



CHAPTER 13

THE SKELETON OF POWER

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ANOTHER LOOK

"WHO RUNS THIS TOWN?"

That sounds like a simple question, but it's deceptive. And as with most questions worth asking, serious observers answer in different ways.

Political scientists, lawyers, and public administrators often approach this question by examining a city's legal structure. This is because, as President Franklin D. Roosevelt once said, "structure is government." Knowing what cities and city officials can do legally is vital to understanding who runs any town.

But a city's legal structure reveals only a small part of the story. Local politics now takes place within a larger, often global, context of public and private institutions.

In the United States, knowing how a city fits into the web of intergovernmental and corporate relations—spinning out from, say, Beijing or other international capitals to Washington, D.C., sometimes bypassing the state capital, and weaving its way down to city hall—is important for understanding who and what run U.S. towns. But understanding the networks of informal power and influence may be more important, perhaps crucial, in figuring out who has the ability to get things done. For instance, Chicago's city charter contains no mention of party bosses or ethnic voting blocs. Nor does it refer to the influence of global corporations, Internet-based businesses (e.g., eBay, gambling sites), "body shops" (government contractors, such as the very profitable Science Applications International Corporation [SAIC], a San Diego-based private corporation with 44,000 employees—more than the U.S. Departments of Labor, Energy, and Housing and Urban Development combined), nationwide religious groups, organized crime, street gangs, and other interest groups on public policy. Yet these individuals and organizations can be key actors in city politics. Thus, both formal and informal power structures—at both the micro and macro levels—need to be examined before any conclusions are reached about who runs any town.

This chapter looks at the public institutional framework of local government in the United States—only. Why *only* the United States? Because globally local governments differ so widely that justice cannot be done to their range in one chapter. Further, the organization of local government can be dizzyingly confusing. Even to the locals! Take towns in Great Britain, for example.

One British guidebook notes, "The set-up of UK Local Government is extremely confusing even to those of us who live here" (Edkins, n.d.).

This chapter investigates questions such as these: How are U.S. cities legally organized? What power and formal authority do city officials have? How do cities interact with other units of government in the U.S. federal system? Chapter 14 deals with the other aspect of power: extralegal structures. It examines informal networks of power and influence, mainly from a historical perspective. Then, Chapter 15 examines contending views of how community power and influence have worked in U.S. cities since World War II.

First, a word about the name of the game: power. Like love, truth, beauty, and other abstract concepts, power can be defined in at least 100 ways. Here, *power* means the ability to force an individual or group to do something, even if they resist.

Ultimately, power is rooted in the threat of force or its actual use. People in many cities across the globe, from Port-au-Prince, Haiti, to Kigali, Rwanda, and Monrovia, Liberia, to New York City, Madrid, Najaf, and Kabul understand that the accepted balance of power can be upset by anyone brandishing a lethal weapon. Even a 10-year-old with a gun, stones, brick, or machete can become powerful.

Power can be distinguished from authority and influence. By *authority*, we mean legitimate power, power used in such a way that people see it as legitimate. By *influence*, we mean informal power, sometimes based on persuasion. Chicago gangster Al Capone, both powerful and influential (but lacking in authority), understood the difference: He once said, "You can get much farther with a kind word and a gun than you can with a kind word alone (in http://www.quotemountain.com/famous_quote_author/al_capone_famous_quotations/)."

We begin with an overview of governmental power and authority. In particular, we examine the role that citizens think government should play in their lives.

THE SCOPE OF GOVERNMENT

"That government which governs least governs best." Jefferson's saying reflects the deep distrust many people in the United States feel toward government at any level, no matter who runs it. Fear of excessive government and centralized, faraway authority is a recurrent

theme in U.S. history, rooted in the Jeffersonian ideals of liberty and small government.

GOVERNMENT'S LIMITED SCOPE IN THE UNITED STATES

For ideological reasons, the scope of government in the United States is smaller and weaker than that of

any other major country in the world today. In France, England, and Sweden, for instance, government is expected to regulate the extent and nature of physical growth and to oversee the general health and welfare of its citizenry. And, as Table 13.1 shows, many countries collect much more revenue per capita to pay for such services. But the dominant ideology in the United

TABLE 13.1 GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP), TAX REVENUES, AND POPULATION FOR SELECTED COUNTRIES, 2003

	Gross Domestic Product, Tax Revenue & Population, 2003				
	GDP millions of US \$	GDP per capita	Tax Revenue millions of US \$	Tax Revenue per capita	Population thousands
Australia	527,975	\$ 26,402	166,840	\$ 8,343	19,998
Austria	255,146	\$ 31,432	109,968	\$ 13,547	8,118
Belgium	304,352	\$ 29,337	138,176	\$ 13,319	10,374
Canada	873,914	\$ 27,630	295,383	\$ 9,339	31,629
Czech Republic	90,488	\$ 8,870	34,114	\$ 3,344	10,202
Denmark	211,238	\$ 39,190	102,028	\$ 18,929	5,390
Finland	161,703	\$ 31,020	72,443	\$ 13,897	5,213
France	1,788,032	\$ 28,933	776,006	\$ 12,557	61,799
Germany	2,442,915	\$ 29,603	867,235	\$ 10,509	82,523
Greece	173,022	\$ 15,720	61,769	\$ 5,612	11,007
Hungary	82,158	\$ 8,112	31,631	\$ 3,123	10,128
Iceland	10,387	\$ 35,907	4,134	\$ 14,291	289
Ireland	152,098	\$ 38,111	45,173	\$ 11,319	3,991
Italy	1,467,747	\$ 25,265	632,599	\$ 10,889	58,095
Japan	4,326,747	\$ 33,905	1,094,667	\$ 8,578	127,613
Korea	609,221	\$ 12,731	154,133	\$ 3,221	47,853
Luxembourg	27,005	\$ 60,012	11,153	\$ 24,785	450
Mexico	640,147	\$ 6,232	121,628	\$ 1,184	102,726
Netherlands	512,142	\$ 31,567	198,711	\$ 12,248	16,224
New Zealand	81,398	\$ 20,152	28,408	\$ 7,033	4,039
Norway	220,664	\$ 48,339	95,768	\$ 20,979	4,565
Poland	209,360	\$ 5,482	71,601	\$ 1,875	38,187
Portugal	147,205	\$ 14,100	54,613	\$ 5,231	10,440
Slovak Republic	32,614	\$ 6,064	10,143	\$ 1,886	5,378
Spain	879,951	\$ 20,948	307,103	\$ 7,311	42,006
Sweden	301,385	\$ 33,644	152,501	\$ 17,024	8,958
Switzerland	321,881	\$ 43,468	94,955	\$ 12,823	7,405
Turkey	239,442	\$ 3,387	78,537	\$ 1,111	70,690
United Kingdom	1,795,848	\$ 30,154	639,322	\$ 10,735	59,555
United States	10,942,668	\$ 37,594	2,801,323	\$ 9,624	291,077
OECD Average		\$ 25,805		\$ 8,004	

Source: OECD Revenue Statistics 1965-2004, OECD, Paris, 2004. © Urban Institute, Brookings Institution, 1439

States assigns as much responsibility as possible to the private, rather than the public, sector.

The scope of the public sector at all levels—federal, state, and local—increased dramatically in the twentieth century as the United States changed from a country of farms and small towns to a metropolitan nation. Yet, governments still operate in a climate generally hostile to them.

Particularly after a series of widely reported scandals in high places—from Watergate in the 1970s to reports in the 2000s of corruption, payoffs, cover-ups, lying to the public, and sexual no-nos, not to mention shameless lobbying—an atmosphere of public cynicism prevails. Trust in both national government and corporate America has declined in recent years. Scandals at Enron, WorldCom, and other major corporations did not help restore confidence in big business. According to a 2002 CBS poll, only one in four people in the United States thought that corporate executives were honest. Further, only 6 percent expressed high levels of confidence in major companies (Roberts, 2002).

In the United States, trust in government has been steadily eroding for decades (see NPR-Kaiser-Kennedy School Poll, 2000). This mood is captured in one reporter's comment about Congress over a generation ago, which remains apt: "The crime rate in Congress is probably higher than in downtown Detroit (Newfield in Bogart, 1980:5r)."

For decades, conservative and libertarian groups have attacked big government and big spending. (Although the rhetoric of so-called conservatives at the national level did not match their actions, such as government bailouts of struggling financial institutions.)

At the local-state level, California's Proposition 13 (the Jarvis-Gann initiative), passed in 1978, is often named as the harbinger of a nationwide revolt against "tax-and-spend" government. This initiative amended the state's constitution in a way that reduced county property taxes, by nearly one-half, and restricted their future growth. Since many local government services are funded by the property tax, Proposition 13 effectively limited the expansion of local government service.

Why did the tax revolt happen first in California? Analysts point to one specific demographic reason—

suburban growth (which provided a base for an expanding conservatism)—plus the state's involvement in trade with Asia's industrial-technological sector. Sociologist Harvey Molotch added an often overlooked factor: then skyrocketing property values. Molotch (1990:183) says that California's rising property values fueled rising property taxes: "the cutbacks blamed on Proposition 13 (including draconian budget decreases for public hospitals, paramedics, coastal protection and a proliferation of user fees for services formerly free) were due to wealth creation, rather than wealth erosion." Still, it didn't feel that way to homeowners, especially older ones on fixed incomes. On paper, their homes had increased in value. But homeowners couldn't eat or spend the profits unless they sold their homes. Thus, older homeowners, not corporate business, spearheaded Proposition 13 as a security blanket for their future.

California's cities were only the first to feel the fiscal pinch. Taxpayers' rebellions soon occurred in many states. (Joblessness played a part too: Nationwide, nearly one in seven manufacturing jobs had disappeared in the private manufacturing sector in about 3.5 years from mid-1979 to the end of 1982.)

In this economic climate, voters elected conservative political leaders. No new taxes! Reduce government spending! Privatize! These messages became rallying cries. They were the centerpiece of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government in Great Britain (1978–1990) as well as the Reagan and George Herbert Walker Bush administrations (1980–1992).

Shortly, we will look at how federal policies affect cities. First, let's examine the impact of state policies on local government.

To begin with, starting more than a generation ago, the fiscal pinch became the fiscal crisis in many states. From the late 1970s on, downsizing was in. Due to circumstances beyond their borders (e.g., economic recession that cut into tax receipts, the credit crisis in 2007 and beyond), local governments in many states faced agonizing choices in "cutback management."

PARADOXICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD GOVERNMENT

Attitudes toward government in the United States are often paradoxical. On the one hand, voters may desire limits on government's growth. On the other,

they look to government to solve many issues of collective concern. In other words, people may wish that government's powers were less, but they expect it to do more. In the case of California, some analysts of Proposition 13 concluded that what the voters wanted was something for nothing: lower taxes and more public services—simultaneously.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE SECTOR RELATIONSHIPS

Even in spheres where the U.S. government is expected to act (either as problem solver, distributor of resources and benefits, or regulator), it is assumed that public policy will be made in conjunction with private group interests.

Often, private interests play a significant, some say dominant, role in public decision making. At the local level, for example, real estate brokers and large land developers have a significant impact on zoning decisions and private business influences urban redevelopment plans. Similarly, professional organizations, unions, and corporate officials are generally consulted on policies affecting their interests. Often, such groups initiate policy proposals.

The political philosophy that underlies these public-private sector relations is rooted in classical liberalism and pluralist democracy. The dominant ideology in the United States holds that government reflects the individual citizens' wishes through group representation, and that government does not serve any one group's interest more than another's. Hence, under the theory of pluralism or interest-group democracy, government *should* act as a broker, balancing private interests.

THE "PROPER" ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The dominant U.S. ideology holds that local government should act as a forum in which competing private interests negotiate and come to an accommodation that serves the entire community's interest. In this view, government is supposed to be a facilitator of private economic activity, not an obstacle. Thus, private enterprise expects local government to set the stage for its activities by providing infrastructure (e.g., streets and sewers), maintaining police and fire protection, supporting a "good business climate" (e.g., keeping business taxes low, assuring the absence of

"inappropriate" street people outside tourist hotels), and regulating certain activities to prevent chaos and quackery (e.g., land-use regulations, public-health standards).

To protect their citizens' welfare and to prevent untrammelled competition, local governments today have varying degrees of authority to intervene and regulate private business—by granting health permits to restaurants, construction permits to builders, and so forth. Clearly, the granting or withholding of such benefits can mean economic life or death to private entrepreneurs. Given these economic stakes, we could predict that local politics cannot be separated from economics. This close connection between political power and potential profit should be kept in mind when analyzing who runs any town.

To conclude: As of 2002, there were 87,525 local governments in the United States (see Table 13.2). These local governments provide a number of services and goods for collective consumption and individual betterment, ranging from well-maintained roads to legal entitlements to make money. Various groups are concerned when their interests are at stake, whether they involve getting sewer hook-ups for a suburban housing development or a neighborhood day-care center.

