

Pimping Paradise? The neoliberalization of growth management in Florida with some implications for politics and conservation

Chad Stephen Boda
Lund University Center for Sustainability Studies

Introduction:

In this essay, I discuss the extended and uneven process involving the initial hobbling and eventual complete infiltration of the growth management institution in Florida through neoliberal governance reforms and what implications this has had, and will continue to have, for environmental conservation in the state as a whole under *deepening* neoliberalization (Peck et al., 2009; Peck and Tickell, 2002). While controlling sprawl and promoting environmental conservation were primary motivations for the creation of the 1985 Growth Management Act, which today remains among the most ambitious of its kind, compounding transformations in the logic and mechanisms of the governance of urban growth has led to a situation where the natural environment is relegated to means-to-an-end rather than an end-in-itself, with perceived contribution to economic “competitive advantage” and growth increasingly dominating as the primary criteria for deciding between the often rival policy goals of environmental conservation and economic growth.

The utilization (or, indeed, the *production*) of urban economic crises has provided the impetus for further transformation of growth management legislation, often with environmental conservation regulations, institutions and funding being among the first to feel the cutting edge of the neoliberal knife known as austerity and its suture needle, re-regulation. While such moves are today recognized as part and parcel of neoliberal policy transformations, the cumulative impacts of their parasitism over-time in particular sectors and particular geographical contexts are less well studied and thus remain relatively poorly understood. Building on this understanding, when looking ahead it seems clear that the guiding logic of neoliberal governance, in Florida as elsewhere, is at odds with long-term conservation strategies and should be resisted as a hegemonic model for environmental management. Furthermore, re-claiming the state, rather than relishing in local fixes, could be the biggest challenge for progressive environmental politics in the coming years.

Methodology and methods:

Understanding neoliberalization as an uneven but compounding process, it is necessary to trace the subsequent interaction of neoliberal initiatives with pre-existing, thus inherited regulatory frameworks, development patterns and socio-political coalitions. To grasp the interactions between existing institutions and neoliberal projects as a dialectical process implies the need to first identify “the (partial) destruction of extant institutional arrangements and political compromises through

market oriented reform initiatives”, and, next, to trace “the (tendential) creation of a new infrastructure for market-oriented economic growth, commodification, and capital-centric rule” (Peck et al., 2009). The first can be considered in terms of the “roll back” (moment of destruction) phase of the neoliberal dialectic, and the latter the “roll out” (moment of creation) phase (Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Peck and Tickell, 2002). For the case of Florida discussed below, these involve some exemplary cases such as the peace-meal process of defanging the state’s growth management institution through targeted reform and the empowerment of public-private partnerships in the 1990s. They also involve examples of the most recent case of *deepening* neoliberalization after the 2007 financial crisis, including the election of venture capitalist Rick Scott to the seat of Governor in 2011 and the subsequent substantial re-regulation of the growth management institution by his administration.

Given that the consequences of neoliberalization are unevenly distributed, more detailed examinations of their effects on specific sectors, locations, and resources can offer additional insights into their heterogeneous outcomes. In this article, special attention is given to the implications of this neoliberalization process for environmental conservation. In this regard, the study proceeds under the assumption that under neoliberalism, transformations in socio-political and socio-economic institutions are guided by a generic (even brain-dead, Peck, 2010) commitment to economic growth and efficiency. Given this guiding principle, when things go wrong, such as in a financial crisis, then one should expect bureaucratic downsizing and fiscal cuts to be made to those agencies, regulations or budgetary items which are not seen as directly conducive to furthering investment and growth. This is often articulated in terms of contribution to the state or local government’s “competitive advantage” (Jessop, 2002). Given that the institution of environmental conservation, in Florida as elsewhere in the United States, is largely funded with public money and often viewed by market fundamentalists as expensive and bureaucratically cumbersome, it is likely to be among the first institutions to feel the sheers when the neoliberal state decides to take a little off the top (Comerford et al., 2010; Townsend, 2012). Evidence is provided from the Florida context to support this claim.

The materials used in this essay follow from the above lines of inquiry, namely the theoretical intensions of both growth management policy in Florida and the neoliberal reform practices which interact with and transform it, and the actually existing implementation of these ideas and their empirical (e.g. material) consequences. Academic literature, legislation and policy documents provide insights into underlying logics and principles. Furthermore, NGO and governmental agency reports, newspaper articles, popular literature and empirical data sets including remotely sensed land-cover transformations provide evidence and insight into the actually existing forms of political

economic and environmental transformations in Florida under deepening neoliberalization. Mixed qualitative analytical methods are employed, with the primary purpose of inquiry being to uncover the underlying mechanisms of the empirical experience, rather than remaining satisfied with empiricist description. In this way, the analysis is conducted in the spirit of critical realism as a philosophy of science.

From neoliberalism to neoliberalization:

Neoliberalism as a social-scientific signifier has gained significant traction over the last several decades, most recently experiencing an impressive revival in academic and common parlance post-2007, despite many scholars and activists having flagged the end of neoliberalism as we know it as a result of the “great recession” (Peck, 2013a). With its ideological roots grounded in the infamous Mont Pèlerin Society established in the 1940s, the “flexible credo” of neoliberalism gained initial prominence as a strategic political response to the crises of Keynesian-welfare economic policies in the 1970s, most notoriously manifest in the sweeping administrative programs of Reagan in the U.S., Thatcher in the U.K., and Pinochet in Chile. Rather than emerging as a fully-fledged program from “nowhere”, Mirowski and Plehwe (2009: 4) point out that neoliberalism is today best understood as a “transnational movement” which required some time and considerable effort to attain the “modicum of coherence and power” which it has achieved today, which, they argue, remains “poorly understood, but curiously, draws some of its prodigious strength from that obscurity.” The language is tricky, because just talking about neoliberalism offers the impression that neoliberalism is “out there” somewhere, if we could only catch it. This is, I think, a somewhat dangerous miscalculation, as any search for a coherent and tangible neoliberal-object is bound to come up short. As Peck et al. (2009: 51) have argued, “We are not dealing here with a coherently bounded ‘ism’, system, or ‘end-state’, but rather with an uneven, contradictory, and ongoing process of *neoliberalization*”.

While enough academic research on neoliberal thought and reform processes has been published to fill a small library, disagreements about what neoliberalism actually *is* have led to divergence in the major perspectives regarding how the neoliberal ideology and process are best conceptualized. Some intellectuals have been prone to view neoliberalism as a monolithic system, a *pensée unique* (Mirowski and Plehwe, 2009: 1), capable of bulldozing existing socio-political institutions and replacing them with “neoliberal” ones. Others draw attention to the quotidian and situated implications of neoliberal policy while rejecting claims to an overarching structure or logic to the neoliberal enterprise as a whole. I find myself convinced by the more dialectical perspective offered by Brenner et al. (2010) who emphasize what they call the *variegated* nature of neoliberalism. The term variegation invokes the systematic unevenness of neoliberalization, which shares a broad

pattern of intent while actually becoming manifest in countless varieties of socio-political mashups. While almost inexplicably similar, the mongrel, actually existing forms are a product of the fundamental parasitic nature of the ideology itself which can only subsist in relation to other social forms (Peck, 2013a).

Holding together the loose pieces of the neoliberal puzzle are some underlying commitments and guiding principles that, either implicitly or explicitly, neoliberal reformers adhere to, to varying degrees. Peck et al. (2009: 50), argue that neoliberalism rests on the conviction that “open, competitive and unregulated markets, liberated from state interference and the actions of social collectivities, represent the optimal mechanism for socioeconomic development”. This conviction invokes the competitive spirit of free-market capitalism, where entrepreneurialism and innovation is supposedly rewarded while inefficiency is punished and excesses trimmed. For the public sector, the pursuit of this conviction means that they, too, must dawn the entrepreneur’s new clothes (Merrifield, 2014) if they are to stay afloat in the sea of increasing inter-spatial competition that arises from neoliberal modes of social, economic and environmental governance. This shift in purpose and practice of public administration, as Harvey (1989) remarked a quarter century ago, involves a fundamental, but by no means complete and uniform, shift from a managerial mode of governance to an entrepreneurial mode marked by the externally oriented “speculative production of place” rather than the internally oriented amelioration of social and environmental needs within a given spatial domain. The “crisis of established modes of governance” which neoliberalism creates provides the impetus for further neoliberalization through exactly this kind of shift in the principles guiding urban governance regimes and thus the available space of possible action (Peck et al., 2013). The disarticulated roll back attacks on local institutions and the rolling out of experiments in neoliberal statecraft which characterize early stages of neoliberalization are followed by a deepening of their dominance within state formations, the intensification of regulatory restructuring efforts, and the increasing synergies of compounding neoliberal reforms (Peck et al., 2009).

Entrepreneurial governance:

The “defining characteristic” of entrepreneurial governance argues Du Gay (1996: 155) is the “generalization of an “enterprise form” to all forms of conduct- to the conduct of organizations hitherto seen as being non-economic, to the conduct of government, and to the conduct of individuals themselves”. This “enterprise form” for public administrations, like businesses, is a product of the competitive pressures to which they are exposed under increasing neo-liberalization (Centeno and Cohen, 2012; Peck et al., 2013). And like businesses, state strategies under entrepreneurial governance tend to emphasize competitive advantage, the pursuit of which typically

relies on public-private partnership which focus on investment and economic development with the immediate (but by no means exclusive) goal of attracting “investment” and promoting place branding rather than addressing territorially bound social and environmental needs (Harvey, 1989: 8).

