THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL REGIME AND PUBLIC POLICY IN HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

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ABSTRACT: Regime theorists have not included state government as a member of urban governing coalitions even though governors and state legislatures have the constitutional authority and fiscal resources that can facilitate local governance. In this research, I analyze economic development and education policies in Hartford, Connecticut to illustrate that the governor is a leader of Hartford's regime. Like other regime actors, the governor provides selective inducements to other coalition members to gain support for his policies. The Hartford regime came to include the governor because the city lost much of its business and political leadership, and management and accountability problems crippled public policy. Because governors have the capacity to act as a powerful regime partner, it is important to study the effect they have on urban governance.

“Has anyone done more for [this city] than I have?”

The author of this quote is Connecticut Governor John G. Rowland and the city to which he is referring is Hartford, the state’s capital (Weiss, 2001). Regime theorists would be somewhat surprised that a governor posed this question. They analyze how the interrelationship among local government, business, and other actors influences urban governance but they fail to examine the degree to which governors and state legislatures affect local policies (DeLeon, 1992; DiGaetano & Klemanski, 1993; Elkin, 1987; Fainstein & Fainstein, 1983; Harding, 1994; Imbroscio, 1998; Jones & Bachelor, 1993; Newman, 2001; Orr, 1992; Orr & Stoker, 1994; Sanders, 1987; Stone, 1989, 1993; Whelan, Young, & Lauria, 1994). Regime theory argues that politics matters at the local level but it does not fully recognize that governors and state politics also matter to urban public policy. Studies that utilize regime theory do not address the ways in which governors are integral parts of the governing coalition in many cities.

In this research, I analyze economic development and education policies in Hartford, Connecticut to illustrate that the governor is a regime actor. It is important to study the effect that governors have on regimes because these chief executives possess the resources and constitu-

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tional authority that can make urban governance possible. I will show that Governor Rowland, with the assistance of the Connecticut General Assembly, not only contributes fiscal resources to economic development and education but he also has authority over and shapes these policies.

REGIMES

An urban regime, which bridges the divide between state and market, is an informal but long-lasting partnership between those who possess resources that facilitate urban governance. Local government officials and business leaders are central to many regimes because they allocate resources, such as authority, productive assets, finance, and information that make urban governance possible (Stoker, 1995; Stone, 1989). Cities need regimes because elected officials cannot govern alone. Authority does not grant local elected officials the capacity to govern because cities operate in a context of scarce resources. Local elected officials are vital because they make genuine choices in response to the market (Stone, 1987). Governors have the resources of city government because they have constitutional authority at the local level.

Elected officials must create the capacity to govern with private interests who control the financial resources and business decisions that are vital to societal welfare (Stone, 1993). Business leaders guide the economy and own productive assets but they do not have authority over urban policy decisions (Stoker, 1995). State government and governors make investment decisions because their taxing powers enable them to control financial resources.

Leadership is central to regimes because the governing coalition must produce the capacity to govern (Stone, 1989, 1993). Regime leaders achieve their policy objectives by convincing others that their policy agenda is socially worthy, achievable, and timely (Stone, 1993). They do not generate governing capacity through coercion but instead induce cooperation via selective benefits including contracts and jobs (Mossberger & Stoker, 2001). Governors with these leadership skills can become regime actors because they possess public and private resources.

Regimes do not operate according to democratic theory because resource providers have a significant advantage over those without resources. They have limited popular control because many regime actors are in the private sector and do not need votes to shape public policy (Stoker, 1995). The electoral and governing coalitions are often different in cities because authority alone does not allow elected leaders to govern (Stone, 1993).

STATE AND LOCAL RELATIONS

Cities are largely dependent on states. State governments give legal powers to localities and they provide administrative and financial assistance to city governments, which have limited technical capacity and taxing powers (Berman, 1997; Cigler, 1998; Kantor, 1988; Ladd & Yinger, 1989; MacManus, 1983; Marando & Reeves, 1985). Governors and state legislatures have taken an active role in urban policy partly because they want to improve the attractiveness of their states, and their constitutional authority allows them to make local policy. State leaders often shape urban economic development to attract and maintain businesses, and they have increased their direct involvement in education policy, which they believe affects business location decisions (DiLeo, 1998; Eisinger, 1998b). Governors and state legislatures have also used their authority to make local environmental and welfare policies (Barrilleaux, 1998; Lester & Lombard, 1998).

Cities have become more fiscally dependent on state financial assistance. For example, from 1957 to 1977, state aid to local governments increased by 750%, and the average state aid to
cities consistently represents more than half of local revenues (Kantor, 1988; Swartz, 1993). As Kantor (1988) states in *The Dependent City*, “It is apparent that lower levels of government, particularly local governments, are now highly dependent on higher levels of government and are not even close to being self-sustaining operations” (p. 214).

State and local relations are even more important in the current era of devolution (Hanson, 1998). In this era of devolution, the elimination of many federal programs and a reduction in federal aid have substituted the national-local relationship for an even stronger interconnection between states and cities (Marando & Reeves, 1985; Stonecash, 1998). As the national government gives the states more discretion, state governments rely more heavily on cities to implement programs (Borut, 1996; Eisinger, 1998a; Marando & Reeves, 1985; Nice, 1998). Consequently, local governments are greatly affected by fiscal problems at the state level (Bartle, 1996). An increase in state power has also made localities more dependent on state government. States have experienced a higher concentration of fiscal power (Sokolow, 1998), which means less local autonomy, less local input (Johnston, 1998), and more local dependence on state government (Agranoff & McGuire, 1998).

