterism is, I suggest, an important aspect of the extrospective, global-urban ‘making up’ (Ward, 2006) of urban policy, particularly because of the way that the practice highlights certain places as exemplars and thus directs attention and connections in particular directions, thus producing a particular, urban-political geography. It is also a useful addition to a wider set of concepts through which to analyze and engage with the production of this global-urban geography.

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Figure 1. The former Olympic Village development, Southeast False Creek, Vancouver.



Source: Author.

Figure 2. Olympic Line streetcar at the Olympic Village Station. The sign includes the logo for the ‘Vancouver Green Capital’ economic development marketing strategy.



Source: Courtesy, City of Vancouver.

Endnotes

¹ Interestingly, the *Times* article isn't about Vancouver. It discusses development in San Francisco's South of Market neighborhood. The author's use of 'Vancouverism' to characterize South of Market's built form seems to indicate the term's widening influence in the architecture, design, and development industries within North America.