Harvey (1989: 8-11) had initially identified four basic, ideal-typical options for entrepreneurial governance, namely 1) the production of goods and services (e.g. resource base, location), 2) the spatial division of consumption (e.g. consumer attractions and entertainment), 3) command and control functions (e.g. communication and transportation networks), and 4) redistribution of surpluses through central governments (e.g. military, education and health investments). All of these types could today be classified as early expressions of neo-liberalism’s now “customary” forms (Peck, 2014: 397). These options are not mutually exclusive, as Harvey (1989: 10) acknowledged, but hybridist and potentially synergistic, their combinations and outcomes helping exacerbate uneven development and thus the uneven fortunes of metropolitan regions. The pursuit of these options results directly from the attempts of state and local governments to adjust to “heightened levels of economic uncertainty by engaging in short-termist forms of interspatial competition, place-marketing and regulatory undercutting in order to attract investment and jobs” (Peck et al., 2009: 58).

Like neoliberalism more broadly, entrepreneurial governance also implies the commitment to cost effectiveness, efficiency, least regulation, etc. The priorities under entrepreneurial modes of governance are, as previously suggested, logically grounded in the criteria of perceived contribution to competitive advantage. This method of prioritization can of course be (and often is) contested, but the underlying logic remains the same. Crisis tests the priorities assumed in the logic of any governance regime by forcing “hard choices” and tradeoffs between competing social, economic and environmental objectives, for example, between cutting taxes and funding conservation initiatives. Austerity is a common reaction to economic crisis under neoliberal logic (Tabb, 2014; Peck, 2014b), and what gets cut is decidedly the lesser priority for the governing administration. In Florida, to which I turn next, the entrepreneurial approach to urban political-economic and environmental governance under deepening neoliberalization has led to both the dismantling of centralized quality control mechanisms and the disempowerment, through de-funding and downsizing, of environmental conservation programs and agencies. The logic of urban governance under neoliberalism is such that environmental conservation as a social objective, like other public services and support systems (e.g. welfare, education, etc.), is seen as necessarily relegated to a second-class seat, becoming a “priority” when it contributes to economic growth via e.g. tourism, but always remaining on the cutting block in times of neoliberal stock-taking.

The roots of growth management in Florida:

In the face of unprecedented population growth and related economic expansion which accelerated in the mid-20th century (figure 1 a and b), Florida was among the first states in the United States to adopt a comprehensive growth management plan in an attempt to better integrate and pursue the competing goals of economic development and environmental conservation. By far the most distinguished and ambitious result of these early efforts was the 1985 Growth Management Act (GMA), which, building on a series of preceding legislative actions aimed at curbing and controlling population and development expansion, sought to comprehensively integrate and coordinate multi-scalar planning, from the state to the regional to the local levels. The GMA has (or, as will be seen, *had*) a double-edged ambition, to maximize the benefits of development while reducing negative impacts such as environmental degradation from e.g. urban sprawl. This was to be accomplished through centrally coordinated and regulated spatial planning. At the time, the GMA was among the most extensive and ambitious attempt of any U.S. state to control development, and has even been touted by some as the pinnacle for the discipline of planning (Connerly et al., 2007).

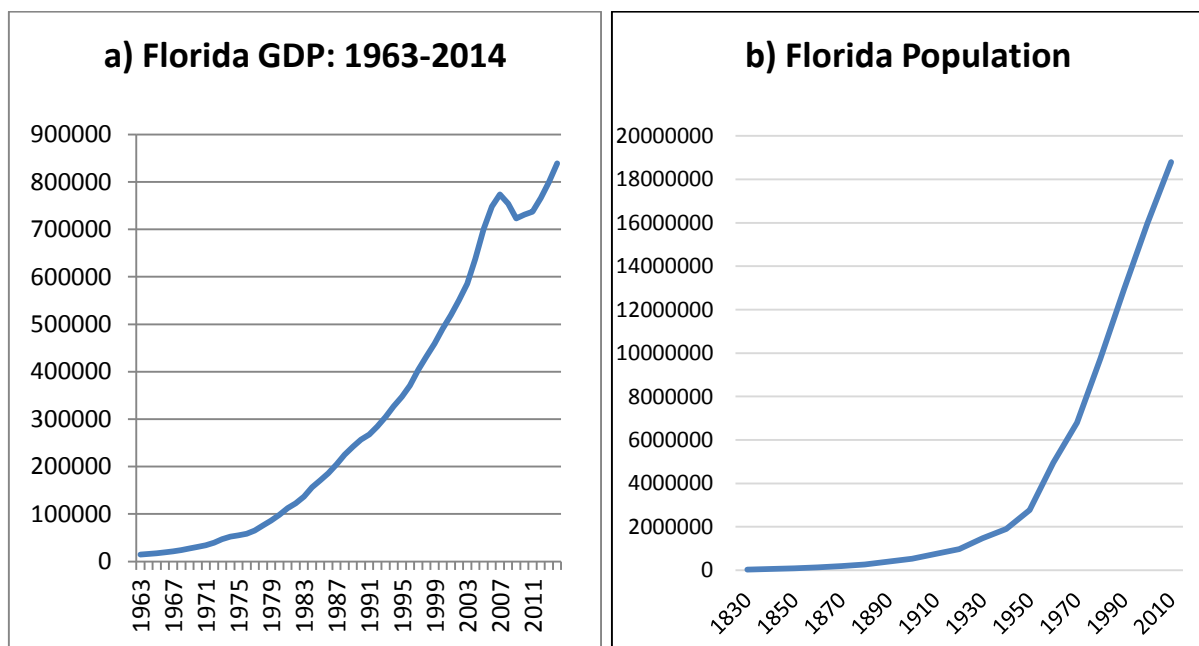


Figure 1 a and b: a) Population and b) total GDP growth in Florida post-1950. Source: a) The U.S. Department of Commerce and b) U.S. Census Bureau.

Both before and after its designation as the 27th state in 1845, federal and state government played a central role in the occupation and development of the Florida peninsula, including active military conflict aimed at the removal of the Seminole Nation, the surveying and “improvement” of swamp lands, the transfer of public lands to private hands for railroad and settlement expansion, and the continued production and maintenance of terrestrial and aquatic transportation networks (Boda,

2016). Among the most striking examples of this facilitation is the way the State of Florida handed the land which would become Orlando over to Mickey Mouse with few qualifications, eventually giving the Disney corporation almost unimaginable freedom to control and transform the environment (Foglesong, 2001).

Along with this history of state facilitated development came extensive environmental degradation, including the wide spread removal of predators (e.g. the Red Wolf *Canis rufus*) and faunal communities (e.g. the Longleaf Pine, *Pinus palustris*), the conversion of huge swaths of ecologically productive interior and coastal wetlands into building sites and farmsteads, and the toxification of the environment in the name of agriculture and pest control. Marjory Stoneman Douglas (2007), for example, famously documented the massive ecological degradation occurring in South Florida prior to WWII resulting from the largely unsuccessful attempts of state and private development interests to “improve” the River of Grass (Everglades) by draining and converting huge portions into farm and ranch land. The resulting ecological destruction, nearly a century later, remains a central point of contention in contemporary environmental politics in Florida (Grunwald, 2006). Even Rachel Carson (2002: 31) frequently noted the destructive practices associated with increasing development in Florida, for example in her mentioning of the indiscriminate use of the insecticide Malathion in “blanket attacks” on insects, including “the spraying of nearly a million acres of Florida communities for the Mediterranean fruit fly”.

It wasn’t until the 1960s, in parallel with the rise of social and environmental movements in the rest of the United States, which Florida began to take some centralized action to control, at least to some degree, the detrimental effects of expanding development. As Nicholas and Steiner (2000: 651) have noted, the development of Florida in the 20th century,

has yielded economic returns that defy measurement. Florida and Floridians have gone from a poor, small group of individuals living on the edge of devastation to major participants in the national and international economies. The developments that begat this transition have largely taken the form of draining interior wetlands and filling coastal wetlands. There is now recognition that a continuation of this historic form of development will not yield further economic gain.

This realization was already growing when Democratic Governor Bob Graham signed the GMA into law in 1985.

The GMA was meant to act as a “steering policy” which would guide future development in the state. While early milestones in its implementation were met without significant problems, for example the

near universal adoption of local comprehensive plans throughout the state, other aspects of the GMA were less successful. Problems associated with urban sprawl, environmental degradation, and inadequate public service provision, all which were core targets of the GMA at its inception, have been at best unevenly realized throughout the state. While some have long touted that state-led growth management was a necessary component of a sustainable long-term development, others have argued that growth management legislation is a “job killer”, advocating instead a “hands off” approach which emphasizes that planning decisions are best made at the local level.

The long-lived controversy over the efficacy and desirability of Florida’s GMA came to headway in 2011 when the recently elected Republican Governor Rick Scott and his administration effectively gutted the enduring, if somewhat weakened, GMA, putting the primary control of development decisions, as they saw it, “back where they belong” at the local level. Rather than being the product of the whimsical will of an eccentric neoliberal politician (which Rick Scott certainly is), the most recent dismantling of Florida’s GMA is perhaps best conceptualized as the latest step in a long series of penetrating attacks on the institution of growth management since its inception. More than a totalizing claim that “neoliberalism strikes again”, the long process of *neoliberalization* of Florida’s GMA offers a more profound insight into the nature of neoliberalism as an ideological program which, while sharing general principles and patterns across space and time, is heterogeneously manifest in particular parasitic relationships and unhappy marriages in concrete spatial and temporal contexts. Because neoliberal institutional adjustment and policy re-regulation are not accomplished *tabula resa*, they instead grasp and infect the existing institutional structures, twisting, molding and dismantling them in ways that are often partial and incomplete, but still part of a broader ideological agenda. These cumulative changes can be traced across-scales and through time. The neoliberalization of Florida’s growth management institution has been underway almost since its inauguration, and the process continues to deepen and intensify in the face of contemporary socio-economic (more specifically, *urban*) and environmental crises which are increasingly the result, as well as the cause, of neoliberal policy reform projects (Heynen and Robbins, 2005).