Local government is at the center of competing demands for its scarce resources. It can't fund all projects proposed. It can't award more than one contract to build a new school or give everyone a license to operate a taxi. And in hard economic times, such as the recessionary 2000s, it may not be able to pay both its police officers and its paramedics. In this milieu, there are bound to be conflicts of interest, opportunities for corruption, and attempts to manipulate or persuade the public via the mass media.

LOCAL POLITICAL ENVIRONMENTS

Local communities don't answer the normative question "What should government do?" in the same way. Some communities expect—and expect to pay for—only minimal public services. (Some communities want top-notch services, such as schools and police protection, but prefer that the services be provided by private companies.) Others demand a higher level of services and more of them. Thus, the local political

TABLE 13.2 U.S. LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, 1952-2002

Type of Government	U.S. Government Units: 1952-2002										
	2002	1997	1992	1987	1982	1977	1972	1967	1962	1957	1952
Total	87,900	87,504	86,743	83,237	81,831	79,913	78,269	81,299	91,236	102,392	116,805
Federal government	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
State governments	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	48	48
Local governments	87,849	87,453	86,692	83,186	81,780	79,862	78,218	81,248	91,185	102,343	116,756
General purpose	3,034	3,043	3,043	3,042	3,041	3,042	3,044	3,049	3,043	3,050	3,052
County	35,937	36,001	35,962	35,891	35,810	35,684	35,508	35,153	35,141	34,415	34,009
Municipal	19,431	19,372	19,296	19,200	19,076	18,862	18,517	18,048	17,217	16,807	
Township (school districts)	13,522	13,726	14,556	14,721	14,851	15,174	15,781	21,782	34,678	50,454	67,355
Special districts	35,356	34,683	33,131	29,532	28,078	25,962	23,885	21,264	18,323	14,424	12,340

Source: Adapted from U.S. Census Bureau, Table A, p. 5, July 2002 (http://ftp2.census.gov/govs/cog/2002COGprelim_report.pdf).

environment is a key factor in analyzing the scope of local government.

According to neoconservative "public choice" theorists, people rationally choose a local political environment. For instance, when a woman chooses a particular place to live, she chooses one bundle of services over another. If she doesn't like the particular service bundle, she can vote with her car. Others disagree, saying that residential choices are due either to "forced choice," "dumb happenstance" (Molotch, 1990:195), or shared lifestyles (e.g., Weiss, 1988). Whatever their motivation for choosing one community over another, people do live in cities and suburbs that offer different services.

The following typology applies only to U.S. suburbs, classifying them according to their attitude toward economic development:

1. *Aggressive*. Suburbs that aggressively compete for business or industrial activities. Types pursuing this strategy: (1) older, close-in suburbs suffering from problems similar to those of their central city (e.g., fiscal pressure, stagnating

income) and (2) newer, more prosperous suburbs.

2. *Regulatory*. Suburbs that adhere to regulations believed to be in the public interest and that are considered more important than development per se. Type pursuing this strategy: those with attractive land that can choose which development they want.
3. *Cooperative*. Suburbs that are moderately prodevelopment. Type pursuing this strategy: stable, established communities.
4. *Retentive*. Suburbs that want to retain existing businesses and industries. Type pursuing this strategy: old, stable suburbs of mixed residential-commercial activity.
5. *Reactive*. Suburbs that have no formal policy on economic development but react case by case. Type pursuing this strategy: developed suburbs (Pelissero and Fasenfest, 1988).
6. *Antidevelopment*. Suburbs that oppose economic development. Type pursuing this strategy: ecology-minded and/or upper-income suburbs.

According to the developers of this five ideal-type classification (I added the sixth type), the values of local elected officials in the suburbs they studied "shaped the particular mix of policies followed in each suburb" and "determined the suburban community's approach to development" (Pelissero and Fasenfest, 1988:11).

Whether city or suburb, the population size and mix, the values of local elected officials, and the attitudes toward economic growth influence the local political environment. So does the level of tax resources available. For instance, relatively homogeneous, residential, upper-status suburbs (e.g., PRIZM's Upper Crust) do not need to promote economic growth or mediate among conflicting interests. Large, heterogeneous cities, on the other hand, often seek to juggle conflicting interests.

CITIES AS CREATURES OF THEIR STATE

In the United States, cities are entirely creatures of their state governments. This stems from a decision made by the republic's founding fathers; they made no mention of cities in the U.S. Constitution. Instead, they granted the states the right to create or not to create all local jurisdictions, including cities.

When the states did create cities, they kept legal power over them. Hence, it is the 50 state legislatures that decide how city governments are structured.

GENERAL-LAW CITIES AND CHARTER CITIES

States grant legal powers to their creatures—the cities—in two different ways. Some states establish the general powers of city governments in state law; these are called **general-law cities**. Other states spell out the powers of a city in a charter approved by the legislature; these are called **charter cities**.

Charters granted to cities by their states vary in content, but most describe the form, composition, powers, and limitations of city officials. To illustrate, a city charter might state that the city council will be elected every 4 years, have one representative from each of 10 districts, and have authority over personnel, zoning, parks, and budgeting.

An important variation is the **home-rule charter**. Under home-rule provisions in a state constitution, the precise definition of city powers is left up to the

city voters, within limits set by the state constitution. About 75 percent of large U.S. cities operate under home-rule provisions. About half of the states provide for home rule in their state constitutions, and about a dozen more allow home rule through legislation.

Charters can be revised. However, voters usually greet revision with yawns.

New York City was forced to revise its charter in 1989 after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the city's top government body, the Board of Estimate, was unconstitutional (because it violated the principle of one person, one vote). New Yorkers approved a complete overhaul of municipal government, eliminating the Board of Estimate, a unique legislative-executive hybrid that exercised more power than the city council.

DILLON'S RULE

When a legal question arises concerning the extent of power granted by a state to a city, the courts have traditionally ruled against cities. In other words, the courts narrowly construe city powers. This narrow construction of city powers is based on **Dillon's rule**, named for Iowa State Judge John F. Dillon, who presided over a court decision in 1868 (see National League of Cities, n.d.).

What difference does it make if states legally control cities and if the courts narrowly interpret city powers? A great deal. Dillon's rule means that a city cannot operate a hot dog stand at the city park without first getting the state legislature to pass an enabling law, unless, by chance, the city's charter or some previously enacted law clearly covers the sale of hot dogs.

Because cities can do only what state legislatures expressly permit them to do (or what is "fairly implied" or "indispensable"), city charters often describe city powers in painstaking detail. For example, in the former city charter of Nashville, Tennessee, the replacement of regular members of the fire department above the rank of "pipeman" or "ladderman" (due to illness or disability) was spelled out so that there could be no mistake concerning the chain of command: the fire chief, subject to the mayor's approval, was to designate any regular member of the fire department from a lower rank to perform the duties of such member during his (or her) absence.

Even under home-rule charters (whereby cities can amend charters without going back to the legislature), cities are far from independent. They are still bound by the law of their state. And the state is omnipotent. In a 1923 case involving the city of Trenton and the state of New Jersey, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a state has the legal power to eliminate cities altogether, even against the will of the city's residents.

CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS

STATE LEGISLATURES AND CITY INTERESTS

The posture of a state legislature is important to the cities of that state. Unfortunately for cities, historically, state legislatures generally adopted negative stances toward their cities—boxing them in with narrow grants of legal power and voting new power grudgingly.

City politicians have long felt victimized by their state legislatures. But the villains in the piece changed as the nation's population shifted from rural to urban to suburban locations. Specifically, before 1962, U.S. cities faced state legislatures dominated by rural, and usually antiurban, interests. By 1960, almost 70 percent of the U.S. population was urban, but about one-third of the states still had very large proportions of their population in rural areas. Further, before 1962, most state legislatures did not have the one person, one vote rule. Usually, state legislative districts were drawn so that rural voters could elect more than their proportional share of representatives. Before 1962, for example, only 11 percent of Californians (mainly from rural areas) could elect a majority of members of the California State Senate.

Beginning with a landmark Supreme Court case in 1962, *Baker v. Carr*, an ongoing process of reapportionment has been under way. This court decision required one person, one vote. It led to a redrawing of electoral district lines so that the population in all legislative districts is substantially equal.

Since *Baker v. Carr* in 1962, rural domination of state legislatures has generally been reduced. But suburbs, not cities, have been the major benefactors. Demographics helps to explain why. By 1970, the U.S. population was roughly one-third urban, one-third suburban, and one-third rural or small town, with a slight suburban dominance. (*The share of the U.S.*

population living in suburbs doubled from 1900 to 1950. From 1950 to 2000, it doubled again. By 2000, the majority, 52 percent, of the U.S. population lived in suburbs.)

The irony is this: State legislatures were reapportioned to ensure one person, one vote at the very time that population was shifting to the suburbs. Thus, reapportionment generally did not significantly benefit big cities. It did benefit suburbs and hurt rural areas.

In many states, a suburban-rural—antiurban coalition emerged in the 1970s, replacing the historic rural—antiurban coalition. This post-1970 antiurban coalition often voted (and continues to vote) against legislation designed to meet "big-city problems."

Antiurbanism escalated in the 1980s (and later, under a new name: "prosuburbanism"). By 1990, mounting budget deficits in state capitals forced many populous and suburban states, including California and Ohio, to make drastic cutbacks in welfare and education; these program cuts adversely affected more urbanites than suburbanites.

By the early 2000s, antiurbanism morphed into prosuburbanism. As discussed below, some members of the U.S. House of Representatives organized a "suburban agenda." Implicitly, this agenda pit the concerns of suburbanites against urbanites.

SUBURBS VERSUS CITIES

More than a generation ago, distinguished urban historian Richard C. Wade called suburbanization "the most important fact of American social and political life" since 1945 (1982:20). A number of analysts agree, noting a related fact: the emergence of two separate—and unequal—communities in the United States, suburbs and cities. (But, as we shall see, this clear separation has broken down in many U.S. metro areas, particularly when many inner suburbs suffer high poverty rates.)

Many suburbanites feel disconnected from (and fearful of) urban poverty, street crime, and other conditions facing their city neighbors—and more and more their *suburban* neighbors. Perhaps that is one reason more and more people are choosing gated communities, both in suburbs and in cities. (Suburban fear of urban poverty is rather ironic in the United States as, since 2005, the poverty rate in many close-in suburbs rivals or bests city rates.)

This emotional apartheid, based on suburban fear of city folk, can start very young. Student research teams in my classes at San Francisco State found, for instance, that children in suburban San Francisco held extremely negative views of the city. Although over 80 percent of the preteenage respondents had never visited San Francisco, they characterized the city as the home of crime, grime, and slime. The vast majority had nothing positive to say about San Francisco, the city voted—16 years in a row—by readers of a U.S. travel magazine as their top destination (Thousman, 2008).

Perhaps it is no accident, then, that Orlando, Florida, home of Disney World's Magic Kingdom (claiming 15.4 million visitors in 2000)—not San Francisco, "everyone's favorite city," or any national park or New York City or Los Angeles—is the most popular vacation destination in the United States. It is also noteworthy that the top destination in the United States by motorcoach in one post-millennium year, 2001, was Branson, Missouri. As a *New York Times* reporter put it years earlier when Branson started its rise, "the astounding growth of this squeaky-clean, virtually all-white, middle-of-nowhere Mecca is a revealing slice of America." One tourist at Branson's Elvis-A-Rama and glitzy country music theaters revealed why he vacationed there rather than in Los Angeles: "There's no smog blowing down from the hillsides. There's no graffiti. There are no gangs. I'm not prejudiced, but it's nice to be someplace where everyone speaks English" (in Applebome, 1993:B1).

Recent Suburban Antiurbanism in the United States Suburban-city antipathy remains, despite the suburbanization of poverty and other so-called urban problems that now are part of suburban life. Indeed, months before they lost control of the U.S. House of Representatives in 2006, Republicans organized a "suburban agenda." Fifty members of the House of Representatives, all representing suburbs and all Republican, joined the Suburban Agenda Caucus. Here is what one Caucus member, Congressperson Mike Castle (R-Del.), wrote on his blog in May 2006:

Delaware communities are often considered suburbs of the major cities that surround us—such as Wilmington, Baltimore and Philadelphia. It is where many families reside and where concerns about open

space, education and health care are top on residents' minds. Because of this, I joined the Suburban Agenda Caucus in the House of Representatives, comprised of 50 Members representing suburban areas, from Washington State to Florida. We recently unveiled a new family agenda for Congress that will focus on addressing the needs and priorities of suburban communities throughout the United States. The Caucus is pushing individual bills backed by voters in suburban areas including 401 Kids Savings Accounts, Health Information Technology, Open Space Conservation and Internet Protection for Kids.

(Castle, 2006)

Was Congressperson Castle asserting that city folk are *not* concerned with such "family agenda" issues as open space, education, and health care? Or was this suburban agenda, poll-tested in 22 suburban counties, more about winning elections in mainly formerly Republican districts on the edge of big cities?

