WHO BELONGS, WHAT BELONGS?
RETHINKING DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY
THROUGH THE GROWTH COALITION AND TEXTUAL
ENVIRONMENT OF DOWNTOWN COLUMBUS, OHIO

A Senior Honors Thesis

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RETHINKING DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH THE GROWTH COALITION AND TEXTUAL ENVIRONMENT OF DOWNTOWN COLUMBUS, OHIO[1]

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This thesis examines *urban redevelopment* projects in downtown Columbus, Ohio, with an interest in evaluating the degree to which contemporary strategies of such projects are performed in a way that is *democratically accountable* to those social actors for whom they produce *social effects*. I consider these effects with regard to the *boundaries* that define the *places* of urban redevelopment, and, rethinking those boundaries, I address a related concern with how democratic accountability should be evaluated.

I approach the issue through recent literature about "*Business Improvement Districts*." Narrating the emergence of projects in Columbus that have adopted—piecemeal or wholesale—elements of this BID-model, I present data from participant-observation work and interviews, describing the material and discursive effects of improvement district "*symbolic strategies*." I indicate that those effects are not entirely accounted for in the recent literature related to the democratic accountability of the BID-model, and I examine how the leaders of improvement district organizations "perform accountability" in a way that, like the literature, brackets the discursively-evident effects from consideration. In conclusion, towards a revised standard of democratic accountability, I review theoretical considerations related to the *place* of improvement districts that may help us identify effects not recognized in recent literature, and not accounted for in contemporary redevelopment practices.

Introduction: Recent Analyses of Business Improvement

Districts, and the Concern with Democratic Accountability

People from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds writing about urban redevelopment share a common concern with the degree to which urban redevelopment strategies are performed in ways that are *democratically accountable*. Often these writers differ over how that should be evaluated. I approach the issues through a review of some recently published literature that, corresponding with trends in urban planning and municipal governance, examines the *business improvement district* model (hereafter, BID model).[2] The review of literature will serve to introduce the BID model. And, more generally, this introduction will clarify the nature of my concern with democratic accountability, briefly explaining my "search for the [affected] public[s]" of "improvement district" space.[3]

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An editor of *City Journal*, Heather Mac Donald wrote "BIDs Really Work" in 2000.[4] In the oft-cited piece, she confronts common criticisms, and defends BIDs on the grounds of their effectiveness as an economic development tool. BIDs, she explains, are territorial subdivisions generally managed by private sector, non-profit corporations that fund so-called "common area", "district specific" services—sanitation, supplemental security, place-marketing, and capital improvements—without a city-wide tax. Instead of requiring such a tax, the BID managers rely on annual, mandatory *assessments* from property owners within the boundaries of the district. Many critics, Mac Donald notes, have understood this reliance on private money as dangerous for a variety of reasons:

> Critics charge that the additional tax burden [BIDs] impose on business
> will prove fatal to business's long term viability; that BIDs represent a
> dangereous concentration of private power in public spaces; and that they
> will further balkanize cities into wealthy and poor districts.[5]

Contrary to these critiques, however, Mac Donald argues that BIDs are capable of producing "improved conditions" more flexibly, effectively, and efficiently than municipal government, and that this capability is directly related to the influence of the

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[2] A business improvement district is a sub-local district that functions as a symbolic and economic lynchpin of development strategies in an increasing number of cities, including Columbus.

[3] Dewey, John. The Public and Its Problems. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1954.

[4] Mac Donald, Heather. "BIDs Really Work," in The Millennial City. Ed. Myron Magnet. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000.

[5] See id. at 289.

private sector on BID-related operations. For Mac Donald, indicators of improved conditions are "increased business activity" and "high-property values," elements of economic growth that—in general terms—are favorable for the property owners who fund BID services. As Mac Donald sees it, insofar as improved conditions favor property-owner assessment payers, the BID managers are doing their job; they are *performing accountability* to the *appropriate stakeholders*. "Those who pay more, get more," she contends.

Mac Donald's discussion of "democratic accountability" emerges in her rebuttle to common critiques of the economic development strategy. Her discussion betrays certain assumptions about how she believes accountability should be evaluated. The view that property owners within the district boundaries are the appropriate stakeholders in BID-related economic development, for instance, is made further clear by her claim that the city-wide public is likely to benefit from BID operation *in spite* of the fact that they do not pay. The city-wide public, insofar as they are not stakeholders—not assessment payers—are, by Mac Donald's understanding, "all free riders on BID expenditures." BIDs, privately funded and privately managed, are not expected to be accountable to these free riders. BID practices are *incidentally* favorable to the city as a whole, and do not need to be otherwise responsive.[6]

Ideas about accountability and the boundaries (social and spatial) of the stakeholder group are elaborated in complementary ways in two pieces—by Richard Briffault, and Brian Hochleutner—recently published in law journals. The pieces describe BID characteristics, processes of BID formation, and typical BID functions in greater detail than Mac Donald and they are usefully read together. The following description of the BID-model relies heavily on both of their works:[7]

BIDs are sub-local jurisdictional units generally formed as one element in a constellation of strategies deployed by organizations orchestrating a city's "revitalization." BIDs are formed and lead by management corporations, and backed by representatives from local government and the private sector, who collaborate in the form

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[6] The degree to which BID services are actually—homogeneously— favorable for the city-wide public is up for debate, as will become clear with my sketch of Sharon Zukin's work (1997).
[7] Briffault, Richard. "A Government for Our Time? Business Improvement Districts and Urban Governance." In *Columbia Law Review* (March 1999): 365-477; Hochleutner, Brian R. "BIDs Fare Well: The Democratic Accountability of Business Improvement Districts." In *New York University Law Review* (April 2003): 374-404.

of an urban growth coalition—a public-private partnership. The improvement district space functions as a symbolic and economic centerpiece of revitalization efforts; they are commonly situated in the central business district (CBD) of a city toward restoring the economic primacy of "downtown." Downtown BIDs, by virtue of their managers' intention to restore the CBD's economic primacy, are formed as an inter-local challenge to the growth of suburbs or outlying commercial centers, which, especially in North American cities, have usurped many traditional CBD functions.[8]

BID formation requires the approval of both government, and property-owners within the boundaries of the improvement district.[9] Upon formation, the management corporation collects annual assessments from property owners within the improvement district by way of the county treasurer. The assessments are remitted to the BID board of directors, which is constituted of property owners' representatives, "trustees," for allocation to common area, district specific services. The managers of a BID organize and delegate services—power-washing sidewalks, making personnel visible on the street, organizing events for new residents of the district—that are thought to significantly enable the work of other organizations in the public-private partnership. The BID operates complementarily with these organizations; for instance, while a City's downtown development office might provide tax abatements for downtown residential spaces, and a private sector non-profit might subsidize parking in order to encourage investment in the office market, the BID managers maintain the appearance of common area infrastructure—streets, sidewalks, alleys, plazas, parks—making the district a desirable destination, and ensuring continued investment by way of cultivating *investor confidence*. In this complementary function, then, BIDs operate at the intersection of symbolic and economic concerns: *BIDs are managed environments, constructed in the interests of economic growth*.

The social and spatial *delineation(s)* within which BIDs operate are important to Richard Briffault's, and Brian Hochleutner's evaluations of the model. Specifically addressing accountability, Briffault's recognizes some potential shortcomings of

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[8] The degree to which the inter-local challenge effects not only the BID, but related spatial areas is important. BIDs are territorially bounded. But are their effects restricted by the boundaries?
[9] State-specific statutes enable BID formation. Upon collecting property onwers' signatures for a petition, the BID management corporation presents the petition to City Council for a vote of approval. If a surpa-majority of owners—in Ohio, 60% of front feet within the district boundaries—have signed the petition, it will likely get approved.

oversight and responsiveness mechanisms in BIDs.[10] Hochleutner, however, adopts parts of his evaluation more reductively, particular that part which discusses the appropriate identification of stakeholders. Interested in the extent to which BID governing institutions are responsive to these "stakeholders," Hochleutner works to identify those social group(s) *most likely to be affected*. Properly identifying stakeholders, by Hochleutner's method, depends on a clear sense of the spatial *boundaries* that define the district and the social boundaries that circumscribe those affected. The spatial boundaries of the district, for Hochleutner, are defined by property, so that BID governing institutions—the BID management corporation, the appointed BID board of directors, and the affiliated organizations in the urban growth coalition—perform accountability to stakeholders within boundaries circumscribing their property.

In addition to property-defined boundaries, other relevant characteristics of the BID model are thought to define the "scope of the accountability problem."[11] For instance, BIDs are thought to be relatively more accountable by virtue of their *small size* (often just several blocks), and *limited purpose* (providing district specific services funded by district specific assessments towards "improving business and enhancing the condition of commercial areas" [12]). Hochleutner contends that, within the district and towards these ends, the stakeholder groups are "relatively homogeneous in [their] desire for enhanced district services."[13] This is a significant assertion; is there, in fact, little internal differentiation of interests within BIDs? In order to consider that question, one need be more specific about exactly *who* stakeholders are—among whom there is little differentiation of interests?—and, in order to think critically about democratic accountability, it seems, one must examine *how* stakeholders are identified, or differently, how relevant *publics* are framed.

A preliminary definition of my use of the term "public" is appropriate here, because I mean it differently now than I have up to this point; not as the public of state agencies (as in "public-private partnership") but more the public of public address, or specifically, the *affected public(s)*. John Dewey provides a way of talking about the affected public(s) in his "Search for the Public," the chapter which introduces his object

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[10] Briffault 455-470.
[11] Hochleutner 382.
[12] See id. at 387.
[13] See id. at 384.

of study in <u>The Public and Its Problems</u>.[14] Here, Dewey is interested in illuminating important considerations for rigorous social analyses of the public. He explains qualities of social interaction that proceed from the interconnectedness of individuals in "associations." Human association, for Dewey, is just the state of things, given. "There is no sense in asking how individuals come to be associated. They exist and operate in association."[15] This being the case, social analyses of the public demand a method by which to "make fruitful social inquiry" that can take account of the indeterminate effects of those associations—"a method which proceeds on the basis of the interrelations of observable acts and their results." *Starting from acts* and *considering their consequences* is particularly well suited to a study of the public, because, for Dewey, it is when the consequences resulting from one social "association" effect "further associations" that an association is considered (a) public.[16]

Accepting, for the time being, Dewey's method of defining (a) "public," I return to Hochleutner's method of defining stakeholder groups relative to the likelihood of their being affected.[17] With Hochleutner's method, guided by the assumption that interests within the district are relatively homogeneous, we would identify stakeholders in light of their affiliation with the limited purpose of BIDs—improving business activity—and their payment of assessments. Those social actors explicitly contributing to economic growth define the scope of accountability. BIDs must be, reading Hochleutner, accountable to *property owners within the boundaries of the district* first and foremost. Property owners are, this stakeholder-identification method holds, *most* likely to be affected—obvious stakeholders because of their investment, and their favorable relationship with the economic goals of BID formation. In this way, Hochleutner argues that property owners must be the primary object of accountability on "principles of fairness." He explains that BID-related institutions must be most accountable to those who have most at stake; BID-related institutions must be responsive to those who are *most likely to be affected*.

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[14] Dewey (1954)

[15] See id. at 23.

[16] See id. at 13.

[17] *Affected publics* are distinct from Hochleutner's *stakeholder groups*. With this thesis, I propose emphasizing an analysis of the affected publics over and above an analysis of stakeholder groups; or differently, I propose redefining stakeholders as members of affected publics.