**REGIMES AND STATE GOVERNMENT**

Regime theory focuses on the effect that local and even regional actors have on public policy and governance. It pays scant attention to the possibility that governors and state legislators are regime actors. Researchers conclude that African Americans, homeowners, the liberal middle class, and others are regime actors but they do not regard governors or state legislatures as members of the governing coalition (Stone, 1993; Whelan, Young, & Lauria, 1994). Regime theory’s narrow focus has led some to criticize it for being too localist (Harding, 1995; Imbroscio, 1998; Kantor, Savitch, & Haddock, 1997; Sites, 1997).

Some regime theorists acknowledge state actors’ influence on city politics but they do not go so far as to say that governors and legislators are regime actors. Orr (1999) and Portz, Stein, and Jones (1999) note that state laws and financial aid affect education policy in Baltimore and St. Louis but they do not regard the governor or legislators in these states as members of the local regime. Other scholars notice the relative absence of state government in regime theory but they have not directly studied this phenomenon. Ferman (1996), for instance, challenges regime theorists to move beyond analyses of the electoral arena and instead focus on the ways in which intergovernmental relations affect local governance.

Using regime analysis, Stone (1998) admits that state legislation affects cities and state officials propose change and can alter “the rules under which local actors play” (Stone, 1998, p. 2). Governors, I argue, do more than propose change and set the guidelines under which local actors shape policy. They are regime actors because they shape policy, allocate resources, and have authority at the local level. It is important to investigate governors’ potential roles as political actors because all regimes are not the same and the interrelationship among those in the governing coalition determines public policy (Stone, 1993, 1998).

**HARTFORD’S REGIME IN TRANSITION**

Prior to the middle 1980s, Hartford had a classic development regime. Known as the Bishops, the CEOs of Hartford’s insurance companies controlled productive assets and shaped many of the city’s policies. These business leaders were instrumental in the urban renewal efforts that Hartford undertook in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Clavel, 1986). In the 1970s and early 1980s, the so-called Archbishop or shadow-mayor John Filer, chairman of Aetna Life and Casualty, used his company’s resources to develop low-income and moderate-priced hous-
In the 1970s, Nicholas Carbone used his deputy mayor’s position to control the city’s institutional resources (Clavel, 1986; McKee, 2000). As I explain below, Hartford uses a council-manager form of government that grants little authority to the mayor and allows the city council, in general, and the deputy mayor, in particular, to control policy if they so choose. The development regime flourished in the 1970s because the Bishops and the political realm, specifically Carbone, worked so well together (Clavel, 1986; McKee, 2000).

**Bishops No More**

Hartford’s development regime began to break down after the mid-1980s because many business and political leaders no longer performed the roles of regime actors. For example, many of Hartford’s insurance businesses merged with other firms thereby moving potential Bishops to New York City. Mayor Michael Peters, Tom Ritter (former Speaker of the Connecticut House of Representatives and a lifetime resident of the city), and others contend that the takeover of Hartford’s insurance companies by firms in other states and cities means that many business leaders neither live in the area nor consistently shape local policy (M. Peters, personal communication, October 17, 2000; T. Ritter, personal communication, July 27, 2000). Only six months before his death in 1994, Filer lamented that senior corporate executives in Hartford did not pay attention to the community and that business leaders “should be part of the enlightened group that calls the different factions and players together and tried to do some intelligent planning, tries to do some intelligent demonstration projects” (Levick, 1994, p. A1). The loss of many captains of industry removed regime actors from Hartford.

However, Hartford has businesses that continue to invest in the city. Once known as the insurance capital of the world, Hartford still has a significant insurance industry. Six major insurance companies (the Hartford, Aetna, Cigna, Travelers, Mass Mutual, and the Phoenix) maintain significant operations in Hartford and continue to be the city’s top taxpayers (Court of Common Council, 1998). Aetna, the Hartford, and Travelers are also three of the top five major employers in the city (Connecticut Capitol Region Growth Council, n.d.).

A number of private leaders continue to perform the role of regime actors in Hartford. Robert W. Fiondella, CEO of the Phoenix, was instrumental in promoting the most recent efforts at urban economic development (McKee, 2000). Evan S. Dobelle, president of Trinity College, engineered and contributed to the construction of the Learning Corridor, a $110 million public-private partnership that consists of a Montessori school, a middle school, a science, mathematics, and technology high school resource center, and the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts.

**Absent Political Leadership**

After Carbone left office, the Hartford regime lost its public leadership, and managerial difficulties and racial and ethnic tensions made it very difficult for the city to implement even routine political decisions. Mismanagement has greatly plagued Hartford over at least the last 15 years. Examples of mismanagement in education include but are not limited to a recommendation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges’ Commission on Public Secondary Education to revoke Hartford Public High School’s accreditation; the education department’s failure to pay the rent on some of its offices (Chedekel, 1998); the lack of basic supplies, such as paper and pencils, in at least one middle school (Green, 1997); claims by the school board that it did not receive $1.7 million from the city council whereas the city council argued that it appropriated the money (Green, 1997); fights at school board meetings that in-
cluded people throwing water at each other; instances of nepotism; and the hiring of four superintendents of a school in a five year span.