The head of the Suburban Caucus, a Republican from Chicago's northern suburbs, argued that the suburban agenda was neither Democratic nor Republican: "It comes out of suburban thinking" (in James, 2006). Some close observers disagreed. Two *Chicago Tribune* reporters called the suburban agenda an election ploy by Republicans to appeal to suburban voters, many of whom were Democratic voters who had left cities for inner suburbs (Zeleny and Kuzcka in James, 2006). If so, the ploy didn't work very well: Republicans lost control of the House, and the losses included six caucus members. (The losses had less to do with the suburban agenda than with other issues, including the Iraq War, inappropriate sexual behavior with underage boys [Mark Foley, R-Fla.], and an FBI investigation [Curt Weld, R-Pa.].)

In the past generation, so many urbanites moved to the suburbs that, by 2000, the *majority* of people in the United States lived around central cities, not in them. Movers' reasons varied widely. One key reason concerned a desire to flee—from city people, from city "problems," and/or from paying for public programs to address those problems. Radical observer Mike Davis (1993) calls this attitude "the War against the Cities." I call it the "moating and gating of suburban America" or the "Yes, you *can* run and hide" syndrome. Whatever it's called, it describes suburban antiurbanism.

What lies behind this suburban antiurbanism? Analysts disagree. *Chicago Tribune* Washington bureau chief Frank James (2006) implies that race—whites vs. people of color—is all-important. James points to the thinly veiled “us” vs. “them” comments by a member of the Republican Suburban Caucus:

You know, the federal government has all kinds of programs for our cities. . . . We devote tons of resources to our cities as well we should. . . . But oftentimes it seems to the people who live in the suburbs that it is done at their expense.

(James, 2006)

Reporter James comments that this congressperson’s words could easily be seen as an appeal to white voters: “Since cities tend to have higher percentages of African Americans and other minorities than many suburbs, [the Caucus Congressperson’s] comments could certainly be interpreted as an attempt to capitalize on white voters’ flawed perceptions that blacks and other minorities receive most federal funding.”

Radical iconoclast Mike Davis (1993) sees race and conservative politics as the keys to suburban antiurbanism. According to Davis, a conservative coalition in Congress united suburban and rural representatives in both major political parties against any federal reinvestment in big cities dominated by minorities. Indeed, he charges that all major candidates for president in 1992 may have acted “in cynical concert to exclude a subject [from their debates] that had become mutually embarrassing—cities”: “The word ‘city’ now color-coded and worrisome to the candidates’ common suburban heartland—was expunged from the exchanges. Thus the elephant of the urban crisis was simply . . . conjured out of sight” (3). Davis concludes that the 1992 presidential election showed that “the big cities, once the very fulcrum of the political universe during Franklin Roosevelt’s presidency, have been demoted to the status of a scorned and impotent electoral periphery” (3).

(Bringing Davis’s argument forward, cities have remained a non-issue in all U.S. presidential elections since. However, some think—or hope—that postelection “realities” of President Obama’s United States, such as the desire to decrease unemployment in part by fixing infrastructure, may change that.)

Public-opinion analyst William Schneider also attributes suburban antiurbanism to conservative ideology. Schneider claims that “a major reason people move out to the suburbs is simply to be able to buy their own government. These people resent it when politicians take their money and use it to solve other people’s problems, especially when they don’t believe that government can actually solve those problems” (1992:38).

“URBANIZATION OF THE SUBURBS”

Yet, ironies abound. First, some U.S. suburbs look more like inner cities than stereotypical, upper middle- and upper-class, pale-faced suburbs, such as the one depicted in the film *American Beauty* (1999). Second, suburban poverty is not an oxymoron. Indeed, in 2005, for the first time in U.S. history, poor suburbanites outnumbered poor urbanites in the nation’s 100 biggest metro areas. According to Brookings Institution analysts Berube and Kneebone (2006), *over 12 million people in U.S. suburbs of the 100 most populated metropolitan areas were defined as poor while fewer—11 million—urbanites in those same metro areas were defined as poor.*

This new reality of more suburban than urban poor in the largest U.S. metro areas could/should change stereotypes: Big cities are usually seen as home to the nation’s poor, surrounded by suburbs populated by middle- and upper-income residents. Yet, U.S. suburbs are more diverse in terms of race and class than ever before. One reason: Increasing numbers of recent immigrants (whose incomes tend to be lower than native-born U.S. residents) are settling in suburbs, not cities—particularly in the South and the West.

In addition, many suburbs now face so-called big-city problems, such as rising crime, low-paying jobs, and low-performing schools. In 2006, the president of the National Urban League (Morial in Associated Press, 2006) called it “the urbanization of the suburbs.” (Surely, he was referring to this sense of the word “urbanization,” as discussed in Chapter 5: urbanization may refer to the process of becoming urban in terms of social, technological, political, and spatial organization.)

I think there is another important factor behind antiurbanism: widespread pessimism about the

future. Citizens seem resigned to diminishing expectations and urban (and suburban) decline. This feeling is rooted in global shifts that affect people in suburbs, cities, and rural areas, albeit differently.

Historically, and for good reason, people in the United States were optimistic after World War II: They had rising expectations for the national economy and their own fortunes. Especially if they were white, they expected that their children would live with more, not less, than they had. Even without having heard of Burgess's hypothesis, they understood that moving out to the suburbs meant moving up. Literally millions of white middle-class and working-class people in the United States left town in the 1950s and beyond.

But by the 1970s and early 1980s, global economic restructuring hit home. Once secure and relatively high-paid jobs in manufacturing moved to cheaper labor areas. Few high-paid jobs replaced them. White-collar and no-collar (digirati) workers, including top managers, also felt insecure as companies merged or went "offshore," and they found themselves unemployed or "rightsized" out of work. Consequently, for ever-increasing numbers, future prosperity seemed dreamlike.

By the early 1990s, people in the United States were wondering what had gone wrong. Increasingly, many were satisfied if they could keep their income and living standards from declining.

In sum, downward mobility was knocking at the door. What does this have to do with suburban anti-urbanism? Probably a great deal. During boom times, it is easier to have compassion for—or at least neutrality toward—strangers and people unlike oneself (or assumed to be different). During gloomy economic times, the politics of resentment can grip the heart and purse, widening the gulf between "us" and "them." The newly-insecure often assign blame to someone or something for their falling fortunes, not to global processes beyond their control. In this milieu, many fled to gated communities or "safer" suburbs rather than fight what they saw as irreversible urban decline, especially dangerous streets.

Liberals would say that the well-off blame the victims. Conservatives would say that the well-off rightly blame those who have not helped themselves but prefer to live off government giveaways. Marxist radicals

would say that it is ironic: A group of better-off people blame those at the bottom of the social ladder instead of the structures of capitalism that tend to impoverish them both.

Meantime, we should remember that the term "suburb" covers many types of communities (Chapter 8). In Europe, many inner suburbs are populated by lower-income immigrants, including large percentages of underemployed or unemployed who live in high-rise tenements. And, as Table 13.3a and b show, many global "suburbs" have more residents than cities considered large in the United States (even if scholars disagree on exactly which suburbs are the largest in the world).

In the United States, the *stereotypical* suburb is a bedroom community of upper-income, mainly or all-white areas beyond the city limits. It features well-manicured lawns and single-family homes, such as those on Wisteria Lane, the home of TV's *Desperate Housewives*.

Yet, U.S. suburbs are much more diverse racially, socially, and economically. The range of suburbs in the United States is considerable: from poor white suburbs; predominantly middle-class African American suburbs; older, shabby industrial suburbs; mixed-use suburbs; rich residential suburbs, and lower-income Latino suburbs (e.g., Huntington Park outside Los Angeles, Berwyn and Stone Park in suburban Chicago) to Asian-dominant suburbs such as Los Angeles's Monterey Park, whose 2000 population was more than 40 percent Chinese American and over 60 percent Asian and Asian American, including Vietnamese and Korean, with a substantial number living in poverty.

In the past two decades or so, particularly in larger metro areas, there has been an upsurge of new ethnic, suburban residents. Activities to serve them often follow but not at the expense of non-ethnicity-based activities. For example, in one upscale Boston suburb with increased numbers of Chinese Americans, in recent years it has not been unusual to come upon a scene like this: "Between reciting Chinese poetry and performing traditional dance routines, [Chinese American] kids munched on McDonald's fries and hunched over Game Boy consoles" (Noonan, 2007).

In the past two decades or so, there have been other momentous city-suburban changes. Importantly,

TABLE 13.3A, B THE WORLD'S LARGEST INCORPORATED SUBURBS, TWO VIEWS**Table 13.3a.***

Rank	City	Population	Metropolitan Area	Nation	Source
1	Giza	2,221,868	Greater Cairo	Egypt	Egypt Census, 1996
2	Quezon City	2,173,831	Metro Manila	Philippines	Philippines Census 2002
3	Bekasi	1,931,976	Greater Jakarta	Indonesia	Indonesia Census 2000
4	Ecatepec de Morelos	1,688,258	Greater Mexico City	Mexico	Mexico Census 2005 CONAPO
5	Kobe	1,528,940	Greater Osaka	Japan	Japan Oct. 2006
6	Tangerang	1,488,666	Greater Jakarta	Indonesia	Indonesia Census 2000
7	Depok	1,353,249	Greater Jakarta	Indonesia	Indonesia Census 2000
8	Kawasaki	1,342,232	Greater Tokyo	Japan	Japan Oct. 2006
9	Guarulhos	1,283,253	Greater São Paulo	Brazil	Brazil IBGE Estimate 2006
10	Thana	1,261,517	Greater Mumbai	India	India Census 2001

*Does not include cities that require exact records of birth, death, and moving, such as in Japan and Brazil, which estimate city populations annually.

Table 13.3b

Rank	City	Population	Metropolitan Area	Nation	Source
1	Bekasi	1,931,976	Greater Jakarta, Jabotabek	Indonesia	Indonesia Census 2000
2	Ecatepec de Morelos	1,688,258	Greater Mexico City	Mexico	Mexico Census 2005 CONAPO
3	Tangerang	1,488,666	Greater Jakarta, Jabotabek	Indonesia	Indonesia Census 2000
4	Depok	1,353,249	Greater Jakarta, Jabotabek	Indonesia	Indonesia Census 2000
5	Kawasaki	1,342,232	Greater Tokyo Area	Japan	Japan Oct. 2006
6	Guarulhos	1,283,253	Greater São Paulo	Brazil	Brazil IBGE Estimate 2006
7	Thana	1,261,517	Greater Mumbai	India	India Census 2001
8	Kalyan	1,193,266	Greater Mumbai	India	India Census 2001
9	Saitama	1,182,000	Greater Tokyo	Japan	Japan Census 2005
10	Caloocan	1,177,604	Metro Manila	Philippines	Philippines Census 2002

Source of Indonesian and Indian population data is citypopulation.de.

poverty has moved into the suburbs in a big way. In the 100 biggest U.S. metro areas, suburban poverty now outranks urban poverty in terms of numbers of people affected. (Note, however, that the poverty rate in U.S. big cities [18.4 percent] remains higher than in their close-in suburbs [9.4 percent].)

Given that many feel that the future portends fewer, not more, property owners, U.S. suburbanites seek to hold the line economically. This condition makes them very tax-sensitive. The upshot is often suburban hostility, particularly in suburbs farther from the urban core, to both government and cities. This hostility coincides with two recent sociospatial developments that have important political consequences:

1. Since 1990, suburban residents are a majority in many states, including the nation's largest, California.
2. Many suburbanites live in edge cities or post-suburbia, settlements that are no longer dependent economically and socially on the urban core.

In brief, scarcity—not familiarity—can breed contempt. Fear can also breed secession from the union—not of South or Sunbelt from North and Rustbelt but of outer suburbs from the urban core. With little hope for a more prosperous future and no sense of community with their urban neighbors, suburbanites are not anxious to share their tax dollars with urban strangers.

Yet, ironically, many suburbs share city-type problems, including poverty, as already noted. As many Big City mayors have long held, a city's problems cannot be walled in. For example, affluent suburban counties around New York City face congestion, drugs, crime, expensive housing, garbage mounds, air pollution, and other so-called urban problems. Further, according to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, in 2005, urbanites did have the highest violent victimization rates, but suburbanites were far from crime-free. For example, six urbanites, four suburbanites, and four rural residents per 1,000 were victims of aggravated assault (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2009).

Nonetheless, few suburbanites apparently see a common future with their urban neighbors. Nor do those seeking high political office. For more than a

quarter-century, perhaps reflecting the demographic shift to the suburbs, no U.S. presidential candidate has addressed specifically urban issues.

So, if you mix economic insecurity, fear for personal safety on city streets, and tense race relations with long-standing cynicism about government, what have you got? A recipe for a volatile brew. Depending on your ideology and optimism–pessimism quotient, you see either (1) the new survival of the fittest, (2) creative challenges, or (3) the war of all against all.