Following Briffault's more nuanced account,[18] Hochleutner also grants district residents a stake in the outcomes of BID strategies; but he understands their potential to be affected differently than he understands that of owners. BID practices, he explains, may affect district residents' "quality of life," but their affectedness does not demand formal representational consideration. Property owners, the argument goes, with their trustee-representatives on BID boards, provide BID residents with "virtual representation" in BID governing institutions. "The Owners' representatives [act] as proxies to represent the interests of residents." Recalling the assumption of little internal (intra-district) differentiation, this way of evaluating accountability conflates the interests of social groups within the district in such a way as to privilege property owners in decision-making procedures. As had been the case for Mac Donald, an increase in business activity or a trend of rising property values within the territorial boundaries of a BID is evidence of accountability in and of itself. Stakeholder-groups' interests are thought, without exception, to correspond with those ends.

Sharon Zukin's work[19] presents a way of rethinking this prevailing standard of accountability. Zukin claims that the interests of relevant publics are likely not homogeneous, but rather, *internally differentiated*. Her project allows us to critically analyze the way assumptions of relatively homogeneous interests enable a relatively small social group to "*reduce the multiple dimensions* and conflicts of [urban] culture into a *coherent visual representation*."[20] She examines this "reduction" through case studies of "Cultural Strategies of Economic Development" that may be deployed by public and/or private sector associations to "frame a vision" for urban space. In one of her short case studies, examining the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation's BID in New York City, Zukin explains that, in the interests of economic development, a public-private partnership sought to design and maintain the BID space in such a way as to privilege a "paying public." She claims that the Bryant Park improvement district has been produced as a "consumer good," contending that the strategies involved in that

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[18] Briffault 455.

[19] Zukin, Sharon. "Cultural Strategies of Economic Development and The Hegemony of Vision," in The Urbanization of Injustice, eds. A. Merrifield and E. Swyngedouw. New York: New York University Press, 1997.

[20] See id. at 227, my italics.

production of space have "involved a questionable redistribution of rights."[21] Illuminating

a relationship, then, between the "cultural strategies" of the improvement district

managers and the disproportionate empowerment of a limited group of stakeholders,

Zukin attends to the management structure and funding procedures of BIDs. She points

out that BID assessment rates are based on commercial rent prices, and that the BID

model is most likely to be effective in districts that already have high property values.

Without being guided by any redistributionist impulses, then, the assessment collection

procedure of BIDs may reproduce social inequality. On this point, Zukin argues that

jurisdictional fragmentation led by BIDs may reproduce unresolved relationships

between existing concentrations of wealth and poverty. Further, by way of "cultural

strategies," BID managers risk collapsing the irreducible social distinctions and diversity

of interests constituting the district into a visually coherent, and representationally

exclusive space. Their strategies may produce "Hegemony of Vision," a space of

homogeneous aesthetics that, in material ways, privileges those social actors, who are

disproportionately empowered to "impose a vision on space."

Using a slightly different vocabulary in this thesis, I understand the *symbolic*

strategies of district social actors to coalesce by way of social interactions to produce a

textual environment[22] that may, getting back to Zukin, "not just 'represent' material

interests," but "mediated by material resources, may produce, perpetuate, or diminish

[social] inequalities."[23] Not "all free riders" as Mac Donald would have it, Zukin explains

that some social groups are disempowered by BID practices. The constructed textual

environment may only represent some of the multiple interests constituting the district,

only some of the social actors who are affected. By way of Zukin's recognition of

internal differentiations and a diversity of interests, we become aware of the way that the

prevailing standard of democratic accountability—outlined most clearly in Hochleutner

and Mac Donald—may only mandate responsiveness to a limited group of the most

highly visible, or *legible* stakeholders. By continuing to perform accountability by a

standard that unquestionably favors property owners in wealthy districts, local

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[21] Zukin 238.

[22] By "textual environment," I mean a socially practiced space, on which social meanings are
legible. The "textual practices" that I focus on are productive and regulatory "symbolic
strategies." The use of these terms will be clarified later in the thesis through examples.

[23] Zukin 224.

governance and development organizations may not prove to be sufficiently responsive to all of those whose interests intersect in improvement district space.

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In downtown Columbus, the BID model emerged relatively recently. Through a "Recent History" of that emergence, I trace the assumptions that bolster the prevailing standard of ownership-accountability back to the construction of the "Arena District." Earlier in this decade, the Arena District was produced as a managed space through strategies that anticipated present-day BID operations near the Statehouse. These improvement districts, the Capital Crossroads SID (Special Improvement District) and the forthcoming "Discovery District" SID, are managed through symbolic strategies of the kind I described through Zukin. The *power to frame a vision for space* that is exercised through these strategies, I explain, *is an unevenly shared social resource. The strategies construct the boundaries of these places even as their effects flow across them.*

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A Recent History of Redevelopment Efforts in Downtown

Columbus; the Arena District, and the Capital Crossroads SID

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In 1998, Nationwide Insurance, a Fortune 500 company with its headquarters in Columbus, acquired a parcel of brownfield land in the northwest corner of downtown, only a block away from their corporate offices. The acquisition consolidated Nationwide Insurance's influence in that part of downtown. Previously occupied by the Ohio Penitentiary, the site they purchased was contaminated with waste from under-regulated industrial prison labor. Restoration became a priority upon the prison's demolition. Towards this end, in late 1996, the City sent an application to the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency requesting to be included in a "Voluntary Action Program" VAP, through which a real estate developer, such as NRI, could take care of the clean up effort. Based on the strictures of the VAP, their effort would be expedited through less stringent groundwater standards than would be required of government.[24] Since 1998, overcoming these initial hurdles, Nationwide Realty Investors (NRI) has master planned the 75-acre site, constructing the mixed-use destination that is the Arena District.[25] As I understand

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[24] James, Barbara G. "Fed Law Change Needed to Make Brownfields Go." <u>Business First</u> 25 October 1996.

[25] Pramik, Mike, Columbus Dispatch, Business, Sunday July 11, 2004, "Nationwide on Every Side."

the Arena District as paradigmatic of the space management practices in more recently emergent downtown BIDs, I attend to the District's development.

The question of what to do with the old Ohio Penn plot surfaced around the same time that murmurs surrounding other questions of downtown development became audible. For years, throughout the 1980s and 90s, Columbus had sprawled beyond the outer-belt, encouraged by rapid highway construction. People working downtown often commuted from Dublin, Powell and Hilliard in the northwest, and Gahanna, Blacklick and New Albany in the east. Companies like Nationwide Insurance considered moving their offices out of downtown to suburban locations; some did move,[26] and entertainment and commercial real estate opportunities followed the emerging markets. Market-led inclinations to succumb to sprawl were bolstered by widespread public perceptions that downtown lacked prominent attractions, or incentives for investment. Aware of the perceptions, (then) Mayor Greg Lashutka favored building a professional sports stadium downtown to improve the image of the central business district.[27]

NRI picked up Mayor Lashutka's vision. In April 1998, they proposed a design plan for "Nationwide Arena," which would be built on the site of the old penitentiary. The plan included street level retail, and pedestrian scale amenities, an early indication of NRI's vision for the mixed use, master planned space.[28] Upon completion of the Arena in the fall of 2000 (in time for the inaugural season of Columbus' NHL franchise), development proceeded quickly. In 2002, NRI announced plans for residential development.[29] The first apartments were completed two years later in the summer 2004.

The mix of spaces out of which NRI has assembled their District reflects a persistent concern with attracting an economically desirable balance of visitors and residents, who are capable of financially investing in the success of the project. NRI's concern with *who* is using their space has influenced their approach to development in the District, and more recently, their approach to development management in another high profile downtown project.[30] In regards to attracting economically desirable users to the

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[26] Brian, Ball R. "In the Downtown Skies." <u>Business First</u> 4 May 2001.
[27] O'Malley, Christine B. "State Pen Brownfield Test Site." <u>Business First</u> 29 November 1996.
[28] "Nationwide Unveils Arena Design." <u>Business First</u> 9 April 1998.
[29] Ball, Brian R. "Arena Developers Plan Apartments, Parking." Business First 19 July 2002.
[30] Fisher, Larry. Personal interview. 11 April 2006.
In the interview, Larry Fisher, president of the Columbus Downtown Development Corporation, spoke with me about his collaboration with NRI on the forthcoming RiverSouth neighborhood.

District, NRI can depend on strategic support from other private and public organizations. The Greater Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau,[31] for instance, has sought to attract corporate travelers and moneyed visitors to downtown through place-marketing efforts. The complementary work of organizations such as theirs is thought to sustain consumer-oriented pedestrian activity on sidewalks, ensuring profitable business activity on nights when nothing is happening at the Arena.[32] In downtown Columbus more generally, redevelopment practices have increasingly been administered by and managed through these types of collaborations between powerful public and private sector interests, in the form of the public-private partnership, or larger growth coalition. The downtown SIDs emerged out of partnership collaborations.

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In "Downtown Columbus" redevelopment is channeled through a public-private partnership consisting of leaders from City government and private sector non-profits. The downtown district in which they work is spread out and de-zoned, bounded on four sides by three expressways and a river.[33] The challenge for organizations in the public-private partnership is to reconcile the plurality of interests in the spread-out downtown, and make the CBD a desirable site of investment. Four organizations, in particular, constitute the public-private partnership—the City's Development Office, the Columbus Downtown Development Corporation, the Capitol South Community Urban Redevelopment Corporation and its related management organization behind the SIDs— "Capital Crossroads" and the forthcoming "Discovery District." The partnership form is far from unique to Columbus; it is unique, however, that the organizations constituting the coalition are housed in a single office building.[34]

The collaborative opportunities presented by this office were explained to me in an interview with Bob McGlaughlin, head of the City's Development Office.[35] He explained that the physical "co-location" of partnership organizations has made

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NRI will be a development manager, he explained, "bringing their expertise [from previous development work] to the table."
[31] Now "Experience Columbus."
[32] McCain, Chiree. "Do the District: Promos Target Groups New to Town." Business First 24 January 2003.
[33] Bounded by 670 to the north, 71 to the east, 70 to the south, and the Scioto River to the west.
[34] This office building, across the street from the Statehouse at the corner of Broad Street and High Street, was the site of my interviews with leaders of partnership-related organizations.
[35] McGlaughlin, Bob. Personal interview. 27 February 2006.

communication much more natural; the organizations enjoy a greater degree of
"operational integration." He claimed that it has created a sense of stability, and that it
has proven to reassure investors who come to the office with questions, concerns, or
development proposals. McGlaughlin narrated such a visit: A developer visits their
office, and finds a stable coalition with a great deal experience that can answer their
questions; the office facilitates investment by cultivating the investor's sense of
confidence. As McGlauglin puts it, an investor is made confident that "[they] can count
on a stable market and a return on [their] investment."