The political geography of the 1985 Growth Management Act:

While there was early recognition of the need to impose some degree of order on the process of growth in Florida, comprehensive legislative action at the state level did not come until the Growth Management Act (GMA) of 1985. In its design and intension, the growth management policy adopted by Florida resembled the “best practices” of other states, most notably the experiences of the State of Oregon who had initiated its own growth management legislation nearly a decade earlier (Pelham, 2007). What sets Florida’s growth management approach apart from the rest is the strong role it

created for the state government in reviewing and commenting on the comprehensive plans developed by local governments, which requires at least some degree of inter-jurisdictional dialogue and cooperation. Over-sight of local comprehensive plans, which are required by the GMA, had been delegated to the Department of Community Affairs (DCA). Florida's approach to growth management was arguably "the most aggressive and far-reaching" growth management strategy yet seen in the United States which, at least to some, represented "the high water mark for the profession of planning" (Connerly et al., 2007: 1-2).

The implementation of Florida's GMA was meant to be regulated by way of a "steering policy" which consists of three distinct sub-policies: consistency, concurrency and compact development. The 3C's serve both leadership and learning functions in the over-all growth management strategy. As Ben-Zadok (2005: 22) notes, "[a]s a leading policy in a multifaceted initiative that consists of several policies, steering policy is directed by distinct purpose and it oversees critical implementation issues. Its learning experience is adopted by other policies, thus bringing changes in the implementation course of the whole initiative". The consistency policy in particular provides the "structural framework for implementing the GMA" as it mandates "coordination, compliance and continuity" between state, regional and local plans. A tri-level review process grants the state with ultimate authority to intervene in land development decisions, which had almost entirely been left to localities in the past (Ben-Zadok, 2005: 21).

Consistency between local, regional and state strategies for managing growth in Florida was coordinated through the establishment of Comprehensive Plans. Compliance between comprehensive plans at different administrative levels was reviewed and ensured by the DCA. Rather than simply a set of rigid regulations, these comprehensive plans articulate a series of strategic goals and policies regarding a variety of growth management-related categories. They are meant to be "living documents", which are open to learning from experience and subject to periodic review and revision. As such, they are also capable of being adjusted to internal and external changes in social, political, and economic relations.

The GMA's requirements for intergovernmental co-ordination among plans include (Ben-Zadok, 2005: 29):

- consistency between the local plan and local development codes such as zoning;
- consistency between the local plan and its counterparts in nearby jurisdictions;
- consistency between local and regional plans;

- DCA’s review and approval of local and regional plans against the SCP and other state policies;
- periodic evaluation and updating of local plans including review by DCA

This control process delineates “hierarchical compliance” among plans from top (state) to bottom (local) and has shaped the GMA as a state centralized process by granting the DCA with “ultimate authority to approve local plans and impose stringent legal sanctions” (ibid). This hierarchical compliance, however, was also meant to be augmented with a bottom-up approach to monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the GMA by accumulating knowledge and experience from local governments at the regional and state levels through periodic review processes. This was meant to allow for coordination within and between levels while still providing possibilities for adjustments in practice as experience accumulates and state policy evolves (Powell, 2000).

The Florida State Comprehensive Plan (SCP) is held under Florida Statutes, Title XIII- PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT, Chapter 187 (.101 and .201) and was adopted in 1985 along with the GMA. The entire plan is comprised of 25 sections, each with a set of approved goal(s) and policies which advocate either positive (e.g. ensuring, increasing, promoting, etc.) or negative (e.g. eliminating, diminishing, preventing, etc.) actions. The SCP is intended to “provide long-range policy guidance” and to be a “direction-setting document”, the contents of which are expected to be “reasonably applied where they are economically and environmentally feasible, not contrary to the public interest, and consistent with the protection of private property rights” (Chapter 187.101 (1-3), Florida Statutes).

Random examples of the multifarious policies captured under the SCP which are directly relevant to economic development and conservation include e.g.

187.201 Section 21 on Economy:

- (21) (b) 1 *Attract new job-producing industries, corporate headquarters, distribution and service centers, regional offices, and research and development facilities;*
- (21) (b) 4 *Strengthen Florida’s position in the world economy through attracting foreign investment and promoting international banking and trade;*

187.201 Section 23 on Tourism:

- 23 (b) 1 *Promote statewide tourism and support promotional efforts in those parts of the state that desire to attract visitors;*

187.201 Section 9 on Natural Systems and Recreational Lands

- (9) (b) 1 *Conserve forests, wetlands, fish, marine life, and wildlife to maintain their environmental, economic, aesthetic, and recreational values; and*
- (9) (b) 3 *Prohibit the destruction of endangered species and protect their habitats.*

These are the guiding policy goals- but their interpretation and implementation is informed by the logic of the prevailing governance regime. While the potential of the GMA and coordinated comprehensive planning was substantial, and in certain ways successful (e.g. the wide-spread adoption of local comprehensive planning), early contestation and partial implementation provided the seeds of future failure, from which subsequent neoliberalization could take hold.

Disarticulated neoliberalism- Florida style: regional reform and the rise of PPPs

Rolling back: funding failures and the culling of cumbersome councils

Even if the GMA signed into law by then Governor Bob Graham had the best of intentions, right from the start it was met with resistance and structural barriers to comprehensive and effective implementation. For example, the 1985 GMA failed to adequately provide mechanisms for funding the 3C's, leaving local governments largely with the responsibility to pursue funding by any means available. At the same time, the pressure to comply with state-level requirements intensified. However, the ability of local governments to extract taxes and other revenues has long been limited in Florida, as "local jurisdictions find themselves in the same basic situation as the state, with constitutional and statutory limitations on raising revenues" (Nicholas et al., 2007: 55).

This condition has led to a situation where local governments have had to "scramble" for funding to meet compliance and concurrency requirements, which put considerable constraints on the possibilities open to planners at the local level (Ben-Zadok, 2005). The state's failure to face up to the funding problem, Pelham (2007: 14) argues, has "undermined support for the growth management process among the development community and local government officials and impeded implementation of major growth management policies such as concurrency and compact urban form".

In addition to the structural problems associated with funding implementation of the GMA's 3C's, the growth management institution met other serious obstacles in the form of the early 1990's economic recession and the devastation wrought by Hurricane Andrew in 1992. In light of these combined financial and natural crises, the third Environmental Land Management Study Committee (ELMS III) commissioned in 1991 by then Governor Lawton Chiles to review the progress of implementation of the 1985 GMA, issued a report containing recommendations aimed at reforming the GMA. These

recommendations were virtually wholly adopted by the 1993 Florida Legislature, among the most significant being the removal of the powers of the regional development councils, the reduction of the scope and significance of regional plans, and the renovation of the assessment process known as Developments of Regional Impact (Pelham, 2007: 11-13).

These adjustments to the structure of the GMA, and the removal of a regional-level component of coordination and compliance in particular, were based on arguments that these councils were becoming too “complicated”, were constraining for local governments, unfriendly to development interests, and that they unnecessarily muddied up a process which was desperately in need of streamlining. The motivation in the end was one of promoting “flexibility” in local planning to accommodate the differing needs and circumstances of various communities; as one ELMS III member remarked, “One size fits all is not true for pantyhose, and it’s not true for planning” (Powell, 2000: 528-529). The whole point of the GMA from the beginning was, however, not to have a completely top-down state-controlled process of development, but a multi-directional flow from state to local levels (e.g. implementation and compliance) and then back again from local to state levels (e.g. evaluation and monitoring effectiveness), which was meant to allow for coordination within and between levels while still providing possibilities for adjustments in practice as experience accumulates and state policy evolves (Song, 2007; Powell, 2000). The regional councils were meant to play a significant role in this multi-directional process, and their removal as active agents in growth management practice in 1993 helps explain why this “bottom-up” dimension of Florida’s planning and growth management system was never been fully realized.

The result of this “streamlining” (or rolling back) of the regional dimension of the Florida growth management institution was the further weakening of an already contested and underfunded planning program. The post-1993 state and regional planning processes were substantially different than those envisioned in the original 1985 legislation, with the increasingly “hands-off” state allowing its own SCP to become out dated while the weakened regional planning component could not effectively deal with multi-jurisdictional issues (Stroud, 2012). In addition, Jeb Bush, who became Governor of Florida in 1999, also made attempts to further restrict state control over local planning practices (Ben-Zadok, 2005) which, at the time, critics recognized would not help to curb growing sprawl or “strip-mall” development (The Palm Beach Post, 1999). As a result of these efforts, the state and regional planning overlay has had little effect on the local planning process (Pelham, 2007) which has had significant implications for fulfilling the SCP policy goals associated with e.g. environmental conservation, as discussed further below. Furthermore, this ineffectiveness, largely the result of concerted efforts to hobble the established mechanisms of growth management and planning, helped produce the very crisis conditions which would later provide the impetus for further

transformation of the GMA and a deepening of neoliberal policies after the “great recession” of 2007-2009. This, I would argue, is a clear example of what Jamie Peck¹ calls neoliberalism’s contradictory capacity to “fail forward”, or to lean into the crises of its own making and use them as means to further constrain solution options and to further infiltrate and transform institutional structures in its own image.

However, while the 1993 Florida Legislature was busy gutting the regional-scale planning component of Florida’s growth management institutions, plans were already in the pipeline to roll out a new and innovative approach to encouraging economic growth in the state, namely, the production of economy-oriented public-private partnerships for which Florida helped set the standard and pave the way for the rest of the United States to follow suit.

Rolling out public-private partnerships: Enterprise Florida and VISIT FLORIDA

Today, the State of Florida relies on largely publically funded public-private partnerships (PPP) to assist in specifying the state’s competitive advantages and pursuing them through lobbying and marketing activities. This is a characteristic strategy in entrepreneurial governance (Pugalis and Bentley, 2014: 129). Back in the mid-1990s, Florida was among the first states in the nation to place the principle responsibility for economic development in the hands of a PPP called Enterprise Florida (EFI). EFI is a PPP between Florida’s businesses and government leaders, and remains the principle economic development organization for Florida². EFI promotes numerous industries, including aviation and aerospace, life sciences, manufacturing, defense and homeland security, information technology, financial and professional services, logistics and distribution, cleantech and headquarters. Tourism, the largest single industry in the state, has its own PPP which was established by the Florida Legislature in 1996, The Florida Commission on Tourism, which operates as VISIT FLORIDA³. Being the official tourism marketing corporation for the state of Florida, VISIT FLORIDA is connected with over 11,000 tourism industry businesses, including mega-corporations like Disney, for whom it facilitates advertising and communications to domestic and international markets. The marketing phrases used below as exemplary of the logic of these PPPs are largely taken from their websites and annual reports.

