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The Theory and Practice of Local Governance and Economic Development

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palgrave
macmillan

Selection and editorial matter © Mark Considine and Sylvain Giguère 2008
Individual chapters © Contributors 2008
Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2008 978-0-230-50060-0

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First published 2008 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS and
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010
Companies and representatives throughout the world

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ISBN 978-1-349-35279-1 ISBN 978-0-230-58268-2 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/9780230582682

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The theory and practice of local governance and economic development/
edited by Mark Considine and Sylvain Giguère.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Public-private sector cooperation—Case studies. 2. Local government—Case studies. 3. Economic development—Case studies. 4. Economic policy—Case studies. I. Considine, Mark, 1953– II. Giguère, Sylvain.

HD2961.T46 2008
338.9001—dc22 2007050057

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08

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Preface

It is not unusual to uncover gaps between theory and practice in modern society – from the field of economics to peace negotiations. Sometimes the gap arises from the complexity of a given problem, which makes the application of any theory unstable. In other cases, the cause lies with individual solutions that are unable to make themselves heard above the din of theoretical dispute or the competing expectations of stakeholders.

On the subject addressed by this book it would be surprising not to find such a gap. Governance, network and partnership are concepts that were introduced into public debate barely 30 years ago, and are still not fully understood in the same way by all. What is more, academics and practitioners have come to attribute different meanings to these concepts, producing serious implications on the ground. In this area, as in many others, it is practice that has led the way, not theory, opening up new subjects for academic research. However, several decades after the emergence of these new themes, practice is still left unsupported by science. Increasingly, new developments are occurring in the open space that surrounds public policy – between government and other stakeholders – whose purposes go well beyond the principal subjects of existing research paradigms. What academia should offer is not only an evaluation of the various instruments being used, but what role an enhanced structure of local governance can play in ensuring that society's new and emerging needs are met.

This book suggests new avenues for reconciling theory and practice and provides concrete advice to those involved in supporting, working in and learning from partnerships on the ground. The decision to pursue this research was made during a conference that we organised in Australia on 25–27 September 2006[1], which attracted 600 people from three continents and generated 200 papers from both the scientific and practitioner communities. The discussions held there convinced us of the need to change the way we currently think about governance and partnership. This volume includes a number of selected peer-reviewed papers which we feel best represent the main thrusts and most important innovations within the debate and which have also inspired some additional studies.

[1] 'Government and Communities in Partnerships: From Theory to Practice', Melbourne Park, Victoria, Australia, 25–27 September 2006. The event was organised by the Centre for Public Policy at the University of Melbourne in collaboration with the OECD LEED Programme, the government of Victoria and *The Age* newspaper.

We are indebted to the contributors to this volume for taking the time and effort to engage in this project. We also very much appreciated the help from the anonymous peer reviewers of these papers. In addition we would like to thank Francesca Froy, who provided comments on various parts of this volume; Kathleen Asjes, who helped prepare the manuscript; and the staff at Palgrave Macmillan for their support throughout.

It is our hope that this book will help both the scientific and practitioner communities, and set theory and practice onto a new path of convergence.

Mark Considine and Sylvain Giguère

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Maura Adshead is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Politics and Public Administration at the University of Limerick. She has published articles on Irish politics and policy, and is the author of *Developing European Regions?* (Ashgate, 2002) and co-editor (with Michelle Millar) of *Public Administration and Public Policy in Ireland: Theory and Methods* (Routledge, 2003) and (with Peadar Kirby and Michelle Millar) *Contesting the State: Lessons from the Irish Case* (Manchester University Press, 2008).

Luigi Burroni
Luigi Burroni works at the Department of Political and Social Sciences of the University of Florence, where he teaches Territorial Politics. He is co-editor of *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*. He has published within the field of economic sociology and on local development. He is currently focusing on how local societies create and distribute collective goods and on how European nation states and regions are promoting labour flexibility.

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Mark Considine is Dean of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Melbourne, where he leads a programme of research on emerging forms of network governance in various OECD countries. This work is represented in recent books including *Enterprising States: The Public Management of Welfare to Work* (Cambridge University Press, 2001) and *Making Public Policy: Institutions, Actors, Strategies* (Polity Press, 2005).

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Aaron Hart worked on the staff of a number of politicians before taking a research position in the Centre for Public Policy. He assisted Prof. Mark Considine's research into partnerships and network governance, with a particular focus on two Australian case studies. Aaron currently works part-time for Mission Australia, where he is Research and Projects Officer, concentrating on homelessness. He spends his other time caring for his children at home in Melbourne, Australia.

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Michael Limerick is a consultant specialising in indigenous governance and policy from Brisbane, Australia. He has degrees in law and political science and is currently undertaking PhD research on indigenous community governance through the School of Politics and Public Policy at Griffith University. Michael worked for the Queensland Government from 1994 to 1997, holding a range of legal, policy and management positions, including the Director of Policy Research in the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy.

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Chris McInerney
Chris McInerney is a doctoral candidate at the Department of Politics and Public Administration at the University of Limerick, with prior experience in a variety of governance contexts: he was actively involved in social partnership processes in Ireland at national and local levels, and recently worked for the United Nations Development Programme in East Timor. His research interests focus on models of pro-poor governance and the role of civil society in new governance arrangements.

Mike Reid
Mike Reid is the Manager of Governance at Local Government New Zealand, the Association of Local Authorities. In his role he advises councils on a broad range of governance issues, including the provision of professional development programmes for elected members. Mike is also a contributory lecturer on local government in the School of Government, Victoria University, Wellington. He has published a number of papers on local government reform and is currently part way through a PhD looking at the issue of strengthening strategic local governance.

Filip De Rynck
Filip De Rynck is Professor of public administration at the Department of Business Administration and Public Administration at the University College Ghent, Belgium. He worked in the public and not-for-profit sector on sub-regional development, community-building, intergovernmental cooperation and urban policy. He was president of the High Council of Home Affairs (1999–2002) and editor in chief of the White Paper '"The Century of the City": City Republics and Grid Cities' (2005). His research interests and publications include urban government, citizen participation and intergovernmental relations.

Chris Skelcher
Chris Skelcher is a Professor at the Institute of Local Government Studies (INLOGOV), University of Birmingham, and Director of Research at its School of Public Policy. He has published widely on the democratic dimension of

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