The partnership did not always share an office building. In fact, the partnership
moved into the office on Broad in 2002, the same year that Mayor Michael Coleman
launched his downtown housing initiative. Moving to the central-location, and dubbing
the site the "Downtown Development Resource Center," the partnership was called upon
to actualize the Mayor's proposal to develop 1,000 residential units per year, over ten
years, a goal that would result in the construction of at least 10,000 new residential units
in downtown—more than three times as many as existed in 2002—by the city's
bicentennial in 2012. As the initiative was launched, members of the partnership
experimented with the BID model, and out of the experiment developed what I refer to as
symbolic strategies.[36]

The first hints of downtown BID formation appeared in 2001, with a
"demonstration project" funded by Capitol South, a private sector non-profit with a long
history of managing business transactions for the City. Capitol South's executive
director, John Rosenberger, explains the BID formation project as a reaction by
downtown leaders to "blighted" common area infrastructure. The leaders understood the
blight as being causally related to the economic decline of the CBD,[37] and they mobilized
against it by way of a renewed emphasis on managing the appearance of the space. He
explains:

> We adopted the five filthiest blocks on High Street and we power washed
> the sidewalks, hired supplemental security, picked up trash everyday, and
> put out landscaping. The first thing we did was take a bunch of pictures so

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[36] As I understand them, "symbolic strategies" are especially relevant to BIDs. Techniques of
management, the strategies manipulate the textual environment, producing a desirable image for
improvement district space. The effects of such strategies complement the techniques of
organizations that more explicitly engage with the economic variables of downtown development.
[37] Rosenberger, John. Personal interview. 24 February 2006.

> we could show people how bad it used to be…On the strength of this demonstration project we sent Cleve [Ricksecker] out to solicit signatures from property owners in the proposed district.

Cleve Ricksecker, who is now the project director[38] of the Capital Crossroads SID, was successful in collecting the necessary signatures in 2001. Since 2002, he has managed the space of the improvement district through a variety of services typical of BIDs in other cities. These services include "cleaning, safety, hospitality, promotions, and advocacy."[39] In keeping with the BID model as I introduced it, the services are deployed so as to complement the economic development strategies of other partnership-related organizations, including those of Capitol South.

Ricksecker's services work symbolically to cohere the disparate elements of district space into a desirable place with a relatively predictable sense of civility. In managing the space of a district on the BID-model, one must reconcile the interests of the plurality of owners who authorized formation of the BID. By virtue of this need to represent multiple interests, a BID project is distinct from a development project like the Arena District with which I began this discussion. While the Arena District is master planned by Nationwide Realty Investors, a BID management organization must negotiate with a variety of stakeholders to produce coherent space out of an untidy set of social relationships. Discussing the distinction between the SIDs and the Arena Disrict with Cleve Ricksecker, I found that while the challenges of SID management are very different from those of districts with consolidated ownership, the managerial vision is similar:

> There's no need for a special improvement district in the Arena District because there's one owner…A SID is only needed, really, when you have fractured ownership…As one owner [NRI] charges not only for rent, but common area maintenance, security, promotions…[They] can behave more like a *shopping center* there.
> …We learn a lot of things from the Arena District…as long as there's managed space, that's what the *public* wants. They don't want to see a lot of disorder, a lot of scary people…[40]

In the quote above, I have emphasized some terms in italics: "shopping center," and "public." These terms frame my discussion in the following section, beginning with a

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[38] Convery, Kristen. "Mr. Downtown." <u>Columbus Alive</u> 24 March 2005
[39] Ricksecker, Cleve. Personal interview. 15 February 2006.
[40] Ricksecker, Cleve. Personal interview. 15 February 2006.

clarification of the genealogical link between the BID model and the space of the indoor shopping mall, and proceeding through the elaboration of a framework for thinking about how the regulated textual environment of such spaces constructs a public.

A Genealogy of the BID Form, and a Textual
Understanding of BID Management Practices

> Nationwide Boulevard is all brand-new…some of the storefronts aren't filled in...Everything has been master-planned and designed. [It] almost feels like *an outdoor mall*, where everything has been specifically selected.[41]

The above quote is from a conversation I had with a resident of the Arena District, Alex, who moved to Columbus a little less than a year ago. Having lived in urban areas in the past, most recently Detroit, he moved to Columbus intent upon living close to downtown, or, at least, in an urban neighborhood:

> I have an affinity for downtown places; I lived in downtown Detroit…Looking for apartments, I wanted to be in a walkable neighborhood; somewhere where there's some nightlife; a place where you can step out of your apartment and get to a park—have something at your fingertips.

Uncertain of the city, Alex spent time online, "seeing what the cool neighborhoods were." Identifying the Arena District and the Short North to the north of downtown, and the Brewery District to the south, Alex toured some of the lofts and apartments that have emerged in recent years as part of the Mayor's housing initiative. He selected the Arena District because of the new-ness of the apartment complex, because of its proximity to the Short North Arts District, and because he identified (with) social spaces —bars, galleries, parks, boutiques—for an "older, more urban" social group.

After living in the District for some time, he noticed some of the ways that the District is different from what he had been conditioned to expect of urban living:

> I realized, 'wow, this is like your classic yuppie development,' when I saw the full scope of the project. …I would have hoped to see some places where families lived. My building—almost everyone is about thirty and single or with a partner. I've never seen a kid come out of my building, and I've only seen people older than forty on a few rare occasions. …I

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[41] Gjerovski, Alexander. Personal interview. 3 March 2006.

>   don't really know if you can find a place in [downtown] Columbus that
>   has the same atmosphere that I had in Detroit.

Observing the relative social homogeneity of the District as compared with his previous neighborhood in Detroit, he also noted some qualities of the built and symbolic environment:

>   The area's just very clean…you don't see much of a mess anywhere. And
>   it's a very master-planned community—the whole area is managed, right
>   down to the little alley where my [apartment] complex is. And those
>   bricks are from some old factory or something.[42] They've [NRI] been very
>   attentive to detail.

Reading the above quotes—some addressing social homogeneity, others, the symbolically inflected built environment—I proceed by examining the District's managed space and its relevant social groups together, emphasizing their relatedness. Recalling an observation Alex made, that "[the Arena District] feels like an outdoor mall," I begin by exploring the way that the mall has set a standard of space management that has influenced the strategies of downtown economic development projects.

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The fact that the Arena District "feel[s]" like a mall is not incidental. Richard Briffault's work, in addition to providing a detailed description of BIDs' form, elaborates a genealogical connection between their privately managed space and the space of the mall. Understanding the BID-modeled CBD economic development imperative to have emerged in response to a competitive inter-local relationship with the residential suburb and the suburban strip-mall, Richard Briffault claims that downtown leadership adopted area-wide, centralized management in order to remain inter-locally competitive.[43] Suburban malls, he claims, have influenced BIDs in three ways: First, by imitating the public realm, the mall has constructed consumer-oriented expectations for the space of the CBD; in order to meet these expectations, BIDs must focus on services, not unlike theme-parks, that create a "clean, safe, and orderly" environment. Second, the mall has provided a model for the institutional structure of BID management; responsible to a powerful board of directors, the BID managers must observe private sector, for-profit standards of efficiency and stakeholder accountability. Third, the mall has set a paradigm

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[42] In fact, the bricks Alex mentions are from the old Ohio Penitentiary.
[43] Briffault 425-430.

for strategic planning on the model of "the marketplace," with complementary services, and consumer-oriented opportunities.[44] Through close attention to the space of the mall, geographers Malcolm Voyce (2003), and Jon Goss (1993) provide insight into this managerial vision. In light of their pieces, we come to understand the managed space of the mall as a mechanism of governance[45] that encourages consumer practices and facilitates business activity.

Voyce examines the strategic planning and current operation of a shopping mall in Sydney, Australia.[46] He determines that the mall owners govern their consumer-subjects through material and discursive "spatial practices." Material spatial practices are manifest in the deliberate ordering of physical space, while discursive spatial practices include all measures taken to construct and represent a place-identity for the mall. For Voyce, spatial practices correspond with "spatial areas," "homes, street, offices, and malls," in which we can identify relationships of power.[47] Spatial practices strategically organize the "lines and spaces" of everyday experience towards exercising social control across the axes of these relations of power. By his understanding, ordinary practitioners —mall shoppers, and mall tenants—are afforded a degree of agency within these constraints; there is a "reciprocal relationship between the produced spaces and the expression of some social practice." This reciprocal relationship between ordinary practitioners and the social space of the mall, however, is thoroughly mediated by the regulative spatial practices of mall owners. The space is produced in such a way as to both facilitate consumption and eliminate disincentives to continued consumption. The

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[44] The following discussion of managed, symbolically regulated space will elaborate the first and third of these influences. The second will be discussed further in "Performing Accountability."

[45] For Voyce, a Foucauldian technology of power.

[46] Voyce, Malcolm. "The Privatization of Public Property: the Development of a Shopping Mall in Sydney and its Implications for Governance through Spatial Practices." In *Urban Policy and Research* 21, 3 (September 2003): 249-262.

[47] For Voyce, "power" is understood through Michel Foucault, particularly the literature through which Foucault describes *governmentality*. Governmentality is a process whereby an individual is subordinated and made subject to power. Practices of governmentality produce a subject through domination *and also* the simultaneous construction of the subject's mentality such that the subject accepts the continued exercise of power. The subject becomes complicit and presumes subordinated-ness. Power acts *through* subjects, *between* subjects, and *within* subjects, but not necessarily *on* subjects, as power is thought to in more structuralist literature. Foucault examined governmentality and subjection through "micro-practices"—for Voyce, spatial practices—at the scale of the individual (*disciplinary power*), and through technologies of control and regulation at the scale of the population (*biopower*). See Foucault, Michel. Discipline and Punish. New York: Vintage, 1995; Foucault, Michel. History of Sexuality, volume one. New York: Vintage, 1990.

mall manufactures a sense of exclusion for non-consumers—demanding complicity—while producing a sense of belonging for consumer-subjects. Neatly expressing the way the space of the mall regulates behavior, Voyce proposes a "*social idea of property*," where "property" (understood as the condition of one's right to space) is understood in relation to the "propriety" of one's behavior. By way of this idea, which will be important to rethinking the democratic accountability of BID strategies, the regulative spatial practices of the mall can be understood as *prescriptively* producing proper behavior at the scale of the individual.

In a complementary piece, Jon Goss is also interested in how the mall functions to regulate social behavior.[48] He understands the mall as a managed space produced to reflect popular *social imaginaries* towards disciplining social behavior. With the mall a mechanism of control. consumer behavior is regulated through "spatial configurations" (materially), and through the "symbolic landscape" (discursively). Often, these distinct strategies are mutually reinforcing; the space, and the symbols—together—recall a social imaginary for users, which cultivates nostalgia for a lost, and idealized, "public realm." Goss examines design and planning characteristics of this regulative environment, observing a correlation with the model of the town. The town imaginary, he claims, is bolstered by a notion of the authentic and a belief in the possibility of authentic community.[49] Produced to resemble this imaginary, malls appear as "shopping towns" and are presented as the "suburban alternative to the decaying downtown." The nostalgia-inducing symbolic elements of these shopping-towns obscure the artificiality of the shopping experience through the ideological fiction of "the public realm." Reading Goss, we might ask, what is public about this public realm? And, differently, what is not public about this public realm? Further, given the genealogical connection between the mall and the BID, how is public-ness expressed in the configuration of BID space and through the "symbolic landscape" inscribed upon it?

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[48] Goss, J. "The Magic of the Mall: An Analysis of Form, Function and Meaning in the Contemporary Retail Built Environment." In *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 83, 1 (1993): 18-47.

[49] Quoting Goss: "In constructing an attractive place image for the shopping center, developers have…exploited a modernist nostalgia for authentic community, perceived only to exist in past and distant places, and have promoted the conceit of the shopping center as an alternative focus for modern community life (22)."