It is noteworthy that when issues are not framed as urban–suburban, U.S. suburbanites seem to follow the Golden Rule. Take health care, for example. One national random sample poll in 2007 (Roberts, 2007) revealed that a vast majority of respondents favored coverage for everyone, presumably urbanites as well as suburbanites and rural dwellers. Similarly, a 2008 poll (*Rasmussen Reports*, 2008) found that 67 percent of respondents thought that the same level of insurance coverage available to members of Congress should be available to everyone. (Note that neither poll asked respondents if they were willing to pay more money to cover insurance for everyone. A poll years earlier did find that suburbanites said they would pay for urban dwellers to be insured.)

To summarize: U.S. cities are creatures of state law. States can grant or take away powers from cities at will. State legislatures spell out city powers in general laws or charters. In some states, cities are granted considerable discretion to determine their own structures and powers under home-rule charters, but even home-rule cities are far from independent. Furthermore, cities have been under the domination of state legislatures, historically controlled by rural interests and antiurban attitudes.

Demographic shifts and reapportionment reduced rural domination. But ironically, suburbs—not cities—gained the most influence and power from these changes. Unhappily for cities, suburban dominance, combined with economic hard times and fiscal austerity, led to a new and grimmer round of antiurbanism.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN A GLOBAL SOCIETY: "TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SKY"

"All politics is local." This maxim, often attributed to the late speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives

Tip O'Neill, means that local interests mold national political issues. Closing a naval base, for example, may be influenced by the local unemployment rate and the clout of the district's congressperson.

But there is another sort of local politics, and it works in reverse: It starts locally and spreads. For instance, the city council of Irvine, a city in postsuburban Orange County, California, passed legislation restricting chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) in the city. The anti-CFC ordinance raised the cost of some goods for local residents and caused hardships for some businesses. Indeed, it seemed idealistic, even quixotic, for one city council to try to solve the ozone depletion situation and to take responsibility for the sky. So why did they do it? Perhaps the idea of locality takes on renewed importance as global problems feel overwhelming, and political awareness can lead to a feeling of helplessness if some action isn't taken. Perhaps they asked themselves, "If not us, who?" and refused to accept the answer of "Nobody."

Not a prairie fire but at least a flashlight, the action of one city, Irvine, illuminated the actions of other localities. Indeed, many other places, from California and New York to Japan's Shiga Prefecture, have taken responsibility for the sky...and the earth...and the water...and their fellow beings. In Detroit, 125 teenagers and young adults worked with local residents to rehabilitate houses and march against crack houses as part of a Green Cities project. Two communities, one in Japan and the other in Siberia, have a "sister lake" relationship; they jointly study the flight of birds that migrate to and from their areas. And so on.

To conclude: Local actions—from passing anti-pollution and gun-control ordinances to conducting municipal foreign policy—have wider political significance. Such local deeds not only encourage collective action but also signal local resistance to the power of the nation-state.

FORMS OF CITY GOVERNMENT

Globally, forms and functions of municipal government differ widely—from Bolivia's elected mayors and councils and Bangladesh's (proposed) four-tier system to the (mega)city-state of Singapore, with its three-tiered local system. Since 1990, many sub-national governments have undergone fundamental transfor-

mation. For example, before 1990, most countries in East Asia were highly centralized, but now local or regional governments from China to Thailand are responsible for delivering some critical services and economic development.

Some comments and concepts we will discuss (e.g., know-who) may or may not apply to local governments globally. Given space constraints, here we will discuss only forms of city government in the United States.

As suggested, the first step in understanding how U.S. cities (including suburban cities) work is to clarify the city-state relationship. The second step entails understanding how a city's internal government is structured.

Getting something done in a city takes know-how and *know-who*. Who has the authority to condemn an unsafe building? What bureaucrat can grant a permit to hold a rally in the park? Can the mayor fire the school superintendent who has ordered the closing of the high school for his own birthday? Knowing whom to go to and how to get something done begins with an understanding of a city's governmental form.

Most U.S. city governments fall into one of three categories: the mayor-council form, the council-manager form, and the commission form. (In New England, town meetings also exist; they are used mainly by cities with less than 10,000 population and exclusively by cities with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants.) Large U.S. cities generally have a mayor-council form. Some smaller cities also follow this model.

However, many smaller and medium-sized communities, particularly metropolitan suburbs that grew up in this century, have a city council-manager form. Here, a city manager, appointed by the city council and accountable to that legislative body, plays a key leadership role, and the elected mayor is less important.

Finally, some cities have a commission form of government. Here, elected commissioners act collectively as the city council and individually as heads of city departments.

MAYOR-COUNCIL FORM

The **mayor-council form** is the most common form of city government in the United States. It is also the predominant form in large cities. The organization

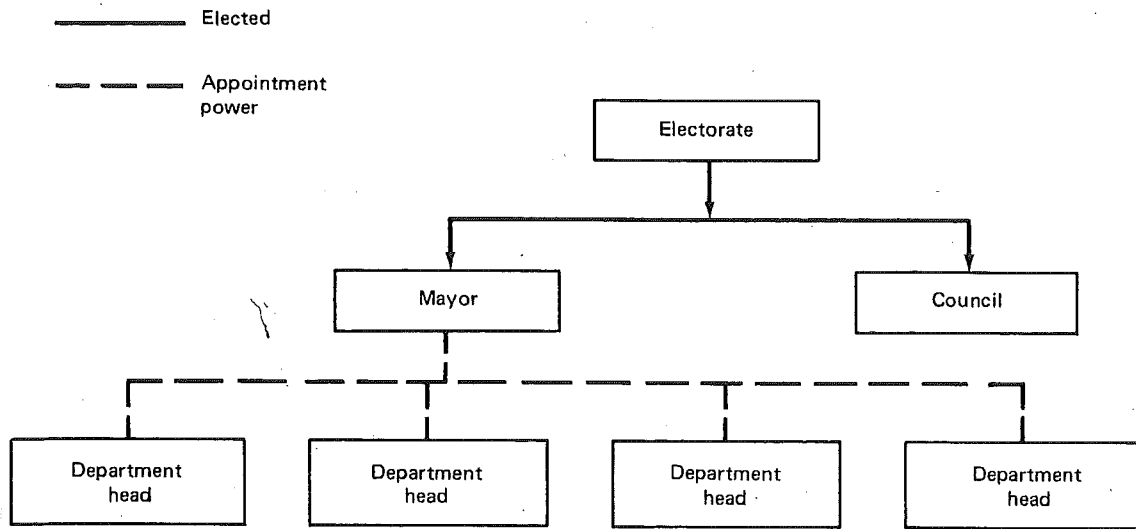


Fig. 13.2 THE MAYOR-COUNCIL FORM OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THE UNITED STATES.

chart in Figure 13.2 shows that under this form of government mayors typically have appointment power—that is, they can appoint department heads. They do not have this power in council-manager cities.

The organization chart also shows that the mayor and city council are elected independently. The mayor's independent elected status and significant appointment power indicate that under the mayor-council form mayors have important executive powers. Other factors, not revealed on the organization chart, contribute to the mayor's role as executive leader. These may include the ability to intervene directly in the conduct of city government operations, to veto the city's budget, and to initiate legislation.

COUNCIL-MANAGER FORM

Consider Figure 13.3. The fact that the mayor is in a box, somewhere off in left field, is a significant feature of the council-manager form of government. Under this form, which is common in many medium-sized U.S. communities, the mayor has much less power and authority than in a mayor-council government. The important actor in this fairly recent form of government is the city manager, appointed by the city council, as Figure 13.3 indicates. Usually, the manager serves at the pleasure of the elected city council and

can be removed at any time if a majority of councillors so decide. The city manager, in turn, typically has the power to hire and fire heads of city departments. He or she is also responsible for preparing the city budget, developing policy recommendations for the council's action, and overseeing city government.

In many cities, the city manager draws a bigger salary than the mayor or council members (who may be part-time or amateur administrators). Further, the city manager has a larger personal staff and more control over the flow of information than the mayor or councillors. This combination of professional expertise and access to and control over information gives city managers informal power beyond what is revealed in organization charts.

COMMISSION FORM

Under the commission form of government, voters elect a relatively small number of commissioners, who play a dual role as legislators and executives. Commissioners approve legislation and also head the city's departments.

The commission form was introduced in Galveston, Texas, following a flood in 1900 that left the city and its finances under water. Today, no U.S. city with a population over 500,000 operates under this form—for

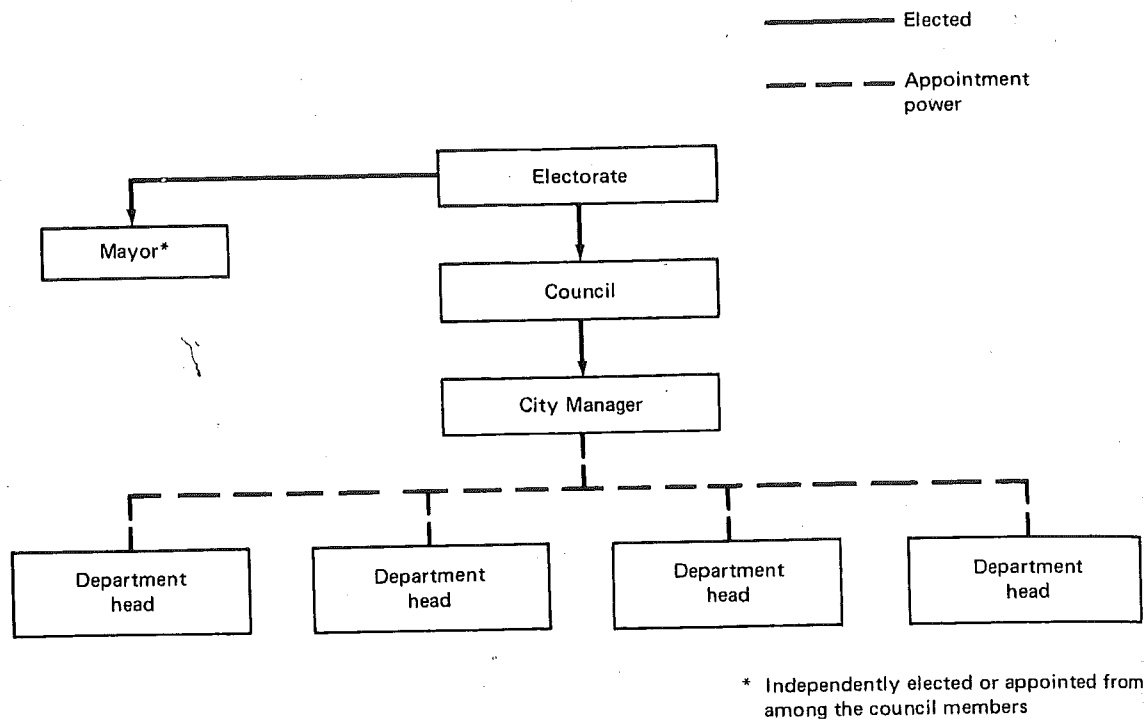
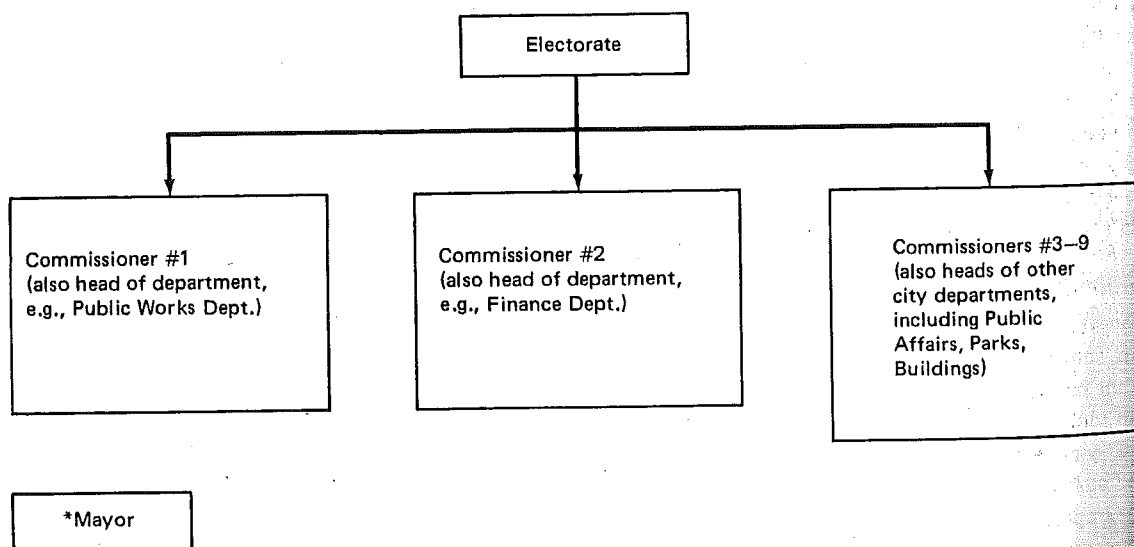


Fig. 13.3 THE COUNCIL-MANAGER FORM OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THE UNITED STATES.