¹ I heard Jamie Peck use this terminology during a lecture on “neoliberalizing space” as part of a PhD course on Political Economy in Sustainability Research hosted by the Lund University Center for Sustainability Studies in November and December of 2015.

² Controversy over funding EFI is happening at the time of writing: e.g. <http://www.tampabay.com/news/politics/stateroundup/as-enterprise-florida-chief-resigns-gov-rick-scott-orders-6-million/2271073>

³ <https://www.visitflorida.org>

One approach used by EFI to construct Florida's competitive advantages is its emphasis on a "business- friendly climate" which comes fully stocked with a "business-friendly legislature, favorable tax climate, and large market" (Enterprise Florida, 2014). An indicator of the relative depth of this low tax and low regulatory approach is Florida being ranked by The Tax Foundation (a neoliberal think-tank) as 5th among U.S. states on their 2016 business tax climate index (see Tax Foundation, n.d.). Florida's 65 Enterprise Zones, which provide tax incentives to businesses in targeted sectoral and geographical areas (Enterprise Florida, 2016), offer a good example of one tool with which Florida's "business-friendly" climate is produced in practice.

EFI language also emphasizes competitive advantages regarding the state's "multi-modal infrastructure" and its "strategic, global location", including its position within the 2nd largest Foreign Trade Zone network in the country (Enterprise Florida, 2015). Florida currently has something like 19 commercial airports, 15 deepwater seaports, and extensive highway and freight rail networks; however, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers, the state's over-all infrastructure report card sits at C- (below mediocre) and continues to decline due to persistent lack of financial support resulting from insufficient tax revenues, among other causes (see American Society of Civil Engineers, 2016). Florida's geographic location, its "friendly" regulatory environment and its extensive public infrastructure are presented as advantageous to businesses hoping to maintain a competitive edge in domestic or international markets.

VISIT FLORIDA, like EFI, emphasizes the competitive advantages of the state in a way that both is consistent with and actively serves the policy goals of the SCP. VISIT FLORIDA emphasizes Florida's well established brand as a national and international travel destination, touting its "strong network of industry partners" which offers opportunities for collaboration which "have the potential to trump competitive brands in specific global markets" (VISITFLORIDA, 2015b: 109). Florida physical geography is also said to lend a "competitive advantage in the sports market, with year-round mild climate and diverse opportunities in the small, medium and large destinations in Florida" (VISITFLORIDA, 2015b: 119). In addition to the agreeable climate, the abundance of sandy beaches and other natural features have long been a draw for tourists from around the country, and more recently, around the world. VISIT FLORIDA also emphasizes branding, networking and information services as strategic and advantageous to businesses hoping to maintain a competitive edge in "ever more competitive" domestic and international markets in tourism.

While the use of this sort of corporate-marketized language by economic-oriented PPPs is not surprising, it is revealing as a signifier of the underlying neoliberal logics guiding these important players in the governance of Florida's natural and built environment. Whether resulting from natural

endowments like climate and geography, or from public investment like transportation infrastructure and education facilities, these public “assets” are presented as available for the taking, pimped out to the highest bidder or “job creator”⁴. While these PPPs are largely tax-payer funded, they are overseen by some of the largest and most politically powerful companies, law firms, utilities and elected officials. Enterprise Florida, for example, is chaired by the state governor (himself a multi-millionaire), but a private entity can pay up to \$50,000 for a seat on the board (Dixon, 2016). All of the above “promotional” activities, the external gaze of place-branding, the construction of competitively advantageous business tax infrastructure, the capturing of federal spending in the form of military and space technologies, and even the reliance on PPPs themselves, are all today well known, and some would even say *customary* (Peck, 2014a) governance strategies under the influence of reformist neoliberalization. Reviewing these activities and discourses offers a view into the basic priorities of Florida’s political and economic elite.

Deepening neoliberalism: The “great recession” and the death of growth management

Florida’s housing bubble and the “double-failure” of the GMA

The cumulative effects of chronic under funding, piecemeal enforcement, and the removal of regional checks-and-balances produced a growth management institution with severely reduced capacity to control the extensive growth and development in the state throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. At the same time, millions of tax-payer dollars were spent on PPP campaigns which encouraged growth in tourism and the production of business-friendly regulatory regimes, including low tax rates and low environmental regulations. One significant result was the well-known housing boom in Florida, which really took off around the year 2000 as housing prices soared well above the national average and the speculative buying and selling of properties skyrocketed (Montes Rojas et al., 2007). Relatively relaxed development laws and significantly reduced state oversight provided the regulatory context within which the housing bubble could grow. Riding the real-estate and construction wave that accompanied the early 2000s housing boom in Florida pushed state-wide unemployment well below the national average, which was historically quite unusual for Florida. However, the benefits of the housing boom would soon come crashing down as the bubble burst and the chickens came home to roost around 2007 (figure 2). Those states, such as Florida, which experienced the highest rates of unemployment also had the highest proportions of “sub-prime” housing foreclosures after the collapse, leaving people without homes or jobs (Martin, 2011).

⁴ For a more general critique of the corporate reliance on commons, see Sayer, 2014: 139-150.

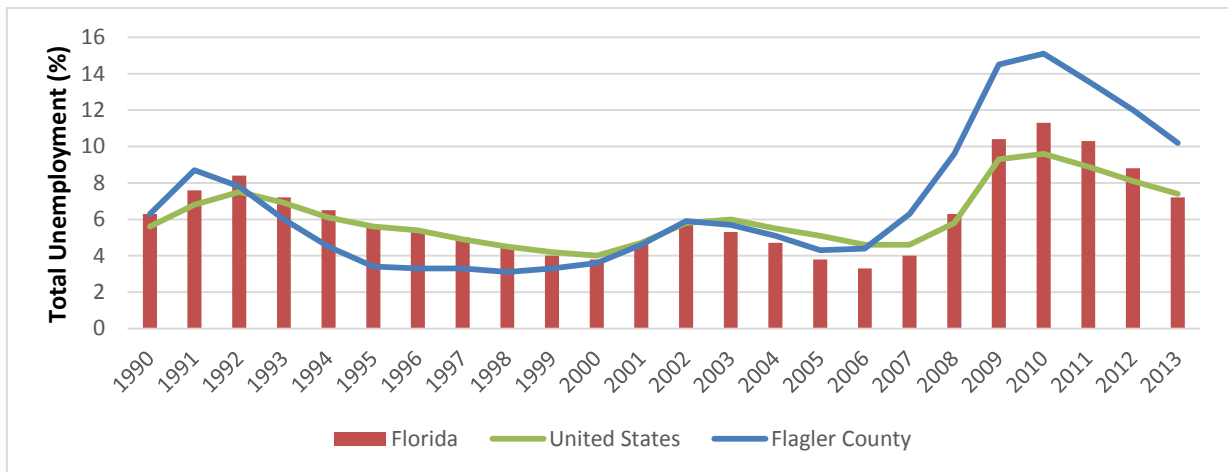


Figure 2: Unemployment at the federal, state and county level. Source: United States and Flagler County- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; Florida- Florida Department of Economic Opportunity

The growth of Florida’s housing bubble and its subsequent deflation was the hell-spawn of a combination of poor spatial and financial regulation at multiple scales. The first relates to a lack of coordination between and control over housing construction projects in places like Florida (many of which were built purely on speculation and left standing as ghost towns of brand new homes after the housing collapse, see for example Rab, 2009) while the latter relates to access to loans and other financial instruments of home owners and prospective buyers. As Martin (2011) has pointed out, the housing bubble and related financial crisis is a prime example of the “glocalized” nature of contemporary neoliberal political economy, where local and state economic development decisions can have impacts that span far beyond administrative boundaries to national and even international economies, and vice versa. The multi-scalar causes of Florida’s housing bubble are significant; however, the role of the state in aggressively attracting investment and its “hands-off” approach to controlling growth and development provided the context within which the seeds of financial crisis could germinate and grow.

Of course, the continued push from business and state elites to reduce or constrain the role of state oversight in spatial planning in Florida was not part of the original GMA plan. Instead, these concerted efforts marked early, somewhat disarticulated attempts to instill (knowingly or not) neoliberal policy logics at the state level in the interest of economic growth. Such attacks on the basic principles of growth management were and continue to be echoed today by neoliberal-conservative organization and intellectuals (e.g. O’Toole, 2009 and Florida, 2016). In this way, the incremental infiltration of the growth management institution by neoliberal policy reforms throughout the 1990s produced the context within which excessive speculation and housing construction would take hold, exacerbating the financial crisis which itself provided the further impetus for restructuring the GMA in Florida. This “failing forward” characteristic of neoliberalization allows for neoliberal reform

programs to be both the architects and the benefactors of political and economic crises, using such opportunities to further deepen policy and regulatory transformations which build on earlier, if disarticulated, advances.

While Governor Charlie Crist struggled to curb unemployment and restore confidence in Florida's economy during his tenure between 2007 and 2011, it was the 2010 gubernatorial election between Democrat Alex Sink and Republican venture capitalist Rick Scott which brought growth management back into focus as a target for further neoliberal reform. Scott, beyond spending some \$78M of his own wealth on the campaign, beat out Sink with a campaign message centered on job creation and de-regulation, proclaiming victoriously during his acceptance speech that "Florida is open for business" (The Palm Beach Post, 2010). Upon entering office in January, 2011, Scott took particular aim at the GMA and sought, with the extensive support from development lobbyists (Deslatte, 2011a), to completely reconstruct the 30 year growth management institution with the ultimate goal to put planning "back where it belongs" at the local level. This restructuring simultaneously served as an opportunity to slash public spending and downsize public agencies, for example the DCA. Stroud (2012) has termed this attack on growth management a "counter revolution", a reference to its oppositional stance to the "quiet revolution" of large-scale land use planning popularized in the 1970s, of which Florida was a front-runner (Bosselman and Callies, 1971).