Towards addressing these questions, we should return to Briffault, who reminds us that the mall is closed space, walled in from outside, not open, and not public, insofar as we associate public-ness with the openness of physical space. The influence of mall management on BIDs should be understood in light of how the open space of the BID is managed to resemble the closed space of the mall. We might recall the distinction I drew between the Arena District and the Capital Crossroads SID at the conclusion of the previous section. I pointed out that, although the vision of management for the two spaces is much the same, the singularity of ownership in the Arena District allows NRI to "master plan" the space without the potentially arduous SID process of negotiating with a variety of owners. As the centralized management techniques of the mall, or other spaces with one primary owner, have been imported into the physically open space of BIDs, and other "revitalized," physically open spaces, this importation has altered the emphases of that management. While the walls of a mall enable mall owners to *physically* exclude undesirable behavior (the behavior of the non-consumer) the open space of BIDs requires different management by virtue of its integration into the fabric of an existing area. These characteristics, the absence of walls and the plurality of ownership, seem to account for BIDs' prioritization of what I call *symbolic strategies*. These strategies enable space managers to regulate the behavior of their public without resorting to the techniques of physical exclusion and boundary setting that compromise the public-ness of the mall.[50]

Symbolic strategies manage behavior by way of the production and reception of symbols in a socio-spatial context. To better explain what I mean, I describe symbols, loosely, as *texts*—which are produced, "read," circulated, and cited. I claim that space managers produce texts towards constructing a place-identity for the space that they manage. *Out of space, through symbolic strategies, they construct a place.* That *place*— a neighborhood for some, an entertainment destination for others— *is inter-textually meaningful*. One text becomes meaningful by way of its relationship with others. For the purposes of this thesis, place's meanings are produced out of textual associations. For space managers—place-makers—of improvement districts, it is economically imperative that these textual associations maintain their place as *desirable*. Symbolic strategies, by their logic, must anticipate, respond to, and regulate the desires of the improvement

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[50] As will become clear, although symbolic strategies can be understood as a way to regulate social behavior *without* physical boundary setting, boundaries (of ownership) do influence space managers' performance of democratic accountability.

district users towards economically beneficial outcomes—"higher rents, and higher occupancy; the bottom line; [the reason] why property owners agreed to do this."[51] The everyday practices of improvement district users—shoppers, residents, or tourists—are also to be understood as "textual." In making this move, I am indebted to Michael Warner's writing on *discourse-publics*, and Michel de Certeau's writing on political discourse and tactics. I review this writing to more clearly define my use of this terminology.

Warner understands publics as text-based, insofar as they exist only "by virtue of being addressed," and self-organizing.[52] The public is imagined in both the act of public address—the production of the address—and the reception of public address. A receptor, a member of the texts' audience, imagines oneself as one of many who are "strangers." In this discursive understanding of public formation, a public's existence is contingent on a receptor's—a participant's—engagement with public address. Thought about this way, a participant is a node, a point of engagement, in an unbounded space of discursive circulation. It is by virtue of their participation in the circulation of an address that one becomes a member of a public; this fundamental qualification of membership is the manner by which a text-based public is transformed into a social entity, a transformation through which it becomes evident that members of a discourse-public are situated in quite material circumstances.

Adopting this notion of participatory membership, I think about engagement as *identification* with a text; when a participant identifies with a publicly oriented address, I argue through Warner, their material practices undergo a transformation. Their material practices can be understood as *citations* of the texts. The participant's citation *performs* the meanings and messages that the text seeks to impute. These citational practices widen the reach of a text's circulation beyond an addresser-addressee relationship; by virtue of the addressee's performance of the text, an address is extended to, in Warner's words, "encompass a multigeneric lifeworld…organized by potentially infinite axes of citation and characterization."[53] These performed citations, by extending the reach of

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[51] Ricksecker, Cleve. Personal interview. 12 April 2006.
[52] Warner, Michael. Publics and Counter Publics. New York: Zone Books, 2002. Here, with "self organizing," Warner reads somewhat like Dewey, who takes "human association," and the public-ness of some *acts*, those producing public *consequences*, as given.
[53] Warner 91.

address, serve to ensure the relative permanence of a discourse, manifest in social space as the *textual environment of a place*.

De Certeau uses "citation" somewhat differently than I have, but in a way that proves useful for clarifying my own terminology.[54] Examining rhetorical strategies of political discourse, de Certeau proclaims citation "the ultimate weapon for making people believe…making credible the simulacra produced in a particular place…for each individual *in the name of others*."[55] The individuals, and the others, if we read de Certeau alongside Warner, are part of the postulated public of a political discourse. An individual, among the others, is attentive to the citation, and "believes," identifies with the order of a particular place. Upon identification, to read de Certeau through my terminology, an individual cites their belief through textual practices. For de Certeau, citation is understood as a practice of power that disciplines participation in discursively constructed, material manifest space. A manifestation of intersecting practices of power, the space of *the city* disciplines social behavior:

> The geometrical space of urbanists and architects seems to have the status of the 'proper meaning' constructed by grammarians and linguists in order to have a proper normal and normative level to which they can compare the drifting of 'figurative' language.[56]

Here, de Certeau describes the city as a spatial organization and a textual assemblage, moving fluidly between an analysis of physically articulate space and the space of language. By way of this understanding, some material practices, what he calls pedestrian "spatial practices," can be thought of as drifting figurative language. Particularly in walking, a manner of movement that can permeate the "lines and spaces" of "spatial areas,"[57] a pedestrian "opens meanings" and "articulates a second, poetic geography on top of the geography of the literal, forbidden or permitted meaning."[58] To clarify through my use of "citation," the poetic geography—produced by practices that do not cite the prevailing discourse—coexists with the geography of proper meaning. In this

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[54] De Certeau, Michel. The Practice of Everyday Life. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984
[55] See id. at 189, his italics.
[56] De Certeau 100.
[57] recall Voyce (2003).
[58] See id. at 105.

tenuous coexistence, the disciplinary conditions of the place produced through symbolic strategies are contested.

Despite this theoretical opening for contestatory textual practices, it is clear from my fieldwork that the textual environment of downtown Columbus largely precludes the possibility that an alternative geography—poetic or otherwise—will establish itself as constructive of the prevailing place-identity. Referring back to Sharon Zukin and my discussion of stakeholders, the "hegemony of vision" space-managers/place-makers establish corresponds with the interests of property owner-stakeholders. These stakeholders are representationally privileged, and their discourse-publics behave in such a way as to facilitate particular kinds of social activity within an improvement district; their citations reproduce the textual meanings of downtown place. In the following discussion, through examples from fieldwork, I examine symbolic strategies and reflect on how their production of place-identity functions to discipline social behavior.

Showcase Space: Place-promotion, Advertising, Symbolic
Strategies, and the Textual Environment of downtown Columbus

In a short essay about *urbanity* as a social imaginary, Michael Walzer (1986) describes urban public space as that "open-minded" space that we "share with strangers…in peaceful coexistance and impersonal encounter."[59] An idealized term, urbanity is taken to describe "the city's chaotic mix," both a set of social relationships, and physical environments. I begin to unpack the textual environment of improvement district space in Columbus through attention to how place-promotion encourages or discourages the type of shared, public activity that Walzer describes. One of several symbolic strategies, place-promotion is a publicly oriented method of attracting residents and visitors to spaces. Imagining downtown-place as some variation of that desirable and idealized social imaginary, we could say, place-promotion taps urbanity.

The appeal to urbanity in place-promotion literature anticipates the desires of visitors and residents. One of my interviewees, a resident of the Arena Crossing Apartments in the Arena District, spoke with me about his inclination—his desire—to live in downtown spaces. Jeff recently moved from Dallas to Columbus to work for

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[59] Walzer, Michael. "Pleasures and Costs of Urbanity," in <u>Metropolis: Center and Symbol of our Time</u>. Ed. P. Kasinitz, New York: New York University Press, 1995.

Nationwide Insurance. He wanted to be around social activity, and "the promise of living in a lively part of town" initially brought him to the district. That promise continues to be an incentive to stay.[60] Reflecting on the presence of visitors and their use of the brick sidewalks outside his building, he observes that the majority of District services—shops, restaurants, entertainment complexes, and information-centers—cater to visitors. He wonders if this is related to the general absence of everyday services, such as a grocery store, that might cater to residents. Not ready to conclude that the developers' emphasis on attracting visitors is performed to the expense of residents, however, Jeff concedes that visitors are necessary to sustain the sidewalk life that initially made the District attractive, given that residents alone are of an insufficient quantity to represent that urbanity without them.

Place-promotion literature for the District reflects this perceived need to attract both residents and visitors to the space. The place promotion texts work to attract these users to places by conferring social distinction upon the potential addressees of a text. I provide examples of such texts, and I present an understanding of the relationship between a discourse-public and the producers of—to invoke Zukin—hegemonizing texts. My examples represent the Arena District as a desirable space for desirable users; the first targets potential residents, and the second targets potential visitors:

> Welcome to *luxury* apartment living in the City's most *vibrant* and *desirable* urban neighborhood—Arena Crossing in the *Arena District*. Arena Crossing is literally *steps away* from *Nationwide Arena,* the *North Market, Short North, Victorian Village* and acres of beautifully *landscaped parks* including McFerson Commons, North Bank Park, and Goodale Park. *Cozy* coffee shops, authentic dining and *friendly* watering holes line the street. Eclectic *shops* and *galleries*, farm fresh produce and world class *sports* and *entertainment* are all within *walking distance* of your new home. *Urban* and *unique*. Comfortable and convenient. A true sense of place. Arena Crossing is where *luxury meets lifestyle*.[61]

> You are invited to visit the Arena District, the premier sports, dining and entertainment destination located in downtown Columbus. The Arena District features great restaurants as well as a variety of entertainment venues to suit your every mood, including music, movies, sports, and much more. So stop by…your entertainment adventure is just beginning.[62]

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[60] Myer, Jeff. Personal interview. 17 November 2005
[61] Arena Crossing Apartments. Columbus, Ohio: Nationwide Realty Investors, 2003. Tri-fold. Their italics.
[62] Arena District Guide. Columbus, Ohio: Experience Columbus, 2004. Tri-fold.

These examples associate the Arena District with particular uses of space, and, by virtue of that association, particular users. Thinking critically about the examples, it is clear that their messages are addressed to a socially and economically distinct public. The first example, for instance, promotes relatively expensive apartments. The residential spaces and the lifestyle the text promotes is accessible only to people capable of paying a great deal of money; Jeff, a resident of the apartments, commented that the rent he pays on his apartment is "not much less than what I used to pay for my mortgage."[63] The resident-oriented text promotes an economically exclusive product, and addresses a paying-public, further evident in that the promotion sometimes accompanies information and promotional materials for similarly exclusive opportunities. NRI, who prepared the residential place-promotion, provides potential residents with a listing entitled "The Big Picture," by way of which I will clarify how social distinction, sense of belonging, and desire operate through the production and reception of these texts.[64]

"The Big Picture" includes information about nearby hospitals, schools, pharmacies, libraries, and dry cleaners; also, it lists nearby malls, art galleries, and salons. The listing is worth examining because, we can infer, the opportunities that are and are not listed delimit the parameters of the lifestyle that NRI place-promoters imagine their resident-public enjoying. Examining the list in such a way, it is interesting to note that City Center Mall—the nearest indoor mall, and the only one in downtown Columbus—is not listed, while Polaris Fashion Place—a newer mall in another county significantly north of downtown—is listed. I understand this choice of what to list—and not to list— as a reflection of the social exclusivity that place-promoters deploy towards the production of their discourse-public. Perhaps NRI imagines that their discourse-public would not shop at City Center Mall because of the mall's association with lower income people of color; and perhaps their estimation is sound. Regardless, the exclusivity inscribed in this choice is socially effective. It associates addressees with a socially distinct public elsewhere, creating an extra-territorial sense of social-belonging to a place. I use Pierre Bourdieu's work on social distinction to bolster my analysis of the effects of exclusivity on the discourse-public of place promotion.