* Usually appointed from among commissioners.

Fig. 13.4 THE COMMISSION FORM OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THE UNITED STATES.

good reasons. As Figure 13.4 shows, there is no strong executive leader. Power is exercised collectively by the city commissioners—the parks commissioner, police commissioner, and so on. Historically, this ideal of collective leadership has resulted in lack of coordination and government by amateurs.

To conclude: Few cities today use the commission form, the mayor-council structure predominates in larger cities, and council-manager governments are most commonly found in medium-sized cities and suburbs. Why is the council-manager form so attractive to medium-sized communities and so unattractive to large cities? To understand this, some background is necessary.

The city manager plan was initiated in Staunton, Virginia, in 1908. It spread slowly throughout the nation up to the 1940s. After World War II, the council-manager form became widespread in medium-sized communities, especially upper-income, white suburbs. Generally speaking, these suburbanites thought that the council-manager form would ensure professional, businesslike government and guard against something defined as inefficient, unprofessional, and corrupt: big-city politics. Many observers think that council-manager governments are best suited to relatively homogeneous white-collar communities. Why? Because there the political representation of diverse interests is not important. Thus, ordinarily we shouldn't expect to find a city manager running a city composed of various ethnic groups and a significant blue-collar population. Typically, mayors operate in cities that mediate among diverse interests, not cities that seek primarily to create pleasant living conditions.

ORGANIZATION OF CITY GOVERNMENTS

MAYORS, STRONG OR WEAK

In U.S. cities with mayor-council governments, the mayor is popularly considered to be the head of city government, the responsible official with whom the local buck stops. But as the song says, "It ain't necessarily so." Often, a mayor is powerless to improve bus service, create jobs for the unemployed, or reorganize the delivery of city services. Although decades old, the following exchange before a congressional committee between then U.S. Senator Abraham Ribicoff

(D.-Conn.) and then mayor of Los Angeles, Sam Yorty, is instructive:

Senator Ribicoff: As I listened to your testimony, Mayor Yorty, I made some notes. This morning you have really waived authority and responsibility in the following areas: schools, welfare, transportation, employment, health, and housing, which leaves you as head of a city with a ceremonial function, police, and recreation.

Mayor Yorty: That is right, and fire.

Senator Ribicoff: And fire.

Mayor Yorty: Yes.

Senator Ribicoff: Collecting sewage?

Mayor Yorty: Sanitation; that is right.

Senator Ribicoff: In other words, basically you lack jurisdiction, authority, responsibility for what makes a city move?

Mayor Yorty: That is exactly it. (U.S. Senate, 1966-1967:774)

In this exchange, Senator Ribicoff seems to blame Mayor Yorty for "waiving" responsibility. But in fact, Yorty never had the responsibility. Then, as now, in Los Angeles (and many other cities), mayors have limited powers, making them weak chief executives. Nonetheless, as outgoing San Francisco Mayor Dianne Feinstein (and later U.S. senator) warned her successor, "Anytime there's trouble, whether [the] Muni[cipal railway] breaks down or someone is cited for double parking, they all come to you. There is no Teflon with this job" (1988:5).

Under the weak mayor-council arrangement, the city council or independent administrative boards dominate city decision making. Further, mayors (either strong or weak) have no authority to control many independent units of government within their political boundaries (e.g., school districts), as we shall soon see.

In weak-mayor governments, administrative boards or commissions exercise power independently of the mayor (who typically appoints members and can remove them). This arrangement serves to broaden the base of political participation. Indeed, city boards are often appointed with a keen eye on local power blocs. In San Francisco, for example, members of appointed boards reflect the city's ethnic and cultural pluralism.

They are composed of a mix of African Americans, whites, Latinos, Asian Americans, single parents, labor unionists, real estate brokers, gays and lesbians, environmentalists, and so forth.

Weak or strong, mayors often have little discretion over city money. In San Francisco, for example, the mayor controls only about 30 cents out of every budget dollar. The rest has to be spent on programs mandated by federal and state government, such as health care and jails.

HYPERPLURALISM AND GOVERNMENT BY BUREAUCRATS

A weak-mayor form of government is attractive to many citizens because it can lead to a government that is responsive to diverse interest groups. But does it lead to responsible government? No, say many political scientists. Years ago, Frederick Wirt made a strong case for the idea that the costs of the weak-mayor form outweigh its benefits.

Political scientist Wirt (1971:114) argued that the price paid for decentralized, fractionated power in a pluralistic city is an inability to formulate and implement long-range public policy. Wirt argued that if successful policy outcomes rest on the agreement of many disparate private groups and public authorities, the power of one component to block any action is magnified. The result, he said, is that over time only minor policy adjustments are possible.

According to Wirt, the result of so many disparate actors playing the political game is **hyperpluralism**. Having too many (*hyper*) different decision points and too many groups with veto power (*pluralism*) paralyzes public policymaking. The result, Wirt said, is non-decision making.

In the absence of strong executive leadership and the presence of disparate competing factions, who runs a heterogeneous U.S. city? According to Wirt, the bureaucrats take over. He claimed that the result is a "government by clerks": long-staying, professional civil servants who were never elected and thus can't be recalled. They may be regulated by professional norms of service and efficiency, but they're not accountable to the citizenry. (Note: Unlike Wirt, some think that a "government by clerks"—composed of a competent and loyal bureaucracy—is not such a bad option.)

The growing strength of municipal unions further erodes city executives' power and authority. Max Weber (Chapter 11) predicted what some call the *bureaucratic phenomenon*—the rise and expansion of rational but fearsome bureaucratic administration and politics.

Decades ago, many studies of big-city politics found decision making there to be hopelessly fractionated (e.g., Sayre and Kaufman, 1960). Today, some wonder if cities are ungovernable; they ask whether or not there are any solutions to unresponsive bureaucracies, proliferating and competing interest groups, weak control over public employees, and dwindling fiscal resources. But others argue that bureaucracies can become responsive, and communities can be empowered if only the entrepreneurial spirit is introduced. And still others, as we shall see in Chapter 14, have a different slant altogether. They claim that it doesn't matter if bureaucrats or bosses run the town; neither is accountable to the citizens, and neither has the interests of most citizens in mind. Among other things, what is needed, they say, is more citizen participation and grassroots organizing.

To conclude: The formal structure of government limits leadership. Weak mayors have a hard time providing executive leadership and gathering resources to meet urban needs. Even strong mayors, who have more authority to meet some urban needs, can't control many key policy areas that have an impact on the quality of life in their cities. Nonetheless, mayors—weak or strong—bear the brunt of public dismay when trouble occurs.

Given their limited legal power, weak mayors must use informal powers to push through their programs. These include the power to persuade, the support of public opinion, and, in some cases, the influence that comes from controlling a well-oiled political machine. (Box 13.1 outlines some factors that make a mayor weak or strong.)

THE CONTEXT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

I have hinted at one reason that U.S. mayors are unable to govern effectively: They can't control other units of government. Both strong and weak mayors operate in the context of a fragmented metropolis and a global economy.

BOX 13.1 WHAT MAKES A MAYOR STRONG OR WEAK**Legal Structure****Strong**

1. Mayor-council plan, which grants the mayor the following powers in the city charter:
 - a. A 4-year term of office with possible reelection for many terms
 - b. Power to appoint and remove city commissioners and/or department heads at will
 - c. Power over the city budget (e.g., the right to submit an executive budget or have veto power over items in the budget)

Weak

1. Council-manager or commission form of government, with only a ceremonial role for the mayor
2. Mayor-council plan, in which the city charter limits the mayor's power in the following ways:
 - a. A short term of office (e.g., 2 years)
 - b. Commissioners and department heads not subject to the mayor's authority (e.g., commissioners appointed by the city council, agency heads protected by civil service)
 - c. Little or no authority over budget matters

Local Government Context

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. State constitution and/or general laws and/or city charter provisions do not significantly limit city authority 2. City performs many important local government functions | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. State constitution and/or general law and/or city charter provisions limit city authority significantly 2. Other layers of government (county, special districts, etc.) |
|--|---|

Personal Power and Influence

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An effective political organization (e.g., a well-oiled political machine) 2. Strong support from powerful local interests, such as the financial/business community or labor | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A weak or substantially nonexistent political organization 2. Lack of support from powerful local interests |
|---|---|

FRAGMENTATION OF THE METROPOLIS

To paraphrase Abraham Lincoln (who once commented that "God must love the common man, he made so many of them" (see Cyber National International, 1997-2003), we could say that God must have loved cities too because She or He made so many of them. Over the decades this has remained the case. Indeed, there are more, not fewer, units of most local government in the United States now than 20 or 30 years ago. (The big exception is school districts, greatly consolidated since the 1950s.) By July 30, 2002, there were 87,849 units of local government. Of these, 38,971 were general-purpose local governments—3,034 county governments and 35,937 subcounty governments, including 19,431 municipal governments. The rest, over 50 percent of the total, were "special-purpose" local governments, including 13,522 school districts (a significant drop from 67,355 in 1952) and 35,356 special districts (see Table 13.4).

To further complicate matters, local government is organized in a crazy quilt pattern of separate and

often overlapping types. To unravel the intricacies of this crazy quilt, some basic vocabulary is necessary. **Municipality** is the U.S. Census Bureau's term for general-purpose units of local government. Cities are general-purpose governments; that is, they undertake a variety of functions and provide a range of services. Hence, by definition, *cities are municipalities*. *Towns, townships, and boroughs are also municipalities*. Other units of local government—separate from municipalities—include school districts, other special districts, and counties. *Fragmentation, proliferation, and Balkanization* are terms often used to refer to this pattern of local government.

This is the way the crazy quilt of local government is patterned within a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA): Cities and other municipalities lie within the boundaries of a county. Within city boundaries (and often extending beyond them) are school districts and various other special districts that are independent of the city. Each unit of government—county, city, special district, school district—is a separate legal entity. This is important for analyzing how local government operates.

TABLE 13.4 SPECIAL DISTRICTS, BY FUNCTION, 2002.

Function	Number
Total	35,356
Total single-function districts	32,157
Natural resources	7,026
Fire protection	5,743
Water supply	3,423
Housing and community development	3,413
Sewerage	2,020
Cemeteries	1,670
Libraries	1,582
Parks and recreation	1,314
Highways	767
Health	743
Hospitals	735
Education	530
Airports	512
Utilities other than water supply	485
Other	2,194
Multiple-function districts	3,199

Source: Adapted from Table D, p. 7, U.S. Census Bureau, July 2002 (http://ftp2.census.gov/govs/cog/2002COGprelim_report.pdf).

SPECIAL DISTRICTS

Special districts are the most widespread type of local government in the United States, and their number keeps growing. As of 2002, there were 35,356 special-district governments; in 1942, there were only 8,299.

One of three types of "special-purpose governments" (the others are corporations and authorities) in the United States, they are set up to serve either a single purpose (e.g., sewage treatment, housing-community development, hospital services, or fire protection) or several purposes, such as sewage and water provision.

Directors of special districts are not accountable to city or county government officials because special districts are totally separate legal entities. Their boundaries do not necessarily conform to those of any other local government unit. Often, they overlap the boundaries of the city and each other.

The existence of independent, overlapping special districts can create problems for the coordination of public services. In one unincorporated area of Portland, Oregon, for example, 11 separate special districts provide various services to area residents. No boundaries of these 11 special districts are contiguous. Some residents live within the borders of one district but just outside the borders of another. Further, each of the 11 districts has its own governing body, which is totally separate from all other local government units. Uncoordinated services can result if sewer district supervisors use plan A for digging ditches while water district supervisors use plan B for supplying water.

Many states have attempted to limit the proliferation of special districts and to consolidate existing ones. These efforts have met with only limited success.

Why are special districts so popular? The main reason is that special districts are separate from other local governments and, thus, not subject to their debt limits. Special districts can issue bonds or borrow money after other local governments have reached the legal limits of their borrowing authority. For example, residents who want more sewers in a city that has already reached its debt limit might form an independent sewer district. The new special district could sell bonds to finance the sewer construction, unrestricted by the city debt limit. Also, districts can be drawn around a functional area, regardless of local government boundaries. A mosquito-abatement district may cover the swampy part of three cities.

COUNTIES (INCLUDING URBAN COUNTIES)

Historically, the county has proved to be a very stable unit of government; its boundaries have generally remained unchanged for decades. For this reason, the county is used by the U.S. Census Bureau as the basic unit of the MSA.