An obituary for Florida's growth management: diving deeper into a localized future

The Community Planning Act (§163.3161(1), F.S.), as the revised growth management legislation is known, was signed into law in 2011 by Governor Rick Scott which, for many, sounded the death rattle of Florida's 30 year experiment with comprehensive growth management (Tampa Bay Times, 2011; Klas, 2011; Deslatte, 2011a). An excerpt from Scott's 2011 gubernatorial inaugural address anticipates the breadth and depth of these changes, and offers a window into the neoliberal priorities and anti-regulatory position from which he began his tenure as governor:

Faced with a deep recession, some say the answer is to expand the role of Government. That's the approach the Administration chose to take in Washington. It's the WRONG approach. It requires magical thinking to expect Government to create prosperity. Government has no resources of its own. Government can only give TO us what it has previously taken FROM us—minus a huge cut for the government middleman. A lean and limited Government has a role to play in providing a safety net. But prosperity comes from the private sector... Florida has to offer the best chance for financial success. Not a guarantee -just the best chance. Three forces markedly reduce that chance for success—taxation... regulation... and litigation. Together those three form "The Axis of

Unemployment”. Left unchecked they choke off productive activity... Unless they are pruned, regulations grow like weeds. While there are SOME regulations that are essential for health and safety, and others that are essential to the protection of our priceless environment, it’s PAST TIME to demand that every regulation be re-evaluated. We will conduct a top to bottom review of all state regulations and weed out unnecessary ones that hinder job creation (Scott, 2011; emphasis in original).

The GMA was among the first bushes to be trimmed, or, perhaps more accurately, to be uprooted. The newly adopted Community Planning Act policies substantially transformed the basic functions and purpose of Florida’s growth management institution from “controlling future development” to “managing future development consistent with the proper role of local government” (§163.3161(2), F.S.) (Florida Land Development Regulations, 2011). The proposed re-regulation of the GMA appeared in tandem with cries from business-oriented organizations such as the Florida Chamber of Commerce that Florida’s “economic freedom was eroding” (Florida Chamber of Commerce, 2011-2016). Among the many changes to the legislation, several stand out as particularly characteristic of deepening neoliberalization. All of these have significant consequences for the future of growth management in Florida and for the possibility of fulfilling environmental conservation goals in particular.

One major adjustment to the GMA was the passing of Fla. Senate Bill 2156 (2011) which effectively dissolved the DCA, which had historically been responsible for oversight of the GMA since 1985, and transferred its growth management functions to the newfangled Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) (Shelley and Brodeen, 2011). The elimination of the DCA as a separate state entity and its incorporation into the DEO was accompanied by a significant reduction in staff and funding available for oversight of growth management activities, which is indicative of the state’s underlying goal of reducing its role to “ad hoc protection of yet undefined ‘important state and regional resources and facilities’, with minimal administrative resources devoted to the task” (Stroud, 2012: 414-415).

In addition to transforming the agency responsible for oversight, substantial changes were made to the process for making comprehensive plan amendments. The previously set limits on the frequency and geography of local comprehensive plan amendments have been removed and the approval process streamlined, making it much easier for local governments to amend local comprehensive plans without regulatory control by regional or state growth management agencies. In fact, as Shelley and Brodeen (2011) point out, “the local government is no longer required to send a copy of

the amendment to the state land planning agency, nor can the state land planning agency intervene in any challenge to a small scale plan amendment”.

Furthermore, the ability of third parties to challenge comprehensive plan amendments, development projects or permits has been fundamentally re-regulated, shifting the burden of proof from the initiators of the change or project to the third party challengers. The adoption of House Bill 993 by Rick Scott, which was strongly supported by the Florida Chamber of Commerce, ensures that “any non-applicant third party bringing claim against a permit has the burden of ultimate persuasion and has the burden to prove the case in opposition to the permit through presentation of competent and substantial evidence” (Florida Chamber of Commerce, 2011). Challenging future development projects will be substantially more difficult and costly for concerned citizens and activists hoping to diminish harm to their local communities and environment. Adding insult to injury, local "Hometown Democracy" efforts to put comprehensive plan amendments to public votes have been banned (Deslatte, 2011b).

Finally, the state’s long-held (and long under-funded) mandate for local governments to adopt management policies regarding concurrency (one of the original 3C’s) for transportation, schools and parks and recreational facilities has largely been eliminated, with many of them being made optional. This means that the burden of meeting concurrency requirements, which historically had been placed via e.g. impact fees on developers whose projects would have adverse impacts on public infrastructure and facilities, has in many instances been shifted to local governments who are now responsible for controlling the impact of growth on public services and infrastructure. Given that these requirements were previously state-mandated, but are now locally optional, their potential removal by local governments in the interest of attracting investment is certainly possible, and seems probable. While “it remains to be seen” what impact removal of the state mandate will have, it is telling that any rescinding of optional concurrency provisions, which must be pursued via comprehensive plan amendment, is not even subject to state review (Shelley and Brodeen, 2011).

What these changes in Florida’s growth management institution mean largely depends on the sector of interest. For development interests and financial capital, it is likely a big win. For other social and environmental programs which heavily rely on state investment and maintenance, the future seems less bright. For example, while Florida has historically relied on substantial state support for land acquisition and management in the interest of conservation, under the newly reformed growth management institution, this is largely expected to take the form of “Rural Land Stewardship” which, perversely, relies on the opening up of rural areas for development as means to conserve them. Basically, land is expected to be conserved through a sort of off-setting approach to urban

development in rural areas, where developers would be required to offer “conservation easements” proportional to their projects. Glenn Storch, a longtime Daytona Beach-based environmental lawyer for the large land owning corporation Miami Corp., seems optimistic about the approach, stating that “[Rural Land Stewardship] is seen now as a model for how we can preserve wildlife corridors... From an environmental standpoint, this is the way we're going to be able to proceed in the future. We have no money to buy conservation land anymore” (Deslatte, 2011b). This paints a picture of a conservation future “beyond” the state, with corporate capital providing the means to conservation ends. A less enthusiastic response comes from Eric Draper of Audubon of Florida, who solemnly warns, “People are going to wake up in a couple of years and see the results of this growth management and say, ‘What can we do to keep our countryside from being chewed up by development’... And the answer will be nothing” (Klas, 2011).

Environmental degradation, growth management, and prospects for the future

“The history of Florida”, wrote Charles Richards Dodge in 1894, “is a story of sanguinary conquest” (Oppel and Meisel, 1987). Looking back into Florida’s long and complicated past can be a depressing undertaking, as C. R. Dodge suggests. But for many throughout history, Florida has also represented the possibility of a better future. For Juan Ponce de Leon in 1513, (La) Florida was a land of fortune and, at least in folklore, the potential site of the fabled fountain of youth (Gannon, 1996). For the Seminole Nation in the late 18th century, Florida was a refuge from colonial settler violence and offered the possibility of recovering some semblance of an ancestral homeland (Walton, 1977). For 20th century American retirees, Florida offered the picture-perfect life-of-leisure after a long life of hard work (Mormino, 2005). Today, nearly 100 million people visit the state annually as tourists or seasonal residents (VISITFLORIDA, 2015a). It is, however, becoming almost impossible to ignore the fact that the incredible transformation taking place in the Florida peninsula continues to degrade the state’s environment to an almost unfathomable degree, leading some critics to speculate whether Florida is “just one new development away from environmental ruin” (Cox, 2009).

Environmental degradation is nothing new in Florida, as mentioned earlier, but the scale and intensity of change has never been greater. More people and a bigger economy mean more productive activity, more houses, more roads, and more use of water, minerals, and land from the natural environment. Curbing such wide-spread environmental change and preserving essential habitat that maximizes biodiversity and ecosystem function while maintaining adequate standards of living in human settlements has traditionally been the job of some centralized (ideally accountable) authority. This is for good reason, because environmental policy decisions and their enforcement stretch across multiple spatial domains and thus require higher-level regulatory entities and

aggregate resource pools to be effective (Hägerstrand, 2001). Absent such mechanisms (or the minds to use them), piecemeal conservation prevails which is generally inadequate to curb ecological degradation resulting from, among other things, habitat fragmentation and other cumulative human impacts (Primack, 2006).

The GMA in 1985 can be seen as the pinnacle of the rising wave of regulatory reform in the 1960s and 1970s at federal and state levels, which included the Clean Air and Clean Water acts, the Endangered Species Act, and the creation of agencies like the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. By putting in place a nested system of regulatory policy infrastructure which could help guide and coordinate future development, the GMA had the rare potential to control environmental change effectively at multiple levels of organization. This possibility, however, has at best been unevenly realized, as changes to the growth management institution have typically clashed with parallel efforts to conserve land (e.g. through the Florida Forever Fund) because of a lack of legal or policy mechanisms for directing development to suitable places (Higgins and Paradise, 2007).