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[63] Myer, Jeff. Personal interview. 17 February 2006.
[64] The Big Picture. Columbus, Ohio: Nationwide Realty Investors, 2003. Directory.

Bourdieu theorizes cultural processes within a network of social and textual relations, by way of two crucial terms, *habitus* and *field*.[65] Habitus emerges out of processes of socialization and social reproduction at the scale of the individual and the social group (class-habitus). The term is used to explain the role of human agency within structural constraints; habitus is generative and organizational of social practices. An agent is mediated by habitus and acts within a material social situation, the field. The field is a space of "structural and functional homologies," which predispose agents to hold values that are relatively consistent across forms. Agents are intersectionally constituted by their social positions within multiple fields—political, economic, and cultural—in a constellation. The meanings and functions of the systemic elements of a field are relationally defined, and, among them, agents act competitively, taking positions that enable them control over resources, which are as often symbolic as they are material.

For Bourdieu, competition among social actors over the resources of a field is properly understood as a competition over the legitimacy of cultural practices, and the legitimacy of a social position that accompanies those practices.[66] Agents' practice within a field assumes certain competencies, knowledges, dispositions, and means of understanding. Qualified by life-long formal and informal pedagogical processes, agents are equipped with the habitus required for appropriate participation; explained differently, social actors internalize systemic elements of a field, and externalize them through practices. A crucial competency that enables participatory access to a field is a "belief" in what is value; a belief that is homologous to—is consistent with—the *belief* of other social-actors in the field. Belief in a particular construction of value has social functionality. It produces *social distinction,* setting standards of social inclusion that provide or limit access to a field for a social actor.

By this reading of Bourdieu, a deployment of socially distinctive value is instantiated in the choices of what to list in "the Big Picture." The listing—a text— prescribes appropriate venues of consumer practices in such a way as to indicate the social distinctiveness of the discourse-public, and the social group appropriate to those places. Oriented primarily to a resident-audience, the listing produces a particular sense of belonging somewhat different from the sense of belonging produced by texts oriented

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[65] Bourdieu, Pierre. <u>The Field of Cultural Production</u>. New York: Columbia University, 1993.
[66] Bourdieu, Pierre. <u>Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste</u>. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984.

to a different audience. For instance, place-promotion texts that address a visitor-public might offer only temporary inclusion in the District more completely *of* a resident-public.

In the example of place promotion addressed to visitors, "*you* are invited to visit," the District to enjoy restaurants and entertainment venues (my italics). Catering to a paying-public, the place-promotion offers vicarious participation, through consumption, in an urban lifestyle that is most completely embodied and practiced by residents. "Your" visit, in this case, will be brief; even as you are included in the life of the district, you are figured as a visitor. The resident-oriented promotion and visitor-oriented promotion encourage you to identify with the District differently. The visitor-"you" and the resident-"you" have different degrees of claim to space relative to different degrees (and types) of investment in the place. The visitor, relative to the resident, is addressed as an aspirational consumer for whom investment in the district—through consumption—may only sometimes be economically accessible. Place-promotion texts addressing visitors work to make this avenue of access desirable. The visitor-oriented place-promotion encourages the visitor to recognize the District as "premier." A visitor is invited, then, to visit a premier destination, which, we learn from resident-oriented place-promotion, is the place of a socially distinctive resident-public. Desire is cultivated on this basis; the social group that belongs is a group with whom you are encouraged to identify: "You are invited." The intersecting circulation of these place-promotion texts produces multiple discourse-publics—of residents, and visitors—through messages that signify their distinct *claims to space*: for residents, the promise of social prestige and distinction, and for visitors, the promise of potential, but temporary, inclusion.

Reading these texts with Warner's work in mind, we understand that resident and visitor addressees—all members of discourse-publics—participate in discursive circulation through identification, or more materially through consumption and investment—what I call citation. The publics that these texts postulate are transformed into social entities by virtue of this identification and citation. Place is made desirable for the visitor-public by the social distinctiveness of the District and its resident public. And place is made desirable for residents, the socially distinct urbanites, by the indication of lively *urbanity* that visitors to the District provide through their presence in space.

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I have indicated that texts addressing different audiences derive their meaning from their interrelated circulation. They postulate addressees' identification and construct discourse-publics around their messages. Like place-promotion, mural advertising in improvement district spaces works similarly, and pursuing an example may prove to better illustrate my notion of a textual environment.

Today, mural advertisements solicit users' gazes throughout downtown Columbus. The density of this advertising emerged recently alongside other efforts to "revitalize" the urban center.[67] Advertising in the Arena District is pioneering in this regard. Late in 2000, soon after the opening of Nationwide Arena, NRI mounted $2 million dollars worth of technologically advanced advertising on the north wall of the parking garage across Nationwide Boulevard from the Arena. The advertising package, which is still in place, includes an 18 by 32-foot LED video screen, and four 13 by 26-foot billboards, the panels of which rotate to reveal advertisements for, among other things, District attractions and Nationwide Insurance Company. Both elements of this advertising package warrant attention, but I am particularly interested in the video screen, which is called ADTV (for "Arena District Television").

ADTV is perched at an angle atop the garage as if observing the social activity in Battelle Plaza below. The plaza is anchored by the Arena, a Starbucks Coffee, and two theme-restaurants, which are situated around this District centerpiece to most effectively attract Arena patrons and District visitors. By virtue of its orientation to the plaza, ADTV also solicits the attention of people in the space. If users linger around or sit on one of the plaza's 12 benches, they have front row seats for looped advertising images, which are accompanied by sound, projected out of speakers erected aside the benches. Upon NRI's proposal of ADTV to the City's Downtown Commission[68] in 2000, Ken Ferell, (then) manager of the City's Downtown Development Office, said, "the Commission has asked for festive and chaotic graphics. This [proposal] is very urban

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[67] Butler, Betsy. "City Promoting Use of Murals, Creative New Billboards." Business First 2 May 2003.

[68] McGlaughlin, Bob. Personal interview. 27 February 2006.
In my conversation with the current manager of the City's Downtown Development Office, McGlaughlin explained, "my office staffs the Downtown Commission, which is the downtown regulatory body that approves all real-estate projects, all development [with regard to zoning]. Its powers, granted by City Council, are a combination of those of a typical planning commission, a board of zoning appeals, and a graphics commission, all rolled into one nine member body."

and fits that bill. It's an exciting image for downtown."[69] In clarification of the image the

Commission sought, Ferell mentions a preference for "controlled chaos."[70] My analysis

of two examples of ADTV programming should clarify the way ADTV contributes to the

production of place-identity for Arena District space.

In one, two voices narrate an advertisement for "arena-district.com," a website

where people interested in visiting the District can find information about entertainment

and dining. The male and female voices engage in a playful and flirtatious conversation

that is projected across Battelle Plaza. The voices represent the appropriate users of the

District, and the content of their conversation indicates some appropriate uses:

> The female voice: "What can we see at the Arena Grand Theatre…?"
> The male voice: "Where can we have some drinks…?"

Considered briefly for the time being: by virtue of the tone and pace of conversation, the

"we" is clearly intended to be a heterosexual, visiting couple. Their specific interests in

the District reinforce the propriety of consumer activities for visitors of the space[71] a

propriety that is intersectionally constructed through other texts, some of which are

ADTV programs.

To elaborate through a second example of the programming, a song plays over the

Battelle Plaza speakers; a guitar and voice:

> A whole new world…A small town spirit, with big-city life…
> …Year by year the parade's getting bigger…
> …Something for everyone on the streets where I live.

The song concludes with an advertisement for the "Official Visitors Guide" distributed

by Experience Columbus.[72] Although the song presents Columbus as "something for

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[69] Ball, Brian R. "I Want My 'ADTV'." <u>Business First</u> 20 October 2000.

[70] It is useful to think about the "controlled chaos" of ADTV relative to Walzer's description of "urbanity." Doing so, we might understand ADTV as harnessing—controlling—the "chaotic mix," and regulating which "strangers" share the space.

[71] Field notes. 8 April 2005
The address to visitors is somewhat ironic giving the temporal context in which I observed the advertisement; on that Monday afternoon, the audience assembled in the plaza was constituted of employees, mostly office workers, from nearby buildings taking their lunch break. They were not visitors to the District, but, rather, well-dressed men and women who looked comfortable in the familiar space of the plaza. Mostly between the ages of 30 and 50, with workplace nametag badges affixed to their clothing, plaza users strolled through the plaza talking in groups. Others talked on cell phones. A woman in a black business suit sat on the bench to my right reading a paperback novel.

[72] <u>Official Visitors Guide</u>. Columbus, Ohio: Experience Columbus, 2005.

everyone," it is clear that the song, more particularly, addresses visitors. The song celebrates downtown's urban ascendance, and promotes particular improvement district neighborhoods, images of which are screened throughout the song as a visual accompaniment. The urban ascendance that the song celebrates is of a particular kind; despite being a growing city, the song suggests, Columbus maintains a small town spirit. If we are willing to read these parallel examples of ADTV programming together, we might ask how the heterosexual, visitor couple of the first example is accommodated by the "small town spirit" of "big-city" Columbus. What does a small town image do for this city? And how does the image make the Downtown-places desirable?

Susan Fainstein and Dennis Judd's edited collection of case studies, The Tourist City, will help us explore these questions.[73] They argue that the emergence of mass-tourism in cities is due, in part, to the entrepreneurial efforts of civic leaders and city governments, who perceive travelers as a social group that possesses desirable spending power. In order to attract their investment, place-promotion symbolic strategies are employed; "image advertising," like ADTV, produces a discourse that encourages transformations and management of the physical space of the urban built environment. If the product advertised—the city, itself—does not sufficiently resemble the romanticized representation in the image advertising, the city must be remade, transformed, in this image. Common strategies of transformation re-construct part of a city into what Judd refers to as "tourist bubbles." As in the improvement districts I've described, the amenities of the bounded districts are thought to "anticipate the tourist's desire." When ADTV highlights urban improvement district neighborhoods in programming, it represents the city, Columbus, as a relatively homogeneous network of these bubbles.

To continue with Fainstein and Judd's analysis, they understand the construction and promotion of these districts as an effort to "sustain a narrative of regeneration" against a "well established discourse of urban decline." They argue that characterizations of the city with the discourse of decline, "*ghetto, welfare,* the *underclass, crime,* and *inner city,* have been utilized to play on the racial fears and resentments of suburbanites."[74] These characterizations are, in part, responsible for the growth of suburbs and the inter-local competition these outlying areas of North American cities

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[73] Fainstein, Susan and Dennis Judd, eds. The Tourist City. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.

[74] See id. at 12, their italics.

represent for CBDs. More relevant to my questions, keeping in mind ADTV's characterization of "big-city" Columbus as an embodiment of "small town spirit," it is clear that the programming functions to de-emphasize the presence of blight associated with urban environments by *relationally* emphasizing the small town spirit of improvement district neighborhoods. This characterization of ascendant Columbus is thought to construct the visitors' perception that fear-inducing elements are *absent* from the space. It is thought to attract the figure of the desirable visitor, and encourage them to spend money in their *presence*. The programming addresses visitors with advertisements for a District with a reputation that has been constructed through the production and reception of other place-promotion texts. This ADTV programming, then, references other texts, and the District meanings are there-by constructed inter-textually.