Mismanagement is not limited to education. The Buracker Report, a national consultant’s comprehensive and independent review of the Hartford Police Department, contends: 1) that the city does not staff or fund the police department at the proper levels, 2) the Hartford Police Department uses deficient training practices, and 3) the police department should change its dysfunctional organizational structure to a centralized model (Brown & Hall, 2000; John Jay College of Criminal Justice, 2000). Hartford has also had problems managing its parking authority, which was nearly $8 million behind in collecting parking fines in 1998 (Puleo, 2001). These types of major management problems illustrate the instability of Hartford’s political arena.

Racial and ethnic divisions have also added to Hartford’s unstable political climate. In 1998, Hartford’s population was 39% Latino (predominantly Puerto Rican), 38% African American, and 22% white (City of Hartford, n.d.). Hartford is a one-party city where registered Democrats outnumber registered Republicans and unaffiliated voters by a count of 44,322 to 18,187. The Democratic Party slate for the city council traditionally has two African American candidates, two Latino candidates, and two white candidates to satisfy Hartford’s diverse constituencies (Cruz, 1998; Simmons, 1994).

An example of Hartford’s tenuous racial and ethnic relations occurred when the school board appointed an African American instead of a Latino as the superintendent of schools (Lohman, 1998). Prior to the meeting to hire a new superintendent of schools, two-thirds of Hartford’s school board announced that they supported a Latino candidate of Puerto Rican descent from Hoboken, New Jersey. The Greater Hartford African American Alliance protested these announcements and 200 people gathered at the meeting to support an African American candidate (Lohman, 1998). A report by the state office on legislative research claims that “at the board’s meeting, under pressure from community activists, a majority of the board members changed their minds and voted to hire Patricia Daniel, the African American superintendent of the East Providence, Rhode Island school system” (Lohman, 1998). As this case illustrates, these divisions lead to policy instability.

Hartford utilizes a council-manager form of government. The nine-member city council is Hartford’s official policymaking body. The city manager has broad discretion in carrying out policy initiatives, especially budgetary matters, and is accountable for city departments and agencies (Burns & Liese, 2000). The mayor’s major formal authority includes policy leadership, the power to appoint and nominate people to boards and commissions, and ability to act as Hartford’s official representative with the national government and other states. The mayor does not have a vote on the city council.

Many complain that Hartford’s form of government leads to deficient leadership, incompetent management, and a lack of responsibility and accountability on the part of elected officials (Gurwitt, 2000; McKee, 2000). When I asked, “who makes public policy in Hartford?” to the city’s white, African American, and Latino political and civic leaders, many responded by laughing and then by remarking that no one either makes or is accountable for policy in this diffuse political system. In December 2000, the city’s electorate voted on a referendum to increase the power of the mayor. However, 15% of the registered voters had to approve the charter change because the city held the referendum in a special election. Even though the supporters of charter revision won by a count of 6,006 to 2,720, the reform did not pass because 15% of the electorate or roughly 6,730 voters did not support the new plan (Weiss, 2000).

Hartford has scarce resources. More than one-third of Hartford’s population receives public assistance and the city’s 10% unemployment rate is nearly twice the state average (Connecticut Capitol Region Growth Council, n.d.; Court of Common Council, 1998). The per capita income in Hartford is $13,271 whereas the state’s per capita income is $27,078 (Connecticut
Capitol Region Growth Council, n.d.). In addition, the city lost 36,850 jobs from 1988 to 1996, and more than one-third of its property is tax-exempt (McKee, 2000; Swift, 1997). Hartford’s population of 130,637 has also decreased by more than 15% from 1970 to 1998.

**AN EXAMINATION OF THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH GOVERNORS BECOME REGIME ACTORS**

In the remainder of this article, I examine Hartford’s economic development and education policies to analyze the degree to which the governor acts as a member of the city’s governing coalition. I use personal correspondence with the governor, the governor’s archives, reports from the state legislature’s office of legislative research, interviews with Hartford’s elected and civic leaders, legislative hearings, city council resolutions, and news accounts to describe the conditions under which Connecticut’s governor became a regime actor in Hartford. In the following analyses, I pay attention to the degree to which Connecticut’s governor uses his authority and his institutional and financial resources to shape and execute policy in Hartford.

**The Study of Economic Development and Education**

Economic development and education policies are the issue-areas that I investigate because the governing coalition shapes these policies. These policy-areas are also vital for the economic and social well being of the city and they help to attract and maintain resources in urban areas.

Economic development is a crucial policy for many, if not most, cities (Imbroscio, 1993; Jones & Bachelor, 1993; Kantor, 1988; Logan & Molotch, 1987). Peterson (1981) argues that this issue-area is so important that every city has a unitary goal of pursuing economic development. By contrast, Stone (1987) contends that local politics influences economic development policies and the composition of the governing coalition determines the extent to which a city pursues this policy. Stone and Sanders (1987) do imply, however, that economic development concerns are central to many cities. In a development regime, for example, the governing coalition advances economic development policies whereas a caretaker regime seeks to limit economic development. I argue that the economic development strategies that Hartford pursues reflect the governor’s philosophies about urban revitalization.