In rural areas where there are no incorporated cities, county government acts as the general-purpose local government; typically, it regulates land use, licenses businesses, and provides police and fire protection. In urban areas, cities usually take over the basic general-purpose local government functions for their residents. In urban areas, counties serve

as the general-purpose local government only for the unincorporated territory that lies within them. Counties also may provide some services to the residents of cities within their boundaries. For example, frequently the county operates libraries within both cities and unincorporated areas.

In recent times, a new spatial-demographic entity has emerged: the **urban county**. This term is used in various ways. It may refer to (1) a county that has assumed comprehensive authority over governmental functions, as in the case of Miami-Dade County, Florida; (2) any county with a large, dense population, giving it the characteristics of a city; or (3) a county that meets specified population size and legal power requirements to be eligible for certain federal funds.

Urban counties will probably become increasingly important. Recognizing this, some states have passed legislation that treats urban counties essentially as cities.

THE STATE'S ROLE IN URBAN AFFAIRS

Apart from their formal legal power, states exert power and authority over cities in many ways. For example, state programs operate within a city's boundaries, and cities may have little or no influence on these programs. Highway construction is illustrative. A state-funded highway can dramatically affect local land use, industrial location, and housing. Yet those cities through which it passes have no voice in determining its route.

The level of state involvement with urban issues varies widely. After the War on Poverty and other Great Society programs of the 1960s, U.S. statehouses were often bypassed by federal grants directly to city halls or neighborhood groups, thus decreasing state clout over their cities. However, some states have taken an active role, creating institutions to deal with their cities.

To summarize: City governments are only one of several units of local government in the United States. Counties, school districts, and other special districts also exist, often performing city-like functions. In MSAs, there is a crazy quilt of fragmented and overlapping municipalities, counties, school districts, and other special districts. Some states also play a significant role in local affairs.

AREAWIDE PLANNING EFFORTS

In theory, the variety and vast array of decentralized local governments ensure citizens a democratic voice in matters that directly affect their lives. In practice, however, things are quite different.

For one thing, voters have little or no control over the most widespread of all local governments: the special district. Critics charge that supervisors of special districts often put special interests, particularly private business, or technical concerns above the public interest. Influential labor negotiator Theodore W. Kheel, for one argued that the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (a multistate special district which owned the World Trade Center) is dominated by the interests of its corporate bondholders. In effect, Kheel said, the Port Authority serves the rich and is indifferent to the needs of people in the New York City area (Kheel, [1969] 1971:443-449).

For another thing, many local issues, particularly land-use and economic growth policies, have area-wide effects. If city A permits a large chemical factory to locate there, nearby cities can be affected (by pollution, new transport patterns, etc.). But the affected cities have no say in the matter. Thus, the crazy-quilt pattern of fragmented local government appears to give metropolitan residents the worst of both worlds: little democratic control and lack of coordinated policies.

Pushed largely by federal government requirements or incentives, most MSAs have established some kind of metropolitanwide planning organization. These organizations, called either a **council of governments (COG)** or an **areawide planning organization**, are strictly voluntary and advisory. Local governments are not legally required to follow their recommendations. Consequently, COGs operate on good will. And sometimes good will runs smack into a fiscal crunch or serious political disagreement. The case of a large COG, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), is instructive. ABAG is the land-use planning agency for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area, and by some accounts, it is a powerful lobbying group. Besides conducting research and advising on water quality and other matters, ABAG sets mandates for low-income housing.

Do COGs represent the wave of the future for interlocal cooperation and areawide coordination? Not likely. To date, most have been little more than intergovernmental talk shows: Views are expressed, but nothing much happens—unless the going gets rough. Then, cities and other local governments walk out. (Example: Years ago, three cities, claiming lack of resources to comply with the housing guidelines, pulled out of ABAG.)

CHANGING GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURES AND PATTERNS

BROAD REGIONAL GOVERNMENT?

Decades ago, a leading population analyst wondered how the fragmentation of local government could handle enormous webs of urbanization that were the United States's future. He advised that the best way to deal with urban regions that were politically fragmented, socially atomized, and economically complex would be broad regional government.

In the intervening years, broad regional government has often been viewed as a rational response to governmental fragmentation. And it has been adopted by some cities globally, notably Barcelona, Spain.

But regional government has not been politically acceptable in the United States. Indeed, even regional agencies for one function—say, public transit—can be suspect. Anyone who thinks politicians in Oakland, San Francisco, and the surrounding suburban cities will agree to unify the Bay Area's competing transit systems, for example, is under the influence of a legal or illegal substance.

Is small, fragmented government, and a great deal of it, more or less democratic than other options? Here, ideology determines one's views. Neoconservatives assume that small governments are more responsive to citizens' preferences than big, bureaucratic ones. Thus, they prefer fragmentation to centralized governments. Others hold diametrically opposed views. Some years ago political scientist Gregory R. Weiher (1991:195), one dissenting voice, wrote that fragmented local government is *antidemocratic*: "The American model of democracy," Weiher wrote, "requires a citizenry in which social groups are not radically isolated from one another"; but "the system of urban jurisdictional boundaries" sponsors segregation of many kinds:

"whites from blacks, lower income groups from the middle class, religious groups from one another." Thus, in his view, fragmentation is an instrument of antidemocracy.

There are some strong regional agencies in the United States as well as regional land-use planning organizations. There is even one umbrella-type agency that is essentially an areawide planning and coordinating agency: the Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities, Minneapolis-St. Paul, area. It has a tax-sharing formula whereby the region shares some of the tax revenue from new development. It serves a seven-county metro area, providing some essential services to the region, including the region's largest bus system.

As of the late 2000s however, there is no broad-based regional government in the United States. It has proved to be too hard of a sell politically.

How, then, are—and will—public services be delivered to metropolitan and megalopolitan residents? Probably, mostly by muddling through. Thus far, public services have been provided via a combination of traditional responses, minor adaptations, and innovative experiments. (It is noteworthy that in some areas, typically upscale, some formerly public services have been replaced or supplemented by private guards, private schools, and private police.)

TRADITIONAL RESPONSES AND MINOR ADAPTATIONS

On the more traditional side, residents of the urban fringe (unincorporated areas near a municipality that have urban service needs) are getting such urban services as police and fire protection in various ways: (1) by incorporation, thus creating a new municipality; (2) by contracting with the county or a nearby municipality for services; (3) by annexation; and (4) by forming special districts. Each of these techniques has its own problems and prospects.

Incorporation creates yet another local government, thereby adding to local fragmentation. Further, if its county is already financially strapped, the newly incorporated city can deprive the county of needed revenue. Contracting for services allows urban fringe residents to keep their highly valued rural environment, but at whose expense? Some observers feel that under

contracting arrangements, city residents pay more than their fair share because residents of unincorporated areas don't pay for large capital investments (jails, firehouses, etc.) or for training city employees.

The problem of coordinating special districts has already been noted. Recall also that the number of special districts has grown enormously since the 1950s, resulting in even more fragmentation of the metropolis.

Annexation is the only traditional response that doesn't lead to an increased number of local governments. Annexation results in political integration rather than metropolitan government. However, since it requires boundary changes, annexation is not feasible in many MSAs, where most land is already incorporated into municipalities.

To cope with disputes over annexation, incorporation, and special district formation, some states have set up boundary commissions. So far, they have helped somewhat to check the further proliferation of local governments, but they have had little success in reforming the existing crazy quilt of local governments in the metropolis.

INNOVATIVE EXPERIMENTS

In France, Canada, and West Bengal, to take just a few examples, politicians have successfully forged innovations in sub-national governments in recent decades. This has not been the case in the United States. From after World War II until the 1970s, a few scholars and politicians in the United States touted innovative experiments in regional and metropolitan government, but attempts at structural innovation sputtered by the 1990s.

Since 2000, there has been almost none in the United States (the exception: Louisville's consolidation with suburban Jefferson County in 2000). Further, scholarly as well as citizen interest in structural changes at the local and regional levels of government became like the Spice Girls, grunge, and fluorescent T-shirts: out of style.

In the United States, the most ambitious proposals—broad regional government and a single, unified metropolitan government (called a "one-tier" or "one-level" government)—remain mere plans on a drawing board. But in North America, there are four

models of structural change currently in operation plus one entrepreneurial framework for delivering public services.

Metro: To date, the most ambitious effort at structural change in North America is the metropolitan government of Toronto, Canada. Metropolitan Toronto first established a "two-tier" federation in 1953; Metro operated until 1997 when it was again transformed.

The original Metro consisted of a single, areawide government as the first tier and the preexisting local governments as the second tier. The newly created metropolitanwide first tier, called the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto (or Metro), was governed by representatives from the preexisting governments: Toronto's municipal government plus 12 suburban governments. Metro had jurisdiction over the entire metropolitan area. It had power over many important urban functions: property assessment, water supply, sewage disposal, mass transit, health services, welfare, administration of justice, arterial roads, parks, public housing, redevelopment, and planning.

Under Toronto's two-tier plan, some functions were retained by local governments while others were shared with Metro. For instance, Metro maintained reservoirs and pumping stations, but the second tier of local governments handled the distribution of water to their residents. By the 1990s, the population of the Greater Toronto area had grown enormously, and the area had become, according to the United Nations, "the most multicultural city [*sic*] in the world" (in MOST Clearing House, n.d.).

By the end of the twentieth century, many believed that Metro had become irrelevant because it no longer covered most of the population in the ever-growing urban area. (In 2005, the Greater Toronto area had a population of about 5.8 million residents.) After a referendum, which failed to win voter support in all six municipalities involved, an amalgamation was pushed through by the ruling Ontario political party. Thus, in 1998 Metro morphed into a regional municipality formed of smaller

municipalities. The larger Metro government was retained, and the existing city of Toronto and five other smaller municipalities became a new city of Toronto.

Note that a Toronto-like framework was adapted in Montreal, Canada, in 2002. However, many suburbanites, particularly English-speaking and rich ones, protested the annexations of their suburbs into the proposed federated system; they viewed a federation as a power grab by larger cities, particularly French-identified Montreal. The Montreal Urban Community was transformed into a federated system, but as of 2006, 32 out of the 89 constituent communities voted to "demerge" or de-amalgamate.

The comprehensive urban county: Short of federation or amalgamation, there is another model of structural change: the comprehensive urban county plan. Operating in Miami-Dade County, Florida, since 1957, a two-tier government gives the county government a powerful and integrating role over an area of 2,054 square miles and 27 municipalities.

Among its functions, the comprehensive urban county government (Figure 13.5) is authorized to promote the entire area's economy, own and operate mass-transit systems, construct expressways, provide uniform health and welfare services, and maintain central records and communication for fire and police protection.

Consolidation: City-county consolidation is another technique. It is a one-government, not a two-tier, approach.

Usually, this type of governmental reorganization consists of the total or substantial merging of the county government with the largest city (or all municipalities) within its boundaries. From World War II to the 1990s, there were four major city-county consolidations, three of which remain: Jacksonville-Duval County, Florida (1967), which in 1992 became a *former* consolidation; Baton Rouge-East Baton Rouge Parish (the parish is Louisiana's equivalent of the county) in 1947; Nashville-Davidson County, Tennessee (1962); and Indianapolis-Marion County, Indiana (1969).

In the 1990s, two Georgia city-county consolidations took place: Athens-Clarke County and Augusta-Richmond County.

Special districts: A more moderate type of institutional change is the formation of metropolitanwide special districts, either single- or multipurpose in nature. The former owner of the long-gone World Trade Center in New York City, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, is such a special district, one that crosses state as well as municipal boundaries.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

The U.S. government's contracting out to private firms is neither new nor experimental. Wells Fargo Bank horseback riders, known as the Pony Express, delivered the mail west of the Mississippi on contract to the U.S. government. Later, starting in World War II, millions of private employees worked in defense-connected industries on government contracts.

More recently, private soldiers working for contractor Blackwater (better known for assignments in war zones such as Iraq) patrolled post-Katrina streets in New Orleans (Scahill, 2007). (Some claim that the U.S. government "outsources" intelligence work to private contractors, including Lockheed Martin and General Dynamics. They estimate that between 50 and 70 percent of U.S. intelligence work, training, and technology are handled by private firms, making it a sector of at least \$20 billion [Chaterjee in Sunnucks, 2007; Shorrock, 2008a]).

What is new at the local level is the growth and range of privatization (also called "privatism"). In the Reagan era, many U.S. communities faced tax revolts, cutbacks in federal funds, shrinking tax collections due to economic recession, and fiscal austerity with continuing demands for services—all at the same time! Localities turned to "entrepreneurial government" as a way to meet the challenges. Local governments contracted with private firms for services or entered partnerships with businesses. At least 75 communities in 15 states, mainly new suburbs and cities hard pressed for revenue, contracted with private companies to provide protection against fire.

Contracting out to private companies or nonprofit organizations became widespread in many U.S. cities.