Through circulating texts meanings are produced for urban space, and it is that way by which space managers of BID organizations construct place-identity. Here, textual practices and symbolic strategies re-inscribe space with meaning, and relationally regulate the textual practices of other discourse-publics. I have used examples from the Arena District to illustrate how the inscriptions of owners, investors, and disciplined social users are privileged in this process of meaning production. Their inscriptions retain greater permanence as touchstones for a privileged discourse-public to which others can aspire for inclusion or exist in absence. These symbolic strategies, place-promotion and advertising—but also, I will indicate, sanitation and policing—are thought to facilitate economic growth, accelerate business activity, and effect city-wide investment patterns.

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The symbolic strategies of the space managers, advertisers, and place promoters—those place-makers with the power to "frame a vision" for the space—function to produce place-identity by virtue of the visibility and legibility of their texts. Maintaining a cohesive and socially appropriate textual environment and place-identity is understood as an important element of an agenda to "revitalize" or "reinvigorate" downtown. The Capital Crossroads SID, with its common area services—litter collection, property marketing, and supplemental security—is responsible for maintaining the appearance of the textual environment within the boundaries of its jurisdiction. The visibility of their approach, just as in other improvement districts, is a crucial indicator of the success of

their strategies.[75] In addition to higher property values and increasing rates of investment in the space of the SID, visual elements within space are understood as causally important to, not simply effects of, realizing revitalization goals.

One of the most highly visible elements of the Capital Crossroads effort has been the "Clean and Safe Team," alternately called "ambassadors" because of their diplomatic relationship with both moneyed visitors and area homeless. The uniformed team is primarily responsible for keeping the improvement district "clean and safe," where cleanliness is associated with reductions in crime. Ambassadors regulate certain symbols—litter, panhandlers, graffiti—maintaining an "image" for Columbus that is thought to send the message that some activities, individuals, and appearances are inappropriate for common area spaces. The symbolic strategies of SID employees actively regulate other textual regimes in order to construct a legible place identity; as part of achieving "hegemony of vision," space managers seek to eliminate disincentives for investment as often as they seek to construct incentives. As Cleve Ricksecker has said, "our [, the SIDs',] main job down here is to eliminate the disincentives for being downtown; dirty sidewalks, disorder. The incentives are handled by other offices—other organizations within this office."[76]

SID strategies work to make the space appealing to people who have not visited the district due to lingering images of downtown produced through the "discourse of decline," and work to maintain a sense of belonging for economically-desirable individuals, who have and do use the improvement district.[77] Jeff, one of the aforementioned residents of the Arena Crossing Apartments, described the efficacy of efforts to regulate "disincentives" in the Arena District. Describing the different sorts of visitors who frequent the district, he claimed that their behavior is predictable. There is little "visible crime," he said, citing the lack of graffiti, broken glass, or panhandlers asking him for money. The occasional row outside a bar, he specifies, sounds more "college-drunk" than "hobo-drunk," revealing a preference for the drunken behavior of some—visitors whose behavior *cites* the messages of some place-promotion literature— over others.[78] The figure of the homeless, or the presence of graffiti, abnormalities in the

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[75] "City Improvement District May Get Action Next Month." <u>Business First</u> 2 January 2001.
[76] Ricksecker, Cleve. Personal interview. 12 April 2006.
[77] Hoke, Kathy. "New Group Launches Panhandling Initiative." <u>Business First</u> 3 May 2002.
[78] Myer, Jeff. Personal interview. 17 February 2006.

textual environment, might be thought of as syntactically inappropriate; texts and textual practices that make visitors to the District, and the place itself, less desirable. These symbols are figured as other to the District space, a designation that relationally privileges place-makers—space managers, advertisers, and place promoters—of the dominant textual regime.

The symbolic strategies that exploit this relationship between privileged and disadvantaged texts reflect the logic of the "broken windows theory," coined in 1982 by George Kelling and James Wilson, each of whom have written on the subject since.[79] By the broken windows logic, the absence of disruptive symbols indicates the success of symbolic strategies, while their presence enables—even causes—a spiral of decline leading to potentially violent crime. In a case study attentive to the "quality of life" campaign of the Giuliani administration in New York City, Tanya Erzen interrogates broken windows logic.[80] Erzen is particularly attentive to the way that some objects and people are figured as symbols of disorder, and she points out the ambiguity of how disorder is defined, most broadly as "incivility." By Erzen's understanding, the regulation of incivility has a "psychological function," whereby enforcing the absence of symbols of disorder maintains a "feeling of safety" for "civil" visitors and residents. The limited distribution of this designation, "civil," denies the "uncivil"—loosely defined—a claim to space. The designation's limited inclusiveness denies them a right to belong, where belonging qualifies one to benefit from the "feeling of safety" that symbolic strategies are nominally deployed to produce.

I spent some time in the field evaluating the effects of these symbolic strategies on the "uncivil." My fieldwork brought me to the train tracks below street level in the Arena District. During daytime fieldwork, I would walk through a privately owned parking lot across from Battelle Plaza to a far corner, where, behind a dumpster, a dirt path descends to gravel along the tracks; a walkway to a place outside of public scrutiny and the scope of symbolic regulation, the dirt path is littered with 40 oz. bottles and rusty spray cans. Over-grown weeds shoot up alongside the path, trodden and shaped by

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[79] Wilson, James and George Kelling. "Police and Neighborhood Safety," The Atlantic Monthly March 1982.

[80] Erzen, Tanya. "Turnstile Jumpers and Broken Windows," in Zero Tolerance: The New Police Brutality in New York City, eds. T. Erzen and A. McArdle. New York: New York University Press, 2001.

graffitists and homeless residents, who descend under cover of night and ascend in the morning to panhandle or go to a day-job. I found campsites—living rooms, bedrooms, and closets in one—where bridges and on-ramps secured them from visibility. In one campsite, I found a library that included Milton, Plato and The Bible. Next to the library, a canvas, concealed from view of the civil, read "Ain't No Love in the Heart of the City." Alongside the painting, a makeshift bed of cinderblocks and wood palettes was piled high with collected clothes and shoes. Not far away, a less concealed site indicated recent practices of symbolic regulation; more visible from managed space, the site had been the territory of graffitists before redevelopment renegotiated the boundaries of belonging. Columns of the underground parking garage beneath the Arena Crossing Apartments— previously part of the graffitists' "wall of fame"—are now painted by rollers, indicating where graffiti had been buffed.[81]

My brief time spent in the spaces of the "uncivil" brought me into contact with a homeless man who, at the time of our conversations, panhandled in the Short North Arts District. He and I talked about his experience negotiating recent changes in the center of the city. We talked about regulatory strategies in many forms, some textual and some legal: a criminal code that frames the erection of temporary structures on City owned property, even sleeping bags, as an illegal claim to space;[82] placards placed on sidewalks in the Short North that discourage panhandling by suggesting that pedestrians "give money [to social service agencies] where it can be used effectively";[83] armrests recently installed on benches in the SID to discourage reclining. The man circumvented these regulations by claiming spaces that were outside the scope of regulation, and panhandling within the bounds of legality: sleeping on church steps, he avoided sleeping on city owned property; panhandling passively while sitting, he avoided being charged with "aggressive panhandling," a fourth degree misdemeanor evaluated at the discretion of Columbus Police. His guardedness about certain topics— like why he believes the shelter system provides inadequate services—makes it clear that while regulatory strategies that

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[81] Field Notes. 22 February 2005.
[82] Beittel, Kent. Personal Interview. 19 September 2005.
During this conversation with the director of the Open Shelter in Columbus, he discussed Criminal Code, 919.12, as a regulation of informal claims to space.
[83] Real Change, Not Spare Change. Columbus, Ohio: Short North Business Association, 2005.

figure him as "uncivil" may produce a "feeling of safety" for some, they produce of *feeling of insecurity* for others.[84]

Having briefly narrated my fieldwork in the concealed spaces with marginal individuals, I argue that, if economically desirable visitors and residents are affected by symbolic strategies and experience a feeling of safety, then the "uncivil" must also be thought affected by their feeling of insecurity. Recall Steve Hochleutner's, and Richard Briffault's standards of democratic accountability, which call for institutional responsiveness to "those most likely to be affected." Looking at the case study, we might ask how SID managers in Columbus perform accountability to the *affected* "uncivil"—the homeless, for instance—and how that performance is related to other relevant publics, particularly those identified as *stakeholders*. In the following section, "Performing Accountability," I examine related issues in more depth, but for the time being, I rely on Cleve Ricksecker to explain how privately funded space managers are responsive to panhandling.[85]

Ricksecker discusses panhandling by virtue of its relationship to his partnership collaborators' and the interests of their stakeholders. He explains, "The number one issue among downtown property owners [the primary stakeholders] is panhandling. People don't want to be panhandled when they're going to work, or going to a show." Panhandling, Ricksecker explains, "makes [them] cynical"; it is thought to discourage paying-publics from bringing their business downtown.

> The whole emphasis, among many SIDs, on reducing the incidence of quality of life problems—public urination, panhandling, public intoxication—is viewed by some advocates as criminalizing homelessness, or unfairly targeting the homeless. It's simply a necessary reality regarding whether you keep a downtown healthy or not.

Keeping downtown "healthy" is discussed by leaders of partnership organizations as primarily related to material-economic concerns. And while Ricksecker understands the health of a downtown relative to economic considerations as well, it is interesting to note that he goes about pursuing that healthy downtown through discursively-oriented, not explicitly materially-oriented practices. In order to "reduce the number of people on the street," he explained, "[the SID has] gone the route of hiring a full-time outreach

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[84] Homeless2. Personal interview. 19 September 2005.
[85] Ricksecker, Cleve. Personal interview. 15 February 2006.

professional." When he proposed the idea to the investor-stakeholders to which he is primarily accountable, he continued, "there was just stunned silence at the board meeting…It never occurred to the commercial property owners that homelessness had anything to do with running a commercial district."

More clearly than most other SID-related services and management decisions, the decision to hire an outreach professional specifically engages with symbolic disincentives. Constructing a cohesive textual environment—a visually homogeneous space—depends on regulatory efforts like this—enforcing certain absences —and not simply the presence of symbolic indicators like mural advertising and place-promotion tri-folds. These symbolic strategies bolster the textual associations relating to the "discourse of urban ascendance" by regulating the contributions of others to what is perceived as a discourse of decline. The simultaneously productive and regulatory nature of these strategies makes them a complicated object of study; as one resident of the Arena District observed while describing the presence of NRI security, "Probably most of the effects [of space management] are things that you don't see rather than things that you do see."[86]

As is evident in the parking garage under the Arena Crossing Apartments, traces of *things that you don't see* are visible in hard-to-reach places outside of public scrutiny. Just as place-maker texts signify spaces of belonging for a socially distinct discourse-public, *things that you don't see*, like graffiti, signify the presence—even in their bodily absence—of a different discourse-public. Michael Warner, with his discursive understanding of public formation, would read the graffiti of the Arena District as a network of publicly-oriented texts that postulate a audience. He would be attentive to constraints on the graffiti's "temporality," observing that the texts are *rarely cited* in the space because they are so attentively regulated. By my reading of Warner, even in their transience, the graffiti-texts' relation to an audience should be thought of as a proposal to public dialogue. In postulating an attentive public, the texts initiate a discourse of belonging, asking, "what belongs in space?" Insofar as an attentive public would imagine someone producing the texts, the inscriptions ask, "who belongs in this space?" Cultural

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[86] Gjerovski, Alexander. Personal interview. 3 March 2006.

critic Anne Norton writes about graffiti as "a sign, an evocation, of presence."[87] Examining symbolic strategies in Philadelphia, Norton looks to local journalism and political discourse that frames graffiti as blight. She argues that the "war against graffiti" discourse mistakes "the signifier for the signified," so that as the discourse frames graffiti as "a symptom of poverty and declining property values," the "symptom is taken for the cause." This mistake, Norton claims, distracts attention from the real, "political and economic" causes of decline.