Education is also important to examine because its success or failure can seriously affect a city’s economic strength and social stability (Stone, 1998). Education, like economic development, is constrained by many forces outside of the city. However, local leaders, politics, and the composition of the governing coalition significantly influence education policy. For example, employment regimes focus on the jobs and benefits that some groups and communities receive from education (Orr, 1998; Stone, 1998). By contrast, performance regimes concentrate on reform that seeks to benefit everyone connected to education. Through an analysis of Hartford’s education policy, I will show that the governor formulates this policy, has authority over this issue-area, and provides significant resources to education.

**Economic Development Policy in Hartford**

In early 1998, Governor Rowland outlined a plan to make Hartford an educational, cultural, and entertainment center (Office of the Lieutenant Governor, n.d.). Rowland’s Six Pillars of Progress initiative includes a convention center, a higher education center, parking garages, housing, riverfront redevelopment, and the renovation of the Hartford Civic Center (Connecticut General Assembly, 1998). In May 1998, the Connecticut General Assembly authorized $300 million to implement the governor’s urban renewal plan (Schnobrich, et al., 2000).
The governor created a strong relationship with other regime actors by including business leaders in the redevelopment process. At Governor Rowland’s request, other members of Hartford’s regime helped develop the Six Pillars strategy (Connecticut General Assembly, 1998). Members of the advisory group on redevelopment included prominent private leaders, such as Dobelle, Fiondella, the director of the Aetna Foundation, and the CEO of Shared Technologies. The advisory group did not include any municipal or state elected officials from Hartford.

This team of private business leaders and the governor represents Hartford’s new development regime. Business leaders and Rowland provide fiscal resources whereas the governor controls and allocates institutional resources. The governor also has the authority to make his decisions binding. The state legislature approved Rowland’s actions regarding economic development and helped the governor choose appointees to the various boards and commissions that deal with Hartford’s redevelopment. However, Governor Rowland put forth the ideas and plans to redevelop Hartford and he led this process.

Governor Rowland also took authority over economic development by creating the Capital City Economic Development Authority (CCEDA). Established as a quasi-state entity in the Six Pillars’ legislation, CCEDA oversees the implementation of the Six Pillars and other projects that can stimulate Hartford’s economy (Capital City Economic Development Authority, n.d.). Brendan Fox, former legal counsel to the governor and a member of the advisory committee on redevelopment, is the executive director of CCEDA.

The Six Pillars legislation gave significant management powers to CCEDA. According to this legislation, CCEDA will own the convention center, manage the parking at Adriaen’s Landing, and control and collect revenue for the air rights over Adriaen’s Landing and the convention center (Office of Legislative Research, 2000). CCEDA will use the funds it collects to pay for various projects. It has power over contracts and it can issue state bonds (Swift, 2000b). CCEDA also distributes state seed money to Hartford and receives its revenue from the gross receipts tax that Hartford collects (Swift, 2000b).

The state and CCEDA have made progress on a number of Rowland’s Six Pillar projects. In the Riverfront Recapture project, a waterfront promenade and a pedestrian walkway on the Founders Bridge are complete, and work on riverfront expansion and a new boathouse began in the summer of 2001 (Capital City Economic Development Authority, n.d.; “Key link to the Riverfront,” 2000). The state is renovating the old G. Fox department store building so that the Capital-Community Technical College can move downtown (Capital City Economic Development Authority, n.d.). It has rehabilitated more than 25 buildings, and the jobs funnel, which the governor created in the Six Pillars legislation, has employed 325 Hartford residents in construction jobs (Capital City Economic Development Authority, n.d.).

During the 2000 legislative session, the General Assembly approved a $455 million state subsidy for Adriaen’s Landing, the 33-acre site for the convention center and hotel (Swift, 2000a). Official work on this project began on May 31, 2001, and the state expects that the convention center will open in 2003 (Capital City Economic Development Authority, n.d.). Governor Rowland with the assistance of the Connecticut General Assembly, business leaders, and CCEDA has set priorities, outlined a course of action, provided resources, and assumed authority over economic development in Hartford.

**Proponents and Opponents of the Six Pillars**

Business leaders, the city, and the suburbs have the most to gain from Hartford’s redevelopment. As members of the governing coalition, businesses strongly supported Rowland’s Six Pillars. The leaders of the Chamber of Commerce and the Connecticut Capitol Region Growth Council, a private economic development organization, believe that Hartford’s redevelopment
will attract people and businesses to the Hartford area (Connecticut General Assembly, 2000). Businesses have also committed considerable resources to the various redevelopment projects. The Waterford Group will invest $110 million to develop the convention center hotel; Connecticut Gas, Northeast Utilities, Fleet Bank, the Phoenix Corporation, and Travelers contributed a combined $55 million to the project; and the Phoenix donated land worth $5 million.

A number of Hartford’s elected officials also endorse Rowland’s redevelopment plan. The mayor and members of the Hartford delegation in the state legislature believe that Adriaen’s Landing will attract people to work and live in Hartford and will significantly increase the city’s tax base. The mayor, who worked closely with the governor to redevelop downtown Hartford, contends that the convention center is exactly what the city needs to increase the number of visitors to the city. Hartford’s elected officials acknowledge that it was the governor who devised and guided these projects. As State Representative Annette Carter noted at a legislative hearing on the Six Pillars,

this proposal that we have before us is mainly something that the governor had pushed and put in Hartford. Hartford itself did not come and ask for this but Hartford is not turning it down. Hartford is saying okay, bring it on board, because if we're going to be bringing revenue in here, we want to see the revenue (Connecticut General Assembly, 2000).