The defanging of regional development councils, underfunding and the subsequent relaxation of state enforcement, and the increased intensity of marketing efforts all contributed to a disconnect between environmental conservation efforts and actual GMA policy implementation (or lack thereof). This includes the substantial gap between local development activities and the upholding of growth management policy goals such as compact development and environmental preservation. For example, when reviewing the effectiveness of local environmental planning in Florida between 1993 and 2002, Brody and Highfield (2005) found substantial deviation between the number and location of granted wetland conversion permits and the formally intended land-uses as represented in local comprehensive plans, reflecting a pervasive lack of local, regional and state coordination and enforcement. They also found that the number and area of these permits increased in volume and density overtime, and resulted from a geographically differentiated mixture of “small, isolated patches” and “rapidly expanding” developments. The “piecemeal” conversion of wetlands, which on aggregate can have unintended though substantial and detrimental effects on over-all wetland cover, is a classic case of what Odum (1982) called the tyranny of small decisions. The other side of the coin, of course, is the brutality of large decisions, including state-funded water management projects and post-modern mega developments like those increasingly found in wetland-rich southern Florida (Cox, 2009). The result has been a substantial loss of wetlands statewide, despite their preservation being an explicit part of several policies in the SCP; the rest of the United States, however, has continued to head in the other direction (figure 3). At the same time, Florida’s rivers are increasingly viewed as

among the most endangered in the country, with the Apalachicola River topping the most recent list (American Rivers, 2016, also see Spear, 2016).

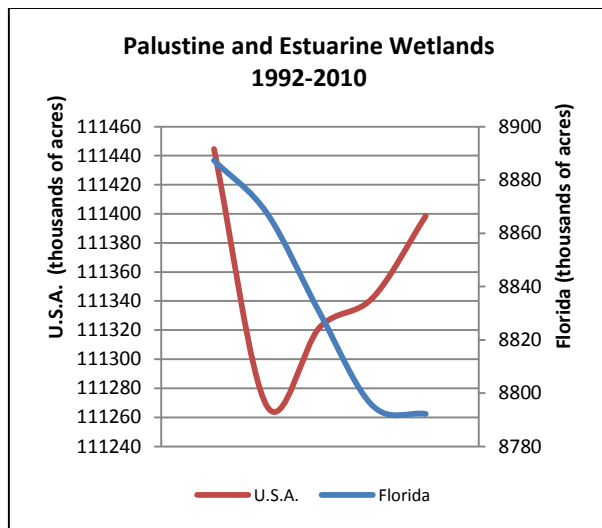


Figure 3: Change of wetland coverage in Florida and the United States. Source: United States Department of Agriculture

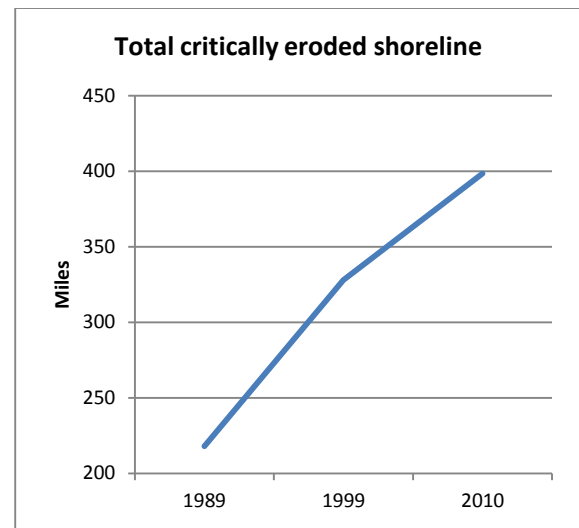


Figure 4: Growth in Florida’s critically eroded beaches, 1989-2010. Source: Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Another alarming environmental problem which requires large scale planning and coordination to effectively address is coastal erosion (Swaney et al., 2012). However, in the absence of effective policies for controlling and directing coastal development, the urbanization of Florida’s coastlines, following the more or less global trend, has continued relatively unabated (Pilkey and Cooper, 2014). The fortification of infrastructure against coastal hazards, which is generally a question of monetary costs versus benefits, can be undertaken by state or private actors, in some cases against the will of local citizens, given current nationwide permits issued by the Army Corps of Engineers and the political geography of state transportation networks (Boda, 2015). The result has been an increase in density of coastal infrastructure in the state, which in turn has increased the prevalence of conflict between coastal processes and manmade structures. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (2015) deems any segment of the shoreline where erosion and recession of the beach or dune system has occurred to the point that “upland development, recreational interests, wildlife habitat, or important cultural resources are threatened or lost” as “critically eroded”. Since the adoption of the GMA and the SCP, the latter which contains a specific policy section on coastal resources, critical erosion has continued to increase (figure 4), causing significant damage to a variety of coastal and marine ecosystems.

Given that sea-level rise is expected to accelerate, with widespread implications for Florida’s densely populated coastlines (Florida Oceans and Coastal Council, 2010; Cox and Cox, 2015), it does not bode well for the future of Florida’s low lying beaches and waterways that most lands that are vulnerable

to sea-level rise are actually slotted for development in local plans along the Atlantic coast, the majority of which, given current Army Corps of Engineers National Permits, are likely to be protected against the rising seas to the detriment of coastal habitats (Titus et al., 2009). Recent accusations of Rick Scott's administration "banning" climate change from use in official state language (Korten, 2015) add further reason to worry about Florida's future in a climate changed world. The localization of environmental management decisions under neoliberalized growth management is likely to exacerbate these problems and make the necessary larger-scale solutions even more challenging to formulate and implement.

The "successes" in Florida's conservation history have largely come from initiatives such as the Florida Forever Program for land acquisition (Florida Department of Environmental Protection, 2016) and fund raising initiatives like the "specialty license plates" program for funding endangered species recovery, including programs specific to the Florida Panther, the West Indian Manatee, and the state's numerous species of sea turtle. These various initiatives are largely coordinated by state agencies like the Department of Environmental Protection and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. The hard fought successes in managing these endangered species, some on the brink of extinction, have come at the cost of millions of tax payer dollars and countless hours of volunteer work by concerned citizens. Conservation efforts for the West Indian Manatee alone have received over \$750 Million in total federal and state funds as of 2012 (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2012). However, under the increasing pressure of neoliberal reform policies, the thinning down of state contributions poses a serious threat to the future of Florida's conservation agenda. Hard-fought but expensive progress like that made for the Manatee is now being used by neoliberal politicians and development and tourism interests as an excuse to remove the very programs and protections which facilitated its recovery in the first place (Staletovich, 2016a). In addition, since the financial crisis began around 2007, downsizing and cuts have been made to a variety of other significant conservation agencies and programs. The Department of Environmental Protection, for example, has lost nearly half of its annual budget allocation since 2007 (figure 5). At the same time, the Florida Forever Program, which had received around \$300 Million dollars in public support annually since 1990, has all but lost its funding all together (figure 6).

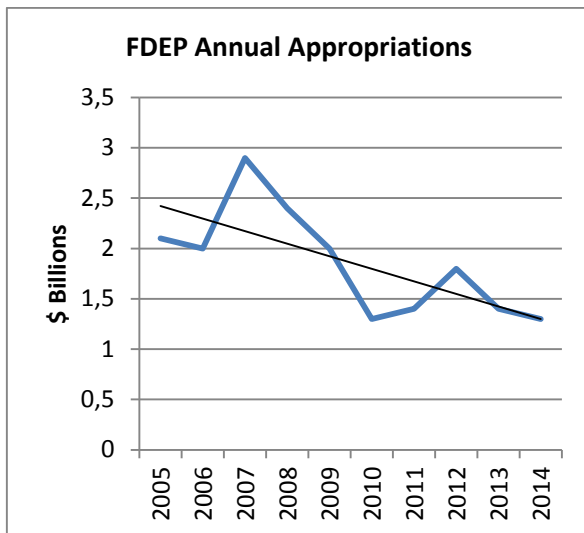


Figure 5: Cuts to Florida environmental agency funding. Source: Sherman (2014)

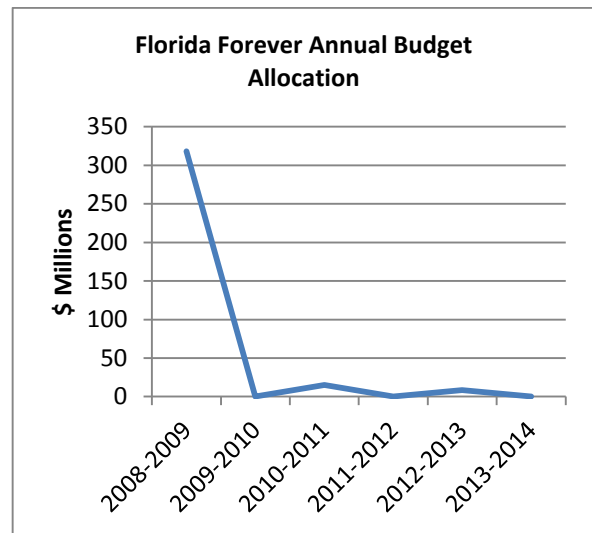


Figure 6: Budget cuts to Florida's premier land acquisition program. Source Dunkelberger (2014)

In a recent attempt to reanimate Florida's conservation program aimed at land acquisition and management, Florida citizens passed the Florida Water and Land Conservation Initiative, Amendment 1, which was expected to raise some \$10 Billion over the next two decades for purchasing and managing environmentally sensitive lands. The ballot initiative read "Water and Land Conservation - Dedicates funds to acquire and restore Florida conservation and recreation lands", and it passed by popular vote with a 3-1 margin in favor (Ballotpedia, n.d.). While this seemed like a clear victory for the conservation movement and its fight against budget cuts and regulatory downsizing, the neoliberal reality appears to be substantially different than what voters bargained for. As the Miami Herald recently reported (Staletovich, 2016b), Florida lawmakers, headed by Governor Rick Scott, instead intend to divert large portions of the raised funds to pay for base operations of existing agencies and programs, including salaries, vehicle maintenance, and risk management insurance. This has (rightfully, I believe) led to accusations that the legislator has turned Amendment 1 "on its head" by using money intended for conservation and land acquisition to pay other costs historically covered by general taxes, which then opens up opportunities for offering business further tax breaks (ibid).