We can imagine Norton arguing, through Warner, that symbolic strategies in Columbus are distracting downtown leadership from resolving or addressing political and economic causes of decline; that the symbolic strategies function to restrict participation in the discourse of belonging to place-makers, who, by virtue of their financial investment in redevelopment, already exercise their power to *frame a vision* for space. The textual environment, by this understanding, does not represent the imprint of all of those affected by the development practices of partnership place-makers. The symbolic strategies of some place-makers produce a feeling of insecurity that denies some a sense of belonging; symbolic strategies constrain the informal, representational capacities of some discourse-publics, and make them, some of those likely to be affected, difficult to identify. The socially manifest, discursively produced, invisibility of some affected publics may limit the responsiveness of improvement districts-related practices to only some of the relevant social actors. Given this, how should we identify stakeholders? How should we re-imagine the publics of improvement district places?

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Performing Accountability

Who is Affected? Who is Represented?

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In the following, I bring my concern with *affected publics* to bear on analyses of the constitution of management structures, the protocol of decision-making procedures, and the priorities of investment practices. I ask: do the discourse-publics of "ascendant" downtown Columbus correspond with the stakeholder considerations of organizations producing the ascendance? I ask: do the (discursively-oriented) symbolic strategies, and

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[87] Norton, Anne. "Writing Property and Power," in Public Space and Democracy, eds. M. Henaff and T. Strong. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.

(materially-oriented) investment practices/incentive programs/institutional configurations manage in the interests and *to the affect* of the same publics?

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By my analysis, we can say that the downtown SIDs are managed by organizations concerned with regulating disincentives, and facilitating economic growth through symbolic strategies that shape a discourse-public of individuals who contribute to that growth. The Capital Crossroads organization is the most highly visible private sector space management organization in downtown, and the imprint of their practices will only become more visible. A formal characteristic that is perceived as an oversight measure, the "sunset provision," requires that SID managers re-petition the property owners within the boundaries of the improvement district after five years of operations in order to reauthorize their mandate. For the five-year interval of operations beginning in 2007, Capital Crossroads SID succeeded in collecting the necessary signatures, and expanded the improvement district's boundaries. Meanwhile, managers of the existing SID worked with property owners to the immediate west of the district and established a second SID for downtown Columbus, the Discovery District SID, which will also be active in 2007.

The project director of the SIDs, Cleve Ricksecker does a lot of legwork: Maintaining contact with property owners, investors, social service organizations, law enforcement officials, event coordinators, promoters and advertisers, local politicians, and everyday people on the street, his interest is in establishing downtown as a neighborhood, "knit[ting] together the community by *interests*."[88] Ricksecker, for his part, is convinced that SID-related projects create positive social effects that correspond with the interests of the relevant stakeholders.[89] Not at all cynically, he believes that SID-related decision-makers represent the interests of the appropriate social groups adequately, and he believes that those social groups are accounted for, represented, and responded to, if not formally, then by virtue of enlightened self-interest guiding decision-makers whose interests *are* formally represented. The following inquiry examines how the Capital Crossroads SID has mobilized certain empowered community members— owners—by virtue of their shared "interests." The inquiry should clarify how stakeholders have been identified in SID-formation, and how they are represented

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[88] Ricksecker, Cleve. Personal interview. 12 April 2006.
[89] Ricksecker, Cleve. Personal interview. 15 February 2006.

through the institutional structures, decision-making procedures, and investment priorities of the SID managers.

An analysis of the degree to which the SID *is* accountable depends on a clear understanding of how accountability is currently performed, and how accountability is to be evaluated. The logic of the recent evaluations of the BID model with which I began this thesis, specifically Hochleutner's and Mac Donald's, seem to generally correspond with the expectations of stakeholders and standards of performance established by SID managers in Columbus. To explain, the standard of democratic accountability described by these writers holds that "those most likely to be affected" are those to whom the SID managers are primarily obligated. They contend that those most likely to be affected are *owners*, and they both, exclusively, grant owners—not "free riders"—formal representation in management structures relevant to BID operations. Given the aforementioned intra-SID plurality of ownership and the degree to which the SID is integrated into the fabric of the city, how have SID managers assessed their obligation to stakeholders? And why the overwhelming influence of owners?

Ricksecker approaches questions of accountability through "efficacy," and "efficiency." Generally, property owners, who pay annual assessments to fund SID services, are the stakeholders to which the SID is thought to be primarily accountable. They are provided influence in decision-making over SID services and programs, and they represent their interests on a board of directors. It can be assumed that the social groups whose interests trustees represent will have an effect on the breadth of concerns prevalent on the board. However, SID managers assume, differently, that monetary investment will encourage the private sector to participate in decision-making over issues of public concern, deciding for the common good and for the "health" of downtown. In support of the assessment procedure and the attendant influence it garners property owners, Ricksecker says, "Money will bring people to the table in ways that voluntary dues and in kind contributions usually don't."[90] But while money may "bring people to the table," it seems it may also compromise the disinterestedness of stakeholders, allowing "the bottom line" to determine the nature of outcomes.

In discussing the accountability of BIDs, John Rosenberger, who initiated the "demonstration project" that brought BIDs to downtown five years ago, explained the

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[90] Ricksecker, Cleve. Personal interview. 15 February 2006.

structure of formal stakeholder representation, "the oversight, and what they [, the trustees,] expect from us."[91] Property-owners are represented on the SID board of directors to a degree relative to the size of their investment in the SID. By way of a stakeholder classification system, considerations of adequate representation on the SID board are resolved. With four classes of trustees on the board, the property owners in the improvement district are broken up into quartiles so that three trustees represent each quartile. The few largest assessment payers—class A property owners—are represented by as many trustees as the many lesser assessment payers—classes B, C, and D property owners. Achieving a mandate through petition and City Council vote, the SID managers turn formal decision-making authority over to this SID board, which expects, "private sector, for-profit standards [of efficiency]." Rosenberger is very proud of this classification system, claiming that, "every kind of person is represented on the board of trustees."[92] Though he means "property owner" by "person," this reductive statement seems to betray an assumption that property ownership, and further *ownership within the property-relevant boundaries of the SID*, is an appropriate qualification for inclusion to decisions relevant to the common, open space of the district. From *property*, one can claim a right to influence decision-making and expect formal representation of interests.

SID management practices guided by this assumption seek to ensure that those *stakeholders who own property within the boundaries of the SID* profit from their investment in SID-services by way of higher property values. SID managers would not be obligated to be responsive to the interests of other users of the improvement district space; or, they would be obligated only insofar as the interests of these other users overlap, cooperatively or conflictively, with those of the property owners, as is the case with panhandlers. Guided by Rosenberger's assumption, SID managers must be concerned primarily with those affects relating to the return on investment that *property owners within the district* risk by virtue of their payment of assessments; it is assumed that those investment-related affects do not exceed the boundaries of the improvement district and are not experienced by social groups other than property owners, and so the social affects experienced by other users are essentially bracketed as irrelevant to accountability concerns.

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[91] Rosenberger, John. Personal interview. 24 February 2006.
[92] Rosenberger, John. Personal interview. 24 February 2006.

It is clear that the structure of funding—mandatory property owner assessments—and the mechanism of representation—the SID board—bolsters this assumption, where "district-specific" assessments are allocated towards funding district specific services. It does not follow, however, given the nature of SID space-management practices, that their district-specific services produce *only* district specific effects. In fact, my case study of the textual environment of improvement district space indicates that symbolic strategies affect individuals that are not typically accounted for—those affected individuals outside the property-relevant boundaries of the district, and those affected individuals not paying assessments. By my analysis of improvement district practices and their social-discursive effects, it seems we must reconsider the operational standard of democratic accountability by which this economic development has recently been evaluated.

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The strategies of the SID, with their origins in mall management, have been deployed to regulate social behavior without physical boundary setting or the erection of walls within downtown space. SID managers do not rely on physical articulate boundaries to delineate the *place* of social interaction. Differently, given the integrated urban fabric within which SIDs are situated, SID managers rely on symbolic strategies to delineate place. This method of delineation makes the identification and analysis of relevant social effects tricky. It does seem clear, however, that SID practices affect individuals by virtue of their relationship with the spaces' social-discursive meaning. The effects of symbolic strategies are not bounded by place as it is defined by property-ownership. Rather, through discursive circulation, and citation, the effects are generative and capable of expanding their scope of address.

Despite the fluidity of effects, an assumption that boundaries *do* encompass the breadth of effects seems to influence SID space managers' performance of accountability. Based upon that assumption, space managers perform accountability by delineating a property-relevant boundary, circumscribing property owners on a city grid, and thereby identifying stakeholders. The symbolic strategies of SID managers construct place-identity through an association of texts that come to represent the space within those boundaries as a *place*; it seems that the boundaries of discursively constructed place and property-relevant place are not entirely agreeable. Given this disagreement, in my conclusion I review considerations that might help us imagine a revised standard of

accountability; a revised standard would mandate responsiveness to *all those affected— the affected publics*—not just the stakeholders as they are currently identified through the commitment to property-relevant boundaries.

Conclusions: Towards Rethinking Democratic Accountability

I begin with a question: what considerations should inform evaluations of democratic accountability in sub-local downtown improvement districts? In Columbus, the districts in question are relatively small, and the boundaries that circumscribe them are both property-relevant and socio-discursively relevant. The boundaries do not always correspond, and this disagreement will be a point of entry towards discussing the parameters of a revised standard of democratic accountability.

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In 1998, before the Arena District had been constructed, local graffiti writers took advantage of the abandoned site of the Penitentiary, which was closed for 14 years, and adopted the cement walls and columns along the train tracks as a "wall of fame." In another neighborhood to the southeast of the Arena District—now the "Market Exchange District"—economic decline in neighboring Old Towne East left many people unemployed. Homeless could be seen walking along Main Street, meeting appointments with social services on Rich Street,[93] loitering or sleeping in the Topiary Garden,[94] or sitting in the air-conditioned Columbus Metropolitan Library. The wall of fame in the Arena District has been erased since the construction of apartments, and the construction of the "Market Exchange District" has brought with it lofts, town-houses, high-end restaurants, and offices, that have pushed the not-economically-desirable homeless further into Old Towne East. The redevelopment of these districts was conceived as *treatment* towards ensuring the "health" of downtown.

"There's a lot at stake in downtown when there's so much flight of jobs to the suburbs, and such a perceived problem with doing business downtown."[95] As Cleve Ricksecker explains, his improvement district strategies with the Capital Crossroads and Discovery District SIDs seek to diminish the prevalence of negative perceptions of

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[93] In this neighborhood is the "Friends of the Homeless Solutions and Possibilities" substance abuse shelter, at 600 Rich Street.
[94] The benches in the Topiary Garden do not have armrests.
[95] Ricksecker, Cleve. Personal interview. 12 April 2006.

downtown, and reconstruct downtown spaces with recent histories of decline into desirable places. He and leaders in other districts must challenge prevailing investment patterns—encouraging investor confidence—towards transforming a nine-to-five, weekday-oriented CBD with a troubling level of office vacancy into a downtown with 24-hour vitality—the type of place that a paying-public might visit. Downtown development projects of the SID-type depend on encouraging a paying-public to invest, and, relationally, concealing the social problems that previously characterized the space and influenced perceptions of it. The fates of paying public/likely investors and undesirable users/symbols of social problems are intertwined by way of improvement district strategies. The production of investor confidence is related to the regulation of undesirable symbols and social behavior.