The suburbs also strongly supported the plans to redevelop Hartford. The chairman of the Policy Board for the Capitol Region Council of Governments, an organization that represents the 29 towns in the Greater Hartford region, endorses the Six Pillars because it will produce jobs for residents of the suburbs; it will attract people to live in Hartford’s suburbs; and it will improve the image of the area (Connecticut General Assembly, 2000). Suburban dwellers apparently believe that Hartford’s dismal national reputation deters people from moving to the Hartford area.

Some groups opposed various aspects of these redevelopment projects. African Americans, in general, and the African American Business and Community Coalition, in particular, were concerned that these projects would not employ traditionally excluded groups. They also wanted assurances that African American entrepreneurs would benefit from these plans. The chairman of the Capitol Region Black Chamber of Commerce believes that previous redevelopment projects did not include African American businesses (Connecticut General Assembly, 2000). Some neighborhoods also expressed concerns that the benefits of redevelopment would not extend into the neighborhoods.

Unions complained that the convention center and hotel are not obligated to use union employees. They believe that union participation would ensure that workers receive a living wage. Various groups also encouraged the legislature to include a provision for affordable housing in the Six Pillars legislation, which called for the construction of market rate housing.

Hartford’s Development Regime in Action

The participation of business leaders in the redevelopment process illustrates how regime members cooperate with each other to accomplish mutually beneficial goals. On the one hand, the governor provided state bonding for the Learning Corridor, a project that not only improves the quality of education for children but also vastly improves the neighborhood that surrounds Trinity College. On the other hand, Trinity President Evan S. Dobelle, the former mayor of a medium sized city, contributed his knowledge of urban government and politics as well as Trinity’s resources to achieve urban redevelopment in a distressed area in Hartford.

The involvement of the CEO of the Phoenix also shows how regime politics work in Hartford. The Phoenix contributed money and land toward downtown redevelopment and a signif-
icant part of this plan, which the CEO of the Phoenix helped create, revolves around the Phoenix building. This project uses a public-private partnership to make the Phoenix and downtown Hartford more attractive to current and potential employees. In addition, Fleet Bank contributed $500,000 toward a downtown skating rink and its chairman is now the vice-chairman of CCEDA’s board of directors.

These kinds of reciprocal relationships between government and business are standard in regime politics. What is not common is that the governor and not the mayor or any other local official is the main actor on the public side.

**Why the Governor Assumed Control over Economic Development in Hartford**

Business concerns, management and accountability problems, and political philosophy led Governor Rowland to take control of economic development in Hartford. Businesses, among others, regarded Hartford’s government as a dysfunctional system that was not capable of leading the city’s economic redevelopment. Businesses inside and outside of Hartford found it difficult to identify the political person with whom to work on economic development. As one local business leader said, “no one is in charge in city hall.”

Governor Rowland stepped in to manage economic development in Hartford partly because none of the city’s elected officials was either able or willing to perform this task. The management problems within city government also encouraged the governor to establish an entity to direct the state’s financial investment in Hartford. The governor also created the CCEDA to ensure accountability. Whereas accountability is often absent in Hartford’s diffuse government, the governor established a government organization that the citizens and businesses could hold responsible.

Rowland’s political philosophy also led him to intervene in Hartford’s affairs. The governor believes that private investment is the only way for cities to recover and flourish in the twenty-first century (Executive Office of the Governor, 1999). Hartford’s image as a dying and dysfunctional city not only kept potential businesses away from the city but it also encouraged Hartford’s business to go elsewhere. Rowland claims that the

new dynamic in Connecticut’s cities will hinge on attracting companies that can actually benefit from an urban location. We are tailoring strategies to strengthen the business base in our cities by looking at the unique and individual inner-city economies of our five major urban centers (Executive Office of the Governor, 1999).

Rowland believes that state government can and should help cities because Connecticut’s major urban centers face the greatest challenges (Personal communication, August 14, 2001).

**The Role of Leadership in Hartford’s Regime**

Governor Rowland produced the capacity to govern Hartford. He convinced the larger community that Hartford’s economic development was necessary and that government and business must immediately contribute resources to accomplish this task. He also used selective benefits, such as state money and input, to induce the participation of other regime actors.

**EDUCATION POLICY IN HARTFORD**

**Events Leading to the State Takeover**

Hartford’s school system encountered numerous problems throughout the 1990s. In addition to the management problems and racial and ethnic divisions mentioned earlier, Hartford
students’ test scores were consistently the lowest in the state. In 1995, 4% of Hartford’s eighth grade students passed the state’s reading, writing, and mathematics mastery exams whereas 5.3% of the students in Connecticut’s other cities and 29.6% of the state’s pupils passed all three tests (State of Connecticut Department of Education, n.d.).