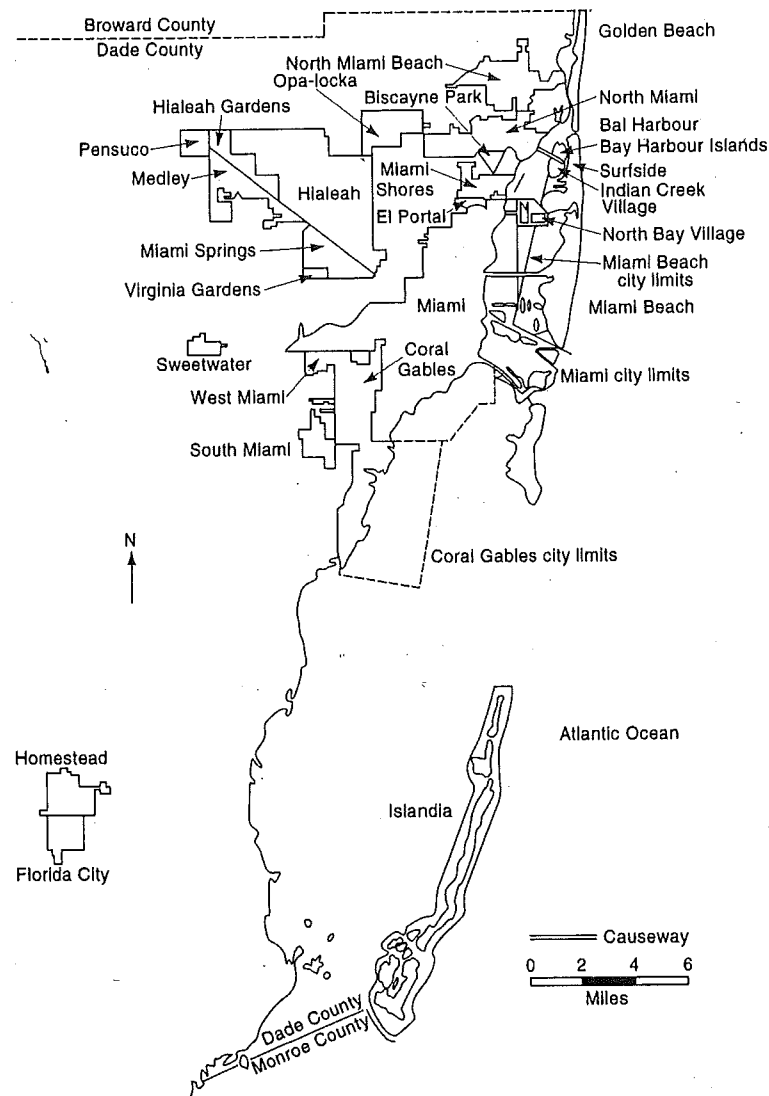


Fig. 13.5 METROPOLITAN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA. In its early years, the metropolitan government in Miami-Dade County (formerly Dade County), faced opposition and a continuing struggle between the county and municipalities, the two levels of government that composed it. Later, however, residents turned their attention from government structure to less abstract issues, such as racial and ethnic tension, changing demographics, hurricane disaster relief, high crime rates, and poverty. By 2005, poverty rates had remained essentially unchanged since 1979 (although the county's population doubled between 1960 and 1990). Those affected disproportionately by high poverty rates as of 2007 were Hispanics, the majority group in the county (61 percent of the total population with about 17 percent living in poverty), and African Americans, with about 29 percent below the poverty line (Miami-Dade County's Planning and Zoning Department, 2007, <http://www.co.miami-dade.fl.us/planzone/pdf/Overview%20of%20the%20Socio-Economic.pdf>). Also by 2007, Miami-Dade's county manager presided over 30,000 employees, 60 departments serving over 2.3 million residents, and a budget of \$6.9 billion.

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The range includes Philadelphia's operation of golf courses, homeless shelters, and parking enforcement to private enterprises in Phoenix, Arizona, running building and grounds maintenance, landfill operations, the bus system, garbage collection, and street maintenance. Other cities sold museums to private businesses under leaseback arrangements or contracted out the running of jails and prisons.

The story of Ecorse, Michigan, is instructive. In the 1950s, this small industrial town downriver from Detroit boomed. By the early 1980s, plant closings around Detroit plus cutbacks threatened to nearly sink Ecorse. Indeed, Ecorse became the first U.S. city to go into receivership. The court told an expert on city finance to close Ecorse's gap between revenue and expenditures. What the expert did was to privatize. He contracted out garbage pickups, public works, animal control, and other services. From 1986 to 1991, the \$6-million city deficit had been turned into a \$100,000 surplus.

Privatization boosters in the United States included Bill Clinton when he was president and many so-called New Democrats. This suggests that in less than a generation people in the United States had changed their expectations of government. In 1968, Robert Kennedy ran for president on a liberal platform, arguing that government was an instrument for the public good. By 1992, the three major candidates for president—Republican, Democrat, and United We Stand—seemed to share the belief that government was the enemy. Even in recent years, U.S. presidential candidates (including sitting senators) have run campaigns as "outsiders" or platforms vowing to "change Washington."

Candidates' running away from identification with government coincided with calls to "reinvent government" and to privatize public services. One best-selling book, *Reinventing Government* (1992), had great impact. (Some, including Shorrock [2008b], claim that Vice President Al Gore was particularly taken with the efficiency claims of privatization.) Written by privatization's leading U.S. advocate, David Osborne, and his coauthor Ted Gaebler, a former city manager in California, it argued that local government bureaucracy had outlived its mission (to fight corruption) and usefulness. Their fix: more market-oriented government to meet declining revenues

and increasing demands for consumer services. Subsequently, Osborne and Peter Plastrik offered strategies for *Banishing Bureaucracy* (1998) and suggested tools for transforming government (2001).

THE REPORT CARD

Have these innovations been success stories or not? Opinions differ widely. Most observers think that Toronto's two-tier government has made substantial strides toward rational policymaking for the metropolis.

Comprehensive urban counties: Scholars give only a C or C+ to Miami-Dade County's comprehensive urban county plan. One assessment points to considerable instability in the relationship between the urban county government and preexisting municipal governments, as well as continuing fiscal and administrative problems. And some say that the Miami-Dade County's two-tier arrangement suffered from continuing rivalry between the county and cities for the allegiance and control of their citizenry. Meanwhile, government structure is not a burning issue for Miami-Dade residents; they are more interested in less abstract issues such as jobs, crime, and racial-ethnic tension.

Consolidations: City-county consolidations face great opposition, usually from outlying residents who must approve the consolidation by popular vote. But sometimes opposition comes from central city residents (who also must approve the change).

Special districts: As for the most moderate structural reform, the metropolitanwide special district, it has made significant gains in dealing with pressing metropolitan needs but is limited to one or a few functions. Further, like special districts that are not metropolitanwide, it is criticized for its nonaccountability to the people it serves.

Privatization: Privatization has vocal supporters and detractors. Boosters praise its cost savings, efficiency, and accountability. Libertarians tend to be its biggest cheerleader. Osborne and Plastrik (1998) claim that Indianapolis saved more than \$1 million over 7 years by privatizing. Detractors disagree for a host of

reasons. Neoconservative thinkers don't want to reinvent government; they want to *disinvent* government—at least until recently, they said they did. Some wanted less bureaucracy, which meant less government. But some liberal critics call contracting out a union-busting strategy designed to weaken or destroy public employee unions by wringing concessions from them. Further, they note, governments are a major employer of so-called minorities; reducing government jobs has a disproportionately negative impact on people of color and women. Others fear that if public schools and prisons are turned over to for-profit agencies, there will be less accountability to all citizens or, they warn, private prisons and private jails threaten civil rights, leaving prisoners with less protection against brutality and arbitrary discipline and not guaranteeing “customers” the rights of citizens.

Other criticisms of privatization abound. One concerns the privatized services' ability to serve everyone equally. For example, they claim that private fire departments left nonsubscribers' homes burning while fighting fires at subscribers' homes. Meantime, some critics warn of opportunities for a new kind of bossism; they fear that the contract bidding process could degenerate into patronage in pinstripes.

Finally, radical scholars and activists wonder who wins the most under privatization. Some think that the profit motive may be a powerful incentive but ill-suited to achieving public-policy objectives because the payoffs serve narrow, private interests. Sometime ago, Harvard scholar Elaine Bernard (1993) offered a more blistering critique, saying that privatism is part of a conscious effort by business to decrease public expectations of government and thereby limit more progressive options.

To conclude: It appears that the current crazy quilt of local government is being patched up with bits and pieces. There is no whole new cloth.

Why have efforts to reform local government structure met with so little success? First, many interest groups correctly perceive that major structural changes would not be in their narrowly defined

self-interest. Suburbanites, for example, tend to oppose any reform that links their future to the fiscal and political problems of their nearby city. African American and Latino leaders in big cities often oppose metropolitanwide government because they could lose their recently won power in some central cities. Northern Democrats tend to resist metropolitanwide government if Republicans form a numerical majority in the metro area as a whole but not in the central city.

Second, structural reform is hard to sell to voters. By contrast, metropolitanwide special districts can be established either without a popular vote or by state law requiring a popular majority in the entire area. Federation, comprehensive urban counties, and city-county consolidations usually require popular majorities in all of the municipalities involved, a very difficult consensus to obtain.

Scholars don't agree on how metropolitan politics should be structured. One group, the centralists or consolidationists, claims that there are too many local governmental units to provide efficient, effective, and responsible government. Their solutions: centralized metropolitan or even broad regional government. Another group holds that government is not decentralized enough to provide responsive government. Their solutions: community control or neighborhood government. Finally, still another group thinks that the present system works well and is highly desirable because it allows citizens to maximize their choices in the consumption of public goods (e.g., through choice in housing location). This group has no proposed solutions because it doesn't define fragmentation as a problem.

Whatever scholars propose about metropolitan politics, citizens dispose in the end. Proposed reforms of any sort inspire yawns or fear—fear of more bureaucracy, more expense, less control, or changes in the balance of local power. And yawns because the connections between structure and policy outcomes, too often, remain unexplained or seemingly too boring for citizens to care about. Thus, the chances of reshaping U.S. local government seem dim.

THE FEDERAL ROLE IN URBAN AFFAIRS

Even without structural reorganization, local government priorities and programs in the United States

have changed dramatically since the New Deal in the 1930s. Corporate business decisions have had significant impacts on localities, such as where to locate a new office or where to invest or disinvest. (Chapters 14 and 15).

Here, let's focus on another important external agent of change: the federal government. Federal officials have pushed (critics say forced) cities to rethink their programs with a variety of incentives, penalties, and mandated duties.

We now turn to a brief history of federal expansion in local life. It is divided into three eras: 1930s–1950s, 1960s–1992, and 1992–summer 2008.

EXPANSION OF FEDERAL INVOLVEMENT IN U.S. LIFE, 1930s–1950s

Since the 1930s, the federal government has been playing a larger role in U.S. life. The expansion of federal involvement in the economic and social life of the country has significantly affected metropolitan politics, both directly and indirectly. This means that the question "Who runs this town?" can't be answered without reference to the federal government.

It was during the Great Depression of the 1930s that the role of the federal government in U.S. life began to grow. Amid the bread lines and competing ideologies of the time (ranging from radical proposals to redistribute wealth and power, technocratic manifestos to let scientists and engineers run government, and hate campaigns blaming African Americans and Jews for economic distress to demagogic appeals for fascist-type rule), President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal administration moved decisively to maintain social order and economic security. (Radical critics say that it worked to *save* capitalism; conservative critics, to *end* capitalism.) Millions of people in the United States, assumed to be "temporarily poor" during the Depression, were provided some form of social security through New Deal programs. Many functions once handled privately (by family, charities, etc.) or not at all were assumed by the federal government.

According to urban historian Richard C. Wade, the growth of federal power under the New Deal "developed out of the intractability of 25 percent unemployment, a stagnating economy and the desperation of

millions" (1982:21). New Deal programs did not take over state and local rights: "Those governments simply had no capacity to meet even the most immediate relief needs, much less to plan for the future." The New Deal added programs that provided a safety net, such as a minimum wage, unemployment insurance, and Social Security. It also offered major assistance to middle-class citizens via such programs as the Federal Housing Administration's below-market-rate mortgages and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, guaranteeing some bank savings.

Subsequently, during World War II and after, the role of the federal government kept growing. (As might be predicted, so did the role of private interests that sought some of the growing state's resources.) Most citizens accepted the centralized system in Washington, D.C., and new programs served new needs, such as the GI Bill of Rights for returning service personnel.

Meanwhile, the "temporarily poor" didn't disappear, and the national interest of a world power was translated into the need for defense industries located throughout the country and efficient transport links. Soon federal funds flowed into and around the nation's small towns as well as big cities. At the same time, modern technology and corporate business organization expanded significantly, and the Springdales of the nation—small towns and hamlets—found themselves in the midst of a mass society (Vidich and Bensman, [1958] 1968). As a result, decisions made in faraway federal agencies and corporate headquarters affected the lives of Americans in cities and rural areas, whether they realized it or not (see Introduction, Figure C).