While conservation agency and program funding is slashed or diverted, Governor Rick Scott has recommended record levels of public funding for the state's PPPs, \$100 Million to Visit Florida (Florida Governor's Office, 2015) and \$250 Million to Enterprise Florida, the latter which was flat out rejected by the state legislature, not in the interest of spending the money, say, on social programs, but under the auspice of not "distorting the free market" and in anticipation of falling future tax revenues (Bousquet, 2016). This prioritization of economic over conservation goals is indicative of the guiding neoliberal logic that has continued to spread through the state's institutions, as well as

down to local administrations. A recent example from Flagler County in north eastern Florida, which was among the fastest growing counties in the United States throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, and among the hardest hit in the financial recession (see figure 2), demonstrates the presence of this logic at the local level. County-level politicians, such as the County Administrator and Vice President of Tourism, have increasingly used the financial crisis as a motivation for opening up community assets to for-profit events, such as an historic ecological preservation known as Princess Place Preserve, considered the “crown jewel” of the county by many, which was proposed to host a Spartan extreme sports race in an attempt to attract revenue through sales and bed room taxes (FlaglerLive, 2015a). Some local residents argued the entrepreneurial move amounted to “pimping Princess Place”, even calling the pending event a “rape in the making” (Tristam, 2015). Strong and persistent resistance to the Spartan extreme sports event eventually led to its cancelation and relocation (FlaglerLive, 2015b), which, I believe, offers a sobering lesson waiting to be learned by conservation advocates regarding the reality of the political challenge facing Florida’s broader conservation movement in the future.

Conclusion: A wakeup call for environmental politics?

Such “pimping” of environmental assets, whether by local government or by state-sanctioned PPPs, is actually a rational outcome of the shift towards entrepreneurial urban and environmental governance given the fundamental, though generic guiding principles of neoliberal policy reform initiatives. Put lightly, this shift, which at least to me seems to clearly have taken place (even if incompletely) means that Florida’s natural environment and prospects for conservation are at best precarious- even in good times, economic development can cause significant environmental problems if ineffectively managed, but when crisis hits, the environment, which has been demoted to secondary importance as an “input” to marketing and growth strategies, is easily among the first to be re-regulated and sequestered in the name of efficiency and bureaucratic downsizing. The piecemeal but cumulative and long-term transformation of Florida’s growth management institution is indicative of what Lefebvre (2003) has called a revolution “from above”, where higher-level state-capital relations are put to work reforming, often behind the scenes, the regulatory landscape of society and the environment to their ends. As I hope has become clear from the exposition above, such neoliberalization processes are far from independent initiatives of nefarious business men, but instead heavily rely on the state, which has long been culpable in “giving away the family silver”, as

Andy Merrifield recently put it⁵, the purpose being to prop up neoliberal political economic interests by offering up public land, resources, and subsidies.

Such a “passive revolution”, as Gramsci (1971: 106-114) might have called it, in the logic and practice of urban and environmental governance poses a significant challenge to activists and concerned citizens interested in conserving the natural environment or maintaining social welfare programs. Not only are neoliberal reformers actively reducing the efficacy of historically available mechanisms for wealth redistribution and development control, more recent moves to deepen the entrenchment of neoliberalism as praxis has effectively destroyed those mechanisms entirely. What this implies for e.g. environmental politics is that, not only are activists and citizens charged with re-claiming the guiding logic of urban and environmental governance, but are further confronted with the daunting task of re-establishing the higher-level mechanisms and institutions which make large-scale initiatives possible. The political left, however, seems in many cases to be captured by what Jamie Peck called the “local trap”, where localism is encouraged and celebrated in and for itself, all the while the right has continued to gain more control over federal and state financial and political systems (Peck, 2013b). The challenge thus becomes not only to resist and subvert attempts to “pimp” public assets at the local level, such as the Flagler County case mentioned above, but to build coalitions within and between disparate social movements which share interests in reclaiming the state to pursue development for people, not for profit (Brenner et al., 2009; Purcell, 2009).

The brightest ray of hope, somewhat paradoxically, shines through the cracks of the neoliberal state itself, as neoliberalism’s necessity to exist in mongrel and hybrid forms means that its successes are always partial and open to contestation. Neoliberalism might be hegemonic, but hegemony does not imply permanence or impenetrability. As Stuart Hall (2011) has put it:

No victories are permanent or final. Hegemony has constantly to be worked on, maintained, renewed, revised. Excluded social forces, whose consent has not been won, whose interests have not been taken into account, form the basis of counter-movements, resistance, alternative strategies and visions ... and the struggle over a hegemonic system starts anew. They constitute what Raymond Williams called “the emergent” – and the reason why history is never closed but maintains an open horizon towards the future.

The major task for conservationists who hope to play a part in the counter-hegemonic movement against deepening neoliberal reform efforts is to “break free of the confines of austerity thinking”

⁵ Here I refer to comments made by Andy Merrifield during a lecture on Lefebvre and the Right to the City as part of the PhD course Critical Urban Theory in Practice, hosted by the Lund University Center for Sustainability Studies in Lund, Sweden in April, 2016.

(Spencer, 2012), to reimagine their shared interests with other counter-hegemonic movements, and to retool in a way that allows for integration of progressive programs across scales and through time. The ultimate goal must be not only to resist or subvert, but to construct and pursue a coherent and actually existing alternative to neoliberalism, pursued with an ambition along the lines of what George Monbiot (2016) recently called “an economic Apollo program”, in Florida and around the world.

References:

- AMERICAN RIVERS. 2016. *America's Most Endangered Rivers for 2016* [Online]. Available: <http://www.americanrivers.org/blog/most-endangered-rivers-2016/>.
- AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CIVIL ENGINEERS. 2016. 2012 Report Card for Florida's Infrastructure [Online]. Available: <http://www.infrastructurereportcard.org/florida/florida-overview/>.
- BALLOTPEDIA. n.d. *Florida Water and Land Conservation Initiative, Amendment 1 (2014)* [Online]. Available: [https://ballotpedia.org/Florida_Water_and_Land_Conservation_Initiative,_Amendment_1_\(2014\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Florida_Water_and_Land_Conservation_Initiative,_Amendment_1_(2014)).
- BEN-ZADOK, E. 2005. Consistency, concurrency and compact development: Three faces of growth management implementation in Florida. *Urban Studies*, 42, 2167-2190.
- BODA, C. S. 2015. Power and rationality in coastal planning: effects on participation and possibility in the management of barrier island dunes in Flagler Beach, Florida, USA. *Journal of Coastal Conservation*, 19, 561-576.
- BODA, C. S. 2016. The politics of landscape production in the history of development along Florida's Atlantic coast. *Landscape Research*, Forthcoming.
- BOSELNAN, F. & CALLIES, D. 1971. The quiet revolution in land use control.
- BOUSQUET, S. 2016. Florida Gov. Rick Scott suffers 2 crushing defeats as budget talks begin. *Miami Herald*.
- BRENNER, N., MARCUSE, P. & MAYER, M. 2009. Cities for people, not for profit. *City*, 13, 176-184.
- BRENNER, N., PECK, J. & THEODORE, N. 2010. Variegated neoliberalization: geographies, modalities, pathways. *Global networks*, 10, 182-222.
- BRENNER, N. & THEODORE, N. 2002. Cities and the geographies of “actually existing neoliberalism”. *Antipode*, 34, 349-379.
- BRODY, S. D. & HIGHFIELD, W. E. 2005. Does planning work?: Testing the implementation of local environmental planning in Florida. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 71, 159-175.
- CARSON, R. 2002. *Silent spring*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- CENTENO, M. A. & COHEN, J. N. 2012. The arc of neoliberalism. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 38, 317-340.
- COMERFORD, E., MOLLOY, D. & MORLING, P. 2010. Financing nature in an age of austerity. *RSPB report*.
- CONNERLY, C. E., CHAPIN, T. S. & HIGGINS, H. T. 2007. *Growth management in Florida: Planning for paradise*, Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.
- COX, S. 2009. Is Florida Just One New Development Away From Environmental Ruin? *AlterNet*, January 14.
- COX, S. & COX, P. 2015. A Rising Tide Miami is sinking beneath the sea-but not without a fight. *NEW REPUBLIC*, 246, 40-45.
- DESLATTE, A. 2011a. Developers helped GOP gut Florida's growth act, records show. *Orlando Sentinel*, September 4.
- DESLATTE, A. 2011b. Growth-law rewrite could change state's landscape. *The St. Augustine Record*, September 12.
- DIXON, M. 2016. Enterprise Florida board faces uncertainty after funding fizzles. *PoliticoFlorida beta*, April 1.
- DOUGLAS, M. S. 2007. *The Everglades: river of grass*, Pineapple Press Inc.
- DU GAY, P. 1996. Organizing identity: entrepreneurial governance and public management. *Questions of cultural identity*, 151-169.
- DUNKELBERGER, L. 2014. *Florida Forever Program: Land Conservation Funds Rising* [Online]. The Ledger. Available: <http://www.theledger.com/article/20140622/news/140629820?p=1&tc=pg>.
- ENTERPRISE FLORIDA 2014. Annual Report 2013-14.
- ENTERPRISE FLORIDA. 2015. *Logistics and Distribution* [Online]. Available: <https://www.enterpriseflorida.com/wp-content/uploads/brief-logistics-florida.pdf>.