The situation became so desperate in 1994 that the city hired a private firm, Educational Alternatives, Inc. (EAI), to run the entire school system (Simmons, 1998). The EAI experiment failed partly because of major resistance from the teachers’ union and uncertainties about how much control EAI would have over budgetary and personnel matters (Finn, 1996). A return to local control did not improve the educational system.

Because patronage politics, poor test scores, management problems, and division within the polarized school system continued, parents and African American and Latino leaders declared that the educational system was in a state of emergency (Green, 1996). Based on public dissatisfaction and these continuing problems, Connecticut’s Commissioner of Education, Theodore Sergi, spent 10 months analyzing Hartford’s schools (Frahm, 1997). At the conclusion of this period, the commissioner wrote a 48-point plan to improve Hartford schools.

**Governor Rowland and the Board of Trustees**

When the New England Association of Schools and Colleges recommended revoking Hartford Public High School’s accreditation in the spring 1997, Governor Rowland called for the state to take over the Hartford school system. The state legislature assisted the governor in the takeover process by passing legislation that authorized state control of Hartford schools. The House of Representatives passed the takeover bill by a count of 135-7 and the Senate approved the legislation by a 27-9 vote. Senior legislative leaders from both parties also helped the governor appoint members to the board that oversees the school system.

The governor claims that he has been blessed with a very cooperative legislative team even though he is a Republican and Democrats control the state legislature (Personal communication, August 14, 2001). He also indicates that he and legislative leaders sat at a table in his office and chose the first board of trustees (Personal communication, August 14, 2001). The governor, however, has the legal authority to select the chairman of this oversight board and the legislation that the General Assembly passed was largely Rowland’s plan (Lohman, 1998).

To increase accountability and improve management, the takeover legislation placed a seven-member board of trustees in charge of all aspects of the Hartford educational system (Lohman, 1999; State of Connecticut, 1997). It mandates that the state’s education commissioner and the state board of education must provide quarterly progress reports to the governor and the state legislature’s education committee (Mazzocca, 1997; State of Connecticut, 1997, section 9). The legislation also requires the new board of trustees to implement the executive office’s 48-point plan to reform Hartford schools (Mazzocca, 1997; State of Connecticut, 1997, section 4).

The board of trustees has the discretion to renegotiate labor contracts with union members (Mazzocca, 1997; State of Connecticut, 1997, sections 5(a) & 5(b)). The legislation required the city to not decrease education spending and to give education money directly to the schools—a practice the city did not follow in the past (Mazzocca, 1997; State of Connecticut, 1997, section 6). The takeover legislation granted control of the system to the board of trustees for three years with an opportunity to extend control for two additional years (State of Connecticut, 1997). In October 1999, the State Board of Education granted the oversight board’s request to extend state control of Hartford public schools until June 30, 2002 (Sergi, 1999).

The first board of trustees only had two representatives from Hartford. According to state law, the new board had to include racial and ethnic minorities, people with expertise in edu-
cation, and at least one person with expertise in financial matters (Mazzocca, 1997). To avoid nepotism, employees of the city and their relatives could not be trustees (State of Connecticut, 1997, section 4). The chairman of the board of trustees, who is a Republican and is the former president and CEO of Heublein, Inc., brought expertise in business management to the Hartford school system. The takeover legislation also calls for the board of trustees and the superintendent of schools to appoint an advisory council, which must include parents, classroom teachers, school principals, and college and university representatives (Mazzocca, 1997; State of Connecticut, 1997, section 4).

The trustees made several strides in improving Hartford’s educational system. Test scores have increased, and the city’s students no longer finish last on the state’s mastery exams. In 1999, for instance, 13% of Hartford’s eighth graders passed all three mastery exams whereas 12% of the students in Connecticut’s other cities and 41.5% of Connecticut’s students passed all three tests (State of Connecticut Department of Education, 2001). In a five-year period, the percentage of Hartford students who passed all three tests more than tripled.

According to Hartford’s mayor and city council, the board has vastly improved Hartford’s schools’ infrastructure, management procedures, and student achievement (Court of Common Council, 1999). The system is no longer in debt, books and supplies have increased, the dropout rate is down, and many of the aging buildings have been repaired (Gottlieb, 2000; “Who takes over the schools,” 2001). The trustees also updated the technology in every school and added numerous preschool programs (Gottlieb, 2000).

The state of Connecticut also provides invaluable resources to Hartford’s educational system. It pays for nearly 70% of Hartford’s spending on education whereas the average for state contributions to local education is 34.6% (State of Connecticut Department of Education, 2001). The state also allocated $20 million for school repairs in Hartford and provided approximately $10 million in bonds toward the Learning Corridor project (Connecticut General Assembly, 1999).

Proponents and Opponents of the State Takeover of Hartford’s School System

Parents and the city’s older racial and ethnic leaders strongly supported the state takeover. The mayor and most of the city’s legislative leaders also believed that a state takeover was the only way to solve the management, accountability, and political problems that plagued Hartford’s schools. Initially, the General Assembly and the Hartford city council endorsed a plan to create a state-appointed panel to manage everything except curriculum and instruction (Lohman, 1998). As the problems continued, however, the state legislature and the city council supported a full state takeover (Lohman, 1998). While not an active participant in the state takeover, business supported plans to improve Hartford’s education, and this confirms Stone’s (1998) assertion that business leaders are paying greater attention to education policy.