I would also like to suggest that the *places* of paying publics and places of undesirables should be understood as *interconnected*; not just by virtue of streets and highways, and sewers and wireless networks, but, by virtue of the paying-publics' and the undesirable-publics' related *claims to space*. The symbolic strategies of improvement district managers, as I understand them, affect these publics' interrelated claims to space. The strategies produce a sense of belonging for discourse-publics who contribute to economic growth, and a sense of exclusion for those who do not. The strategies are both generative and regulative of the conflicting claims to space. Recall Malcolm Voyce's "social idea of property," where "property" (understood as the condition of one's right to space) is understood in relation to the "propriety" of one's behavior. Voyce's idea allows us to imagine that symbolic strategies are prescriptive, not only *producing* proper behavior at the scale of the individual, but compelling those who behave in excess of propriety to remain invisible and absent. Their practices, which, if visible, would assert a claim to space, are *regulated* to the margins. By virtue of this alternative definition of property, *ownership* becomes an uncertain term; ownership of space implies that one has a right to space and can assert a claim to space, but "social property," because it is relationally defined *across boundaries*, does not neatly correspond with legally-defined borders.

The social boundaries of downtown improvement districts—corresponding with a social idea of property and generally elided by recent analyses of democratic accountability in BIDs—are manipulated by the discursive construction of place-identity

through symbolic strategies. Neglecting to attend to this *social idea of property*, and how that mode of ownership represents an extra-legal but nonetheless affective claim to space, the recent analyses I have reviewed demonstrate insufficient attention to the "affects" experienced by—as of yet, unidentified—stakeholders. Affected individuals, who are rendered socially invisible by symbolic strategies, are not—by way of the prevailing standard of accountability—understood as objects of political responsibility. If a commitment to property-relevant boundaries is insufficient for mandating accountability to all of the relevant social groups, within what boundaries are the affected, and what considerations must a revised standard demonstrate in order to be sufficiently accountable to those affected?

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With her "progressive sense of place," geographer Doreen Massey helps us begin to address this question of boundaries. She argues for a way of thinking about place that does not reduce the complexity of one places' interconnections with others,[96] connections that are socially defined by relations across space. Pitching the issue at the global scale, Massey understands space as stratified and uneven. The unevenness is not just economically articulate, Massey argues. In fact, it would be more appropriate to understand the unevenness by way of the "power-geometry" of space that privileges some, enabling *mobility* by virtue of their relative power in social relationships defined across gender, race, *and* wealth, among other axes of social difference.

> Different social groups and different individuals are placed in very distinct ways in relation to…flows and interconnections…[In] relationship to this anyway-differentiated mobility…some are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don't; some are more on the receiving end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it.[97]

Across space, the interconnections of these different social groups coalesce at particular locations, to produce places. Places are always in a process of *becoming*, Massey argues, criticizing an epistemological position which holds that the that spatially local be understood as a "source of stability and unproblematical identity." Places are properly understood as produced through never-completed processes, and always inflected by uneven social relationships. By way of this understanding, Massey claims that drawing

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[96] Massey, Doreen. "Power-Geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place," in <u>Mapping the Futures</u>. Eds. Jon Bird, et al. New York: Routledge, 1993.
[97] Massey 61.

boundaries around places is a problematic exercise because it does not reflect the continuity of flows *across* spaces, and the instability of places' delineation.

Massey notes some inter-local relationships that exceed the bounded-ness of a particular place, and illustrates, at the micro-level, her macro-level concerns:

> Every time [one] uses a car, and thereby increases their personal mobility, they reduce both the social rationale and the financial viability of the public transport system—and thereby also potentially reduce the mobility of those who rely on that system. Every time [one] drives to that out-of-town shopping center [one] contributes to the rising prices, even hastens the demise, of the corner shop.[98]

Here, referring to mobility, Massey describes what is at stake socially in the spatially diffuse relationships that produce places. Through her examples, she proposes a "politics of mobility and access" that enable us to ask questions about "whether our relative mobility and power over mobility and *communication* entrenches the spatial imprisonment of other groups (my italics)." We might read Massey's coupling of mobility with "communication" by way of Sharon Zukin (1997), who proposes "the power to frame a vision" for space as an unequally available resource through which the socially privileged express their power, or differently, communicate their *author*ity through textual inscriptions. It is clear, through Zukin's case studies of "cultural strategies of economic development," that their exercise of power—controlling the textual objects that are communicated—is likely to influence the ability of others to frame a vision for space. The relationships over which the power to frame a vision is unevenly distributed are, getting back to Massey, "increasingly stretched out over space…at every different [scale], from the household to the local area to the international." Across the space, places are to be "conceptualized in terms of the social interactions which they tie together,"[99] the social processes which give places meaning.

Massey's interconnected conceptualization of place is quite different from the conceptualization of place which, defined by the boundaries of property, indicates the scope of accountability for place-makers in improvement districts. By way of constructing a relatively (discursively) homogeneous place-identity, the managers of improvement districts fail to represent the "internal differentiations and conflicts" that are

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[98] See id. at 62.
[99] Massey 66.

"generative" of those places.[100] These internal differentiations are social in character and spatial in manifestation. Supplementing our understanding of place by examining internal differentiations at the urban-regional scale, political philosopher Iris Marion Young understands residential segregation as a spatial manifestation of uneven social relationships of power across that differentiation.[101] The spatialization of power, Young argues, impedes the realization of social conditions that would enable an *inclusive* social *process of political communication*.

Examining the social phenomenon of urban residential segregation, and discussing its consequences for political communication, Young speaks to what might be thought of as enabling conditions for accountable representation and representational practices. She explains that, "segregation impedes communication among segregated [social] groups," by way of the construction of boundaries—creating physical distance— that make political obligation across social groups difficult to perceive. Spatial fragmentation by way of residential segregation, constituted through "practices and processes that tend to homogenize the income and wealth level, occupational status, and lifestyle consumer tastes of communities," tends to make privilege invisible; masking the extent to which the abundance of resources in a privileged community comes at the relative expense of segregated neighborhoods.[102] If we read Young through Massey's "politics of mobility and access," we might say that some social actors, those who are privileged by their access to a relative abundance of material and symbolic resources, are more empowered of "the flows and interconnections" between their place, and the place of other(ed)s.

Ideally, or for Young, *normatively,* an inclusive process of political communication would promote democratically deliberative interactions across social difference and spatial distance towards mutually beneficial outcomes.   In order to be *normatively legitimate*, then, structures of political communication— structures that mediate the influence of social groups—must be inclusive and accessible. Towards imagining such structures, we might acknowledge that all social groups are situated

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[100] See id at 67.
[101] Young, Iris. Inclusion and Democracy. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000
[102] See id. in chapters, "Residential Segregation and Regional Democracy," and "Social Difference as Political Resource" for a discussion of these points.

together in a space of "mutual effect";[103] all individuals are mutually affected by virtue of the fact that they "dwell together within structural relations generated by [the] processes of [their] interaction."[104] By granting this, we can say that the mutual affectedness among social groups produces mutual obligations, which, under normative conditions, demand "political co-operation" across currently uneven social relationships. Through Young, then, we would argue that the boundaries constructed by spatialized concentrations of social resources impede democratic interactions that should proceed from mutual obligations.

Continuing with Young, we could suggest a normative ideal of "differentiated solidarity" that would challenge the spatial boundaries that have circumscribed political obligations. By an ideal of *Differentiated solidarity*, "the scope of the polity"—the scope of accountability concerns "…ought to coincide with the scope of the obligations of justice which people have in relation to one another because their lives are intertwined in social, economic, and communicative relations that tie their fates."[105] The intertwinedness of human associations in places is, as it has been for Massey and Young, the basis for Nancy Fraser's[106] discussion of political obligation. Fraser helps us understand how legal-political boundaries by which we come to understand issues of justice and injustice are capable of drawing attention away from political obligations as they exist across social difference and despite spatial distance.[107]

Away, then, from what she calls the Keynesian-Westphalian frame of territories of political obligation, Fraser proposes "Reframing Justice" in light of interconnections between social groups across space. With her "post-Westphalian" frame we come to understand "territoriality" as a condition of the modern state that is "out of synch with the structural causes of many injustices in a globalizing world."[108] The structural forces that perpetuate injustice in our interconnected world are no longer constrained by the boundaries of the "space of places." Structural forces, or instrumentalities of power, are

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[103] Young 110.
[104] See id. at 197.
[105] See id. at 229.
[106] Fraser, Nancy. "Reframing Justice in a Globalizing World." In *New Left Review*, 36 (Nov./Dec. 2005): 1-19.
[107] Fraser 1-5.
[108] See id. at 13.

better understood as relevant to the "space of flows."[109] Within the diffuse space of flows, then, differentiated social actors are variously affected in their structural "co-imbrication." In order to account for this co-imbrication, Fraser continues, just conditions—through normatively legitimate and accountable structure— would grant *all* those *affected* the right to assert "justice claims" on the structures and relations through which they are affected.

By reading Fraser through Massey, we understand the *place* of political obligation as a place constructed through flows connected to other spaces; these flows represent the trajectories of "social effectivity" traversing places. Social effects are read to exceed the boundaries of state-rule that have circumscribed considerations of justice and political obligation in the past. The geographical diffusion—the place—of these social effects is not static, but rather, expanding and contracting, unstable, uncertain, *becoming not being*.[110] Adopting Massey's idea of places as processes, we must reconsider the parameters of improvement-district place. By contrast to this boundary setting, we must rethink democratic accountability by way of considering *social effectivity*.

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In conclusion I return to John Dewey, whose emphasis on the "consequen[tial]" relationships of public associations leads him to define his public as a diffuse network of human interactions, "associations," that produce public consequences. Consequences "call a public into being" in a manner similar to that through which Warner's publicly-oriented addresses "postulate a public."[111] Dewey's consequences "expand beyond those directly engaged in producing them,"[112] as might, by my reading of Warner, citations of circulating texts that re-construct discourse-publics. Characterized by expansion and diffusion, then, Dewey's and Warner's publics' are not human associations on the model of an undifferentiated mass into which individual social actors are integrated—"The Public." Rather, by thinking of publics as they help us to—as continually re-constructed through expansive and diffuse effects—one can understand the place of publics' interactions as spatially differentiated and only problematically bounded.

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[109] See id. at 12-13.
[110] Massey 63.
Massey argues that, "places are process," and should not to be understood as static or stable, an ontological position which she attributes to the philosophy of Martin Heidegger.
[111] Warner 66-67.
[112] Dewey 27.

Through my own search for the public(s) of improvement district places I have tried to make sense of the social complexity Dewey so deftly describes. By attention to consequences, and a concern with the affected, I have indicated the uncertainties of "boundaries" and "ownership" in improvement district space. Further, I have proposed some normative considerations toward rethinking the scope of BID accountability in light of those uncertainties. Taking those considerations into account, a revised standard would expect improvement district managerial procedures and the places they produce to reflect the spatial and social interconnections that bind the fate of so many social actors. Normative considerations would mandate accountability to *affected publics*— stakeholders by virtue of their affectedness—and not simply "stakeholders," as have been identified on the basis of property-ownership within territorial boundaries.

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