- ENTERPRISE FLORIDA. 2016. *Why Florida? Incentives* [Online]. Available: <https://www.enterpriseflorida.com/why-florida/business-climate/incentives/>
- FLAGLERLIVE. 2015a. Princess Place Preserve Slated for Extreme-Sport-Type Endurance Race, and 6,000 Racers. August 19.
- FLAGLERLIVE. 2015b. Spartan Extreme Race Re-Sets for Flagler: New Location, Same Lack of Transparency. *FlaglerLive.com*, October 22.
- FLORIDA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE. 2011. *Governor Rick Scott signs Florida chamber-backed regulatory reform bill* [Online]. Online. Available: <https://www.flchamber.com/print/2540>.
- FLORIDA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE. 2011-2016. *New data reveals Florida's economic freedom is eroding* [Online]. Online. Available: <http://www.flchamber.com/new-data-reveals-floridas-economic-freedom-is-eroding/>.
- FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION 2015. Critically eroded beaches in Florida. *Engineering, hydrology and geology program* Division of Water Resources Management.
- FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION. 2016. *Florida Forever* [Online]. Available: http://www.dep.state.fl.us/lands/fl_forever.htm [Accessed January 19 2016].
- FLORIDA GOVERNOR'S OFFICE. 2015. *Governor Scott Recommends Historic \$100 Million in Funding for VISIT FLORIDA* [Online]. Available: <http://www.flgov.com/governor-scott-recommends-historic-100-million-in-funding-for-visit-fl/>.
- FLORIDA LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS. 2011. *Summary of some of the major changes to the Florida growth management statutes* [Online]. Available: <https://floridaldrs.com/tag/community-planning-act/>.
- FLORIDA OCEANS AND COASTAL COUNCIL 2010. Climate Change and Sea-Level Rise in Florida: An Update of "The Effects of Climate Change on Florida's Ocean and Coastal Resources." [2009 Report]. Tallahassee, Florida.
- FLORIDA, R. 2016. How Zoning Restrictions Make Segregation Worse. *CityLab*, January 4.
- FOGLESONG, R. E. 2001. *Married to the Mouse: Walt Disney World and Orlando*, Yale University Press.
- GANNON, M. 1996. First European Contacts. *The New History of Florida*, 16-39.
- GRAMSCI, A. 1971. Selections from the Prison Notebooks, ed. and trans. *Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith*. New York: International.
- GRUNWALD, M. 2006. *The swamp: the Everglades, Florida, and the politics of paradise*, Simon and Schuster.
- HALL, S. 2011. The march of the neoliberals. *The Guardian*, 12.
- HARVEY, D. 1989. From managerialism to entrepreneurialism: the transformation in urban governance in late capitalism. *Geografiska Annaler. Series B. Human Geography*, 3-17.
- HEYNEN, N. & ROBBINS, P. 2005. The neoliberalization of nature: Governance, privatization, enclosure and valuation. *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 16, 5-8.
- HIGGINS, H. T. & PARADISE, N. B. 2007. Paying for the "Priceless": Florida Forever, Managing Growth, and Public Land Acquisition. *Growth Management in Florida: Planning for Paradise*, 241.
- HÄGERSTRAND, T. 2001. A look at the political geography of environmental management. *Sustainable Landscapes and Lifeways. Scale and Appropriateness, op. cit*, 35-58.
- JESSOP, B. 2002. Liberalism, neoliberalism, and urban governance: A state-theoretical perspective. *Antipode*, 34, 452-472.
- KLAS, M. E. 2011. Florida lawmakers wipe out 30 years of growth management law. *Tampa Bay Times*, May 7.
- KORTEN, T. 2015. In Florida, officials ban term 'climate change'. *Miami Herald*, March 18, 2015.
- LEFEBVRE, H. 2003. *The urban revolution*, U of Minnesota Press.
- MARTIN, R. 2011. The local geographies of the financial crisis: from the housing bubble to economic recession and beyond. *Journal of Economic Geography*, 11, 587-618.
- MERRIFIELD, A. 2014. The Entrepreneur's New Clothes. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 96, 389-391.
- MIROWSKI, P. & PLEHWE, D. 2009. *The Road from Mont Pelerin*, Harvard University Press.
- MONBIOT, G. 2016. Neoliberalism – the ideology at the root of all our problems. *The Guardian*, February 15.
- MONTES ROJAS, G., MCGUIRE, S. T., IVEY, S. & DURRENBERGER, T. 2007. The Florida Housing Boom. *Florida Focus*. Bureau of Economic and Business Research, University of Florida.
- MORMINO, G. R. 2005. *Land of sunshine, state of dreams: A social history of modern Florida*, University Press of Florida.
- NICHOLAS, J. C. & STEINER, R. L. 2000. Growth management and smart growth in Florida. *Wake Forest L. Rev.*, 35, 645.
- O'TOOLE, R. 2009. How urban planners caused the housing bubble. *Cato Policy Analysis Series*.

- ODUM, W. E. 1982. Environmental degradation and the tyranny of small decisions. *BioScience*, 32, 728-729.
- OPPEL, F. & MEISEL, T. 1987. *Tales of old Florida*, Castle.
- PECK, J. 2010. Zombie neoliberalism and the ambidextrous state. *Theoretical Criminology*, 14, 104-110.
- PECK, J. 2013a. Explaining (with) neoliberalism. *Territory, politics, governance*, 1, 132-157.
- PECK, J. 2013b. *Explaining (with) Neoliberalism* [Online]. Online: Youtube.com. Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONSskq9rbYU>.
- PECK, J. 2014a. Entrepreneurial Urbanism: Between uncommon sense and dull compulsion. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 96, 396-401.
- PECK, J. 2014b. Pushing austerity: state failure, municipal bankruptcy and the crises of fiscal federalism in the USA. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 7, 17-44.
- PECK, J., THEODORE, N. & BRENNER, N. 2009. Neoliberal urbanism: Models, moments, mutations. *SAIS Review of International Affairs*, 29, 49-66.
- PECK, J., THEODORE, N. & BRENNER, N. 2013. Neoliberal urbanism redux? *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 37, 1091-1099.
- PECK, J. & TICKELL, A. 2002. Neoliberalizing space. *Antipode*, 34, 380-404.
- PELHAM, T. G. 2007. A historical perspective for evaluating Florida's evolving growth management process. *Growth management in Florida: Planning for paradise*, 7, 17.
- PILKEY, O. H. J. & COOPER, A. G. 2014. *The Last Beach*, Duke University Press.
- POWELL, D. L. 2000. Growth management: Florida's past as prologue for the future. *Fla. St. UL Rev.*, 28, 519.
- PRIMACK, R. B. 2006. *Essentials of conservation biology*, Sinauer Associates Sunderland, Massachusetts.
- PUGALIS, L. & BENTLEY, G. 2014. State strategies and entrepreneurial governance. *Enterprising places: Leadership and governance networks*, 3, 123-148.
- PURCELL, M. 2009. Resisting neoliberalization: communicative planning or counter-hegemonic movements? *Planning Theory*, 8, 140-165.
- RAB, L. 2009. South Florida's Housing Crisis Leaves Behind Ghost Towers. *New Times Broward-Palm Beach* June 18.
- SAYER, A. 2014. *Why we can't afford the rich*, Policy Press.
- SCOTT, R. 2011. *Florida Governor Rick Scott Inaugural Address* [Online]. Online. Available: <http://www.flgov.com/2011/01/04/florida-governor-rick-scott-inaugural-address/>.
- SHELLEY, L. L. & BRODEEN, K. 2011. Home Rule Redux: The Community Planning Act of 2011. *The Florida Bar Journal*, 85, 49-51.
- SHERMAN, A. 2014. Rick Scott touts 'record funding' for environmental protection in State of the State speech. *PoliticFact Florida in partnership with Tampa Bay Times and Miami Herald*, March 6.
- SONG, Y. 2007. The Spillover Effects of Growth Management: Constraints on New Housing Construction. *chap*, 10, 155-168.
- SPEAR, K. 2016. Florida coastal environments are collapsing. *Orlando Sentinel*.
- SPENCER, M. 2012. The green movement must escape the confines of austerity thinking. *The Guardian*, February 28.
- STALETOVICH, J. 2016a. Florida manatees in line to lose 'endangered' species tag; feds say move is a sign of recovery. *Miami Herald*, January 7.
- STALETOVICH, J. 2016b. With conservation money, Florida lawmakers aim to foot other bills. *Miami Herald*, February 8.
- STROUD, N. 2012. A History and New Turns in Florida's Growth Management Reform. *J. Marshall L. Rev.*, 45, 397-1227.
- SWANEY, D. P., HUMBORG, C., EMEIS, K., KANNEN, A., SILVERT, W., TETT, P., PASTRES, R., SOLIDORO, C., YAMAMURO, M. & HENOCQUE, Y. 2012. Five critical questions of scale for the coastal zone. *Estuarine, Coastal and Shelf Science*, 96, 9-21.
- TABB, W. K. 2014. The wider context of austerity urbanism. *City*, 18, 87-100.
- TAMPA BAY TIMES. 2011. An obituary for Florida Growth Management. June 4.
- TAX FOUNDATION. n.d. Florida: the facts on Florida's Tax Climate [Online]. Available: <http://taxfoundation.org/state-tax-climate/florida>.
- THE PALM BEACH POST. 1999. Editorial: Bush plan won't stop sprawl and strip malls. 31 October.
- THE PALM BEACH POST. 2010. Scott declares victory after Sink admits defeat. November 3.
- TITUS, J. G., HUDGENS, D., TRESKOTT, D., CRAGHAN, M., NUCKOLS, W., HERSHNER, C., KASSAKIAN, J., LINN, C., MERRITT, P. & MCCUE, T. 2009. State and local governments plan for development of most land vulnerable to rising sea level along the US Atlantic coast. *Environmental Research Letters*, 4, 044008.

- TOWNSEND, M. 2012. Conservation in a time of austerity—Why fund nature? *Ecos-Review of Conservation*, 33, 17.
- TRISTAM, P. 2015. How County Government is Pimping Princess Place While Spinning Fairy Tales. *FlaglerLive.com*, August 22.
- U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE 2012. Federal and state endangered and threatened species expenditures. Fiscal year 2012 ed.
- WALTON, G. H. 1977. *Fearless and Free: The Seminole Indian War, 1835-1842*, Bobbs-Merrill.
- VISITFLORIDA. 2015a. *2014-2015 Annual Report* [Online]. Available: <http://www.visitflorida.org/media/19501/yearinreview2015.pdf>.
- VISITFLORIDA. 2015b. *2015-16 Marketing Plan* [Online]. Available: <http://www.visitflorida.org/media/7987/currentmarketingplan.pdf>.