In Sheff v. O’Neill (1996), the Connecticut Supreme Court ruled that the racial and economic isolation between Connecticut’s inner city and suburban schools denied city students’ state constitutional rights to a substantially equal educational opportunity (McDermott, 1999). Hartford’s suburbs have not advocated school choice or busing as ways to desegregate, and in 1997 the governor gave city students a very limited opportunity to attend suburban schools (Rabinovitz, 1997). Though not expressly stated, it stands to reason that the suburbs would support attempts to improve the Hartford school system.

The Connecticut State Federation of Teachers and the Connecticut State AFL-CIO opposed the state’s proposals to take over the school system (Lohman, 1998). Unions did not favor the provisions that allowed the board of trustees to renegotiate contracts at any time. They also
opposed the section of the law that enabled the board of trustees to take proposed revisions of contracts directly to union members. Hartford’s Superintendent of Schools initially opposed the state takeover but became less adamant in her opposition as the decision to take control of the schools became more eminent.

Hartford’s Performance Regime in Action

Prior to 1997, an employment regime operated the Hartford School System. Education politics focused partly on patronage and nepotism, which divided the city’s leaders and the citizenry and made it virtually impossible for anyone to make sound policy decisions. The governor attempted to remove divisive city politics from education policy by appointing a school board that did not have to include Hartford citizens. He also tried to reduce nepotism by having a board of trustees that could not include Hartford employees or their relatives. Student performance also increased during the tenure of the board of trustees.

The governor has authority over education in Hartford; he and his education commissioner set the city’s education policy agenda; and he and the legislature provide significant resources to this city’s educational system. The governor with the assistance of the Connecticut General Assembly also established a process through which an oversight board manages and is accountable for education policy and spending in Hartford.

Why the Governor Assumed Control over Education in Hartford

The lack of regime actors who possessed the capacity to address educational problems is one of the primary reasons for gubernatorial intervention in Hartford school politics. Private leaders, such as Dobelle, contributed important resources to education but Hartford no longer has the cadre of business leaders who have the kinds of human and financial resources that can deal with educational deficiencies. The city also did not have any political leaders who controlled the institutional resources necessary to address the educational dilemma. Rowland became a regime actor because he controlled the financial and institutional resources that Hartford’s educational system needed. He also possessed the leadership skills necessary to create a working relationship among the state legislature, the city council, citizens, parents, and African Americans and Latinos.

Management problems, a lack of accountability, encouragement from city leaders and parents, and failing test scores also led the governor to assume control over Hartford’s education policies. The governor created a process to address each of these problems. The state of Connecticut provides significant financial resources to the Hartford educational system and the governor “was not in favor of infusing a large amount of state aid to a city school system that was failing without some accountability” (J. G. Rowland, personal communication, August 14, 2001). Consequently, the board of trustees manages and is accountable for spending this large sum of money.

In addition, the outcry by city leaders and parents also drew the governor’s attention to the city’s educational problems. The mayor was especially instrumental in the state takeover. Mayor Peters asked the governor for assistance and told Rowland that neither he nor the city was capable of handling the city’s educational problems on their own (J. G. Rowland, personal communication, August 14, 2001).

The Role of Leadership in Hartford’s Regime

Regime actors seek the cooperation of others to ensure that their ideas become policy. Parents and racial and ethnic minorities were the main groups who supported the state takeover
and Rowland made sure they had input. The board of trustees had to include racial and ethnic minorities and parental participation on the school advisory council was mandatory. The governor provided selected benefits to these groups and he treated these groups as partners in Hartford school reform. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the law required the school system to implement the executive branch’s plan for school reform. These benefits are at least partly an attempt by the governor to gain support from the people who have an intense interest in education reform.

**THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL REGIME**

Hartford has an intergovernmental regime that is led by the governor. In the following sections I summarize the governor’s role as a regime actor. I also describe the resources that allow governors to become regime actors and the conditions under which regimes come to include the governor.

**The Governor as Regime Actor in Hartford**

Governor Rowland is clearly a member of Hartford’s regime because his ideas shaped the city’s economic development and education policies. Rowland’s philosophy that private investment will improve cities is the foundation of Hartford’s redevelopment policy (Executive Office of the Governor, 1999). The governor designed the Six Pillars projects to attract businesses to the city and to increase the contributions of companies already in Hartford.

The governor also shaped Hartford’s education policy and the ways in which the city makes future education policy decisions. He wanted to transform Hartford’s educational system from an employment regime to a performance regime and the board of trustees, which he appointed, has overseen improvements in student performance. The governor also sought greater accountability for economic development and education in Hartford and he put procedures in place to ensure accountability in both of these policy areas.

Governor Rowland provides a classic example of leadership in an urban regime. He did not simply seize power from local government but instead he convinced members of the governing coalition and citizens that the time was right to pursue his policies. For example, three years before work began on Adriaen’s Landing, Rowland said, “Hartford has many exciting economic development opportunities before it. As I’ve said before, this is Hartford’s time” (Connecticut General Assembly, 1998). In addition, Rowland used the potential loss of Hartford Public High School’s accreditation to convince the General Assembly and the city council that a complete state takeover was necessary.

Rowland also acted like a regime leader by providing selective benefits to gain the cooperation of other regime actors. He allocated financial aid and positions of authority to business leaders and he gave African Americans, Latinos, and parents the opportunity to influence and advise the board of trustees. Even though the governor has significant authority and resources, he still included other members of the governing coalition to ensure that people would support and implement his policies.

Hartford is also typical of other cities because its regime is not democratic. Hartford’s citizens did not elect many of the city’s major policy makers and resource providers. The CCEDA and the board of trustees replaced the Hartford officials who made the city’s economic development and education policies, and private actors provided significant resources that allowed the city to carry out these policies. In the case of Hartford’s schools, however, local leaders and parents asked the governor to reform the educational system. The governor’s subsequent intervention suggests that, in some instances, cities may trade local control for an improvement in policy.
The Resources that Enable Governors to Become Regime Actors

Governors possess resources that are common to public and private actors. Constitutional authority allows governors to make their decisions binding at the local level, and the executive staff, cabinet, and bureaucracy provide greater knowledge and information to the governor. Rowland used his authority to formulate policy and run aspects of economic development and education in Hartford. Governors and private actors share control over productive assets. Gubernatorial taxing and spending powers enable the governor to provide financial assistance to cities. This financial capacity gives governors a prominent role in cities, which operate with scarce resources. Rowland used his spending powers to allocate important resources to the economic development and education policies in Hartford.

Conditions Under Which Governors Become Regime Members

Governors assume control over urban policy in the absence of political and business leadership that has the resources that facilitate local governance. A leadership vacuum in the private and public sectors and deficiencies in management and accountability led Connecticut’s Governor to become a regime actor in Hartford. Whereas Hartford continues to have business leaders who shape local policies, the days when the Bishops ruled most decisions are over. Consequently, the city has had to look beyond business leaders to find the leadership and financial capital that are vital for local governance. Rowland not only provided significant monetary assistance to Hartford’s redevelopment and school system but his ideas also guide these policy areas. The governor also manages major aspects of Hartford government and politics because the city’s elected officials were either unwilling or unable to make decisions. The mayor does not have the authority to make policy and the divisions that are so prevalent in Hartford politics inhibit city council members from pursing a policy agenda.

The governor is also actively involved in urban affairs because he believes that businesses and citizens need to invest in cities (J. G. Rowland, personal communication, August, 14, 2001). He also shapes economic development policies in Connecticut’s other cities. Rowland and the state legislature allocated $448 million in bonds for economic development in Hartford, Bridgeport, and New Haven (State of Connecticut, 1998). He used state bonds to develop New Haven’s waterfront even though many of the city’s leaders opposed this project (Bass, 2001). The governor also created Connecticut’s New Inner City Business Strategy, which seeks to attract private investment to improve the lives of city residents (Moran, 2000). The governor wants educators, private leaders, and residents in Bridgeport, Hartford, New Britain, New Haven, and Waterbury to develop strategies that will attract businesses to their cities (Executive Office of the Governor, 1999; Moran, 2000).

Governors also intervene in urban affairs to improve management and provide accountability. Hartford’s leaders were not capable of supervising economic development and they mismanaged the educational system. In light of these problems, Connecticut’s governor created processes by which experienced professionals, whom he selected and trusted, would manage and implement his economic development and education policies in Hartford. The governor also appointed independent boards to oversee these two-issue areas because he wanted to ensure that the significant state investments in economic development and education would be competently managed. Proficient management was not a characteristic that Hartford possessed prior to state intervention.

Management problems also led the governor to intervene in the affairs of other cities. In 2001, Waterbury encountered such large budget deficits that it could not pay its bills (State of Connecticut, 2001). In response to this financial disaster, the governor appointed an oversight
Governors and state legislatures in other states have also exerted direct control over local affairs in order to address local management problems. Half of the states have laws that allow the governor or legislature to take over local school districts (Arasim, 1999; Education Commission of the States, 2001; Wong, Shen, Jain, & Novak, 2000). Governors or state legislatures have gained at least partial control of local school boards in Jersey City, Paterson, and Newark, New Jersey, Chicago and East St. Louis, Illinois, Chelsea and Lawrence, Massachusetts, and Baltimore, Maryland (Heartland Institute, 1999; Orr, 1999). According to the Education Commission of the States, which is a non-profit organization that seeks to improve education in the United States, fiscal mismanagement, inept administration, and corrupt governance in addition to poor academic performance caused governors and state legislatures to run local school districts (Education Commission of the States, 2001).

Connecticut’s governor also took over economic development and education in Hartford to ensure greater accountability. The establishment of independent boards to oversee economic development and education allows all actors to hold someone accountable for these policy areas. The governor also wanted to provide accountability to Hartford because he sought assurances that the city would competently spend state dollars. Other states have also devised ways to hold local actors accountable for state aid. In Philadelphia, for example, the Pennsylvania Intergovernmental Cooperation would not help relieve the city of its massive debt without the ability to hold Philadelphia accountable for its substantial investment (Bissinger, 1997).

**SUMMARY**

The Hartford case illustrates how state government, in general, and the governor, in particular, use their assets to expand their authority over urban areas, make local policy, and become powerful members of the urban regime. The governor became a regime partner in Hartford because many businesses moved their corporate headquarters out of the city and the political leadership was largely incapable of addressing the city’s problems. The state uses its resources to complement the role of the business and it uses its authority to make local policy.

**REFERENCES**