Federal policies don't have to be labeled "urban" to affect urban life. Indeed, many federal programs not so designated have changed the fabric of the metropolis as much as, or more than, funds earmarked for cities. Let's take a look at two such post-World War II programs: housing and transportation.

HOW FEDERAL POLICY AFFECTED POSTWAR HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION

Housing

Beginning with the New Deal, the U.S. federal government has pursued policies intended to strengthen financial institutions that provide mortgage money for

housing, particularly single-family, detached houses. For instance, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) was created in the midst of the Depression, when millions of homeowners were defaulting on mortgage payments because they were out of work, housing construction was at a virtual standstill, and banks were going bankrupt. The FHA was established to provide mortgage insurance to protect lenders (banks) against the risk of default on long-term, low-down-payment mortgage loans. The FHA contributed to a gradual recovery of the home finance industry during the 1930s, and then it spurred the massive post-World War II suburban housing boom.

Other federal housing credit institutions in the United States (e.g., the Federal National Mortgage Association, popularly called Fannie Mae) helped to create a national secondary mortgage market so that housing construction funds could flow freely into growth areas. (Since then, a private market for poor credit risks developed: the so-called subprime mortgage sector. "Subprime" borrowers are less than creditworthy risks.) Most blame failures in the housing sector—at least to a significant degree—for the faltering of the U.S. economy in 2007 and beyond. (It is noteworthy that the Republican George W. Bush administration—led by Secretary of the Treasury Hank Paulson, one-time head of a major Wall Street securities firm—sponsored financial aid to Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, another big, government-sponsored housing credit institution, in 2008.)

What impact did these post-World War II federal housing policies have on cities and suburbs? An enormous impact. By stimulating suburban growth, federal programs underwrote the exodus of white middle-class residents from central cities. In so doing, they helped to cement metropolitanwide housing patterns of economic and racial segregation.

Transportation

Similarly, the billions of dollars poured into highway construction by Congress after World War II had a broad impact on the metropolis. The new interstate highway system, funded 90 percent with federal money, allowed commercial and industrial enterprises to move out of their central city locations and relocate in the suburbs. These location decisions by private

business contributed to the erosion of the central city's tax base and to its financial stagnation.

To conclude: Whether intended or not, national policies—not specifically deemed urban—have helped to change the shape and character of U.S. cities since World War II. In particular, federal policies opened up the suburbs, spurred regional growth in Sunbelt cities where new defense-related industries were generously supported, and provided the infrastructure (roads, airports) for private business to serve a national and global mass market. Cities, legal creatures of the state, increasingly became economically and socially tied to the national and international political economy.

FROM FEDERALISM TO THE NEW FEDERALISM, 1960s–1992

In the 1960s, the number of federal programs aimed specifically at the metropolis rose dramatically. So did funding levels. Not surprisingly, the size and number of federal agencies that implement urban-oriented programs followed suit.

A cabinet-level agency, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), was established by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965 specifically to address urban needs. A year later, the Department of Transportation (DOT) was set up, increasing the national government's already-active role in financing urban transit. Other cabinet-level departments expanded their urban programs as part of LBJ's Great Society. New programs, including the controversial War on Poverty, channeled funds directly to cities or urban community groups.

Those were the heady days of Head Start, Job Corps, Model Cities, Foster Grandparents, Legal Services, Community Action, and so on. To liberals, these 1960s Great-Society programs represented a step in the right direction: government intervention to provide equal opportunity for all citizens. To radicals, these programs represented government's attempt to keep cities calm and co-opt the poor by throwing out a few crumbs instead of attacking the capitalist structures that put people in poverty. To conservatives, these programs represented "a ragbag."

When President Richard M. Nixon started his second term in 1972, he proposed a New Federalism. He

promised to take powers away from the federal government and give authority and flexibility to the state and local governments. The showpiece of Nixon's New Federalism was **general revenue sharing**, a program with few strings attached. Funds could be used to finance nearly any local government program. (Before the 15-year revenue-sharing program ended in 1987, \$85 billion was distributed to 39,000 cities and towns, where the money was spent to purchase a variety of products and services, from flowers to fire trucks.)

President Nixon and his successor, the late Gerald Ford, did not destroy LBJ's Great Society, but they did change its course. While keeping up the level of federal spending for local programs, they redirected funds away from big cities in the Northeast, considered Democratic strongholds, to the urban South and West.

The numbers tell the story of federal expansion. In one decade, 1969-1979, federal outlays to state and local governments quadrupled to \$85 billion, much of it being spent in cities (U.S. Office of Management and Budget, 1978:175). In percentage terms, cities' dependence on federal aid for their general revenue grew from 4 percent to 14 percent from 1965 to 1980.

Then, the Reagan-George H. W. Bush "revolution" changed all that. President Ronald Reagan introduced his New Federalism in his 1981 State of the Union message. Underpinned by the conservative/libertarian ideas of Milton Friedman, Reagan's New Federalism decentralized many federal activities to states and local governments, assuring that such decentralized programs would be more responsive to the two most interested groups: the people they were meant to help and the people who were paying for them.

New Tasks, Less Money

However, instead of sustaining the level of federal funds flowing to states and cities, the Reagan and George H. W. Bush administrations slashed the funding of federally-financed, locally-administered programs. Many federal grants-in-aid for education, public works, mass transit, and housing were cut or cut out. From 1980 to 1992, federal dollars spent on U.S. cities declined by 59 percent. Briefly put, the federal government gave the states new tasks but less money.

Cutbacks in federal aid were accompanied by stagflation, high interest rates, and bad economic times. This combination of hard times and budget cuts left localities tax-starved and defunded. Which is what many conservatives wanted: Governments could do less with less money.

More than half of the state and city governments in the United States faced serious financial shortfalls by 1990. Liberals complained. Urbanist George Sternlieb of Rutgers University opined, "We don't have New Federalism, we have New Feudalism, where every community fends for itself with a hodgepodge of responsibilities and taxing powers" (in Hinds and Eckholm, 1990:A11). Worst-case budget scenarios became common. For example, hundreds of patients and doctors jammed into San Francisco's City Hall to complain that more cuts to health clinics would endanger lives. The next day, hundreds of children and parents went to City Hall to complain that more library cuts would endanger the literacy of the next generation. Competition for scarce funds between libraries and health clinics was so fierce that one advocate for health care drove home his cause like this: "Dead people can't read books" (in Sandalow, 1993:1).

Severe cutting, even gutting, of cities' social programs raised critical voices to a fever pitch. Reporter Bob Scheer called local government the "garbage can of American politics," left to pick up the pieces of "problems (e.g., crime, drugs, disoriented vets) that the federal and state governments have failed to adequately deal with" while "their tax base is pared to the bone" (1993:1).

To conclude: Starting with the New Deal, the federal government became heavily involved in a wide range of urban programs, from child nutrition and law enforcement to community development. Cities lobby Congress intensely for programs through both nationwide organizations and individual lobbyists.

Long ago, political scientist John Mollenkopf (1983) pointed out that which political party controls Congress does make a difference to cities. In his study of urban legislation from 1933 to 1980, Mollenkopf argued that when Republicans had national control, they redirected money away from central cities to the suburbs and newer metropolitan areas of the Sunbelt. Further, Republicans restructured intergovernmental

aid—by channeling it through states and block grants, for instance—to ensure that voters in central cities had the least possible influence.

The balance between city and suburban political power started shifting mightily to the suburbs in 1972 with Nixon's general revenue sharing. By 1992, more than one-half of U.S. cities were saddled with major service burdens and limited options. In a time of economic decline, they faced decreased federal and state aid, state prohibitions against raising local taxes, and widespread suburban antiurbanism.

From 1992 to summer 2008, no major presidential candidate specifically addressed urban issues such as crushing service burdens or homelessness. This neglect would not have surprised urban historian Richard C. Wade. A generation earlier, he noted that the country's political and social power had been permanently reallocated, completing the "suburban captivity of American politics" (1982:21). Of course, Wade could not see the future except through a glass darkly. He did not predict that, by 2005, the percentage of poor in many suburbs around the largest U.S. cities would outnumber the percentage of poor inside central cities. Neither did Wade foresee that the rising cost of energy might push some suburbanites back to U.S. cities, thus changing the urban-suburban mix in the United States.

A NAMELESS PERIOD, 1992–SUMMER 2008

Unlike previous administrations, neither President Bill Clinton nor President George W. Bush stamped a name, such as the New Federalism, on his urban program. (Some critics, however, called these policies "fend for yourself federalism.") During their tenures, there was no easily identifiable urban policy. Perhaps on purpose. That is, political purpose. Even so, federal programs (or the lack of them) aimed at cities and suburbs continue to have serious impacts.

Clinton's Urban Policies

During the Clinton years (1993–2001), unemployment dropped to record lows. So did inflation. The federal budget was in surplus. Crime rates dropped in many places. These greatly affected cities.

Under Clinton, several policies and laws also had great impacts on cities and cityfolk. For exam-

ple, Clinton expanded the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which proved to be the Clinton's most effective antipoverty measure; it provided the working poor with more income than any other program. Further, Clinton's Department of Housing and Urban Development promoted community development corporations as a way to revitalize poor urban neighborhoods; in Los Angeles (and other cities), community development corporations built most of the affordable housing that was added to the city's inventory in over 10 years.

However, critics hold that Clinton's policies had little to do with improved urban conditions. They argue that cities improved basically because of an unprecedented national economic expansion. Others think that this economic expansion was reinforced by federal policies sponsored by Clinton, particularly those that reduced joblessness.

Clinton's most controversial urban-oriented legislation was the welfare reform bill of 1996: the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). The day it passed in August 1996, Clinton announced that PRWORA would end welfare "as we know it." The day after, a *Washington Post* reporter hailed Clinton's bill as "historic," rewriting 60 years of social policy, "ending the federal guarantee of cash assistance to the poor and turning welfare programs over to the states" (Vobedja, 1996). The bill required recipients to work (so-called workfare rather than welfare) and limited benefits to 5 years.

Clinton's PRWORA was intensely disliked in many quarters, particularly by noncentrist Democrats. Some believed it pulled the "safety net" out from under the nation's least fortunate. Others dubbed it "forced labor," not "workfare" (e.g., Dunlea, 1997). The National Organization of Women called it "punitive" (Lee and Weinstein, 1996). But by spring 2007 no one in the mainstream media or in national politics seemed to care one way or the other.

George W. Bush's Urban Policies

During George W. Bush's presidency, the focus shifted. Bush preferred private answers to public challenges. Thus, he favored cutting taxes, particularly for those at the top of the income ladder; reducing government regulations on business; and privatizing previously

government-funded public services such as drug counseling. These measures were aimed, his administration said, at increasing investment and jobs and saving taxpayers' dollars. Conservatives and libertarians were pleased with such measures, assumed to stimulate the economy and promote the "trickle-down" effect. (The other major Bush initiative in terms of funding—U.S. military spending for wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—did not get widespread support from libertarians.)

A U.S. economic recession ended in late 2001. But the recovery over the following 2 years was mainly jobless as U.S. firms shipped white- and blue-collar jobs overseas. Thus, during Bush's first 3 years as president, unemployment *increased* (from 4 to 6 percent). Between 2000 and 2003, median household income fell, and the poverty rate rose (from 11.3 percent to 12.5 percent or, otherwise put, from 31.1 million to 35.9 million). After 9/11, funds for a domestic "war on terrorism," together with big tax cuts for some and big military spending, led to spiraling budget deficits. Discretionary funds for social or antipoverty programs dried up, which is what many conservatives thought prudent. Later during his administration, bank bailouts and credit infusions into the banking system—designed to stem financial crises that began in 2007—would increase the deficit more.

Critics say that the Bush administration's "war on terrorism" and "homeland security" programs have had a disproportionate and negative impact on U.S. cities. They claim that the federal government has required cities to dramatically increase security (e.g., at airports, ports, and sporting events) and to improve emergency preparations but that the cities were not given adequate funds to pay for these programs. According to sociologist Peter Dreier (2004), cities were spending \$70 million a week out of their own coffers just to comply with each "orange alert" security threat from the federal Department of Homeland Security. Similarly, others argue that cities were asked to comply with expensive federal mandates, especially homeland security and antiterrorism initiatives, but that federal funds were not provided to help pay for the mandated programs.

Aside from responses to financial crises, such as federal intervention in the banking and credit mar-

kets, two Bush initiatives have had the most impact on metro areas. They are the following: (1) No Child Left Behind and (2) Faith-Based Initiatives.

No Child Left Behind

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires local schools to raise standards via testing and to issue annual report cards on students' improvements. The bill requires federal and state governments to punish schools that don't meet the standards. Critics say that Bush failed to ask for enough funds that could pay for hiring more teachers, reducing class sizes, and improving facilities that could help low-achieving students, especially students in inner-city schools. They also claim that there is a mismatch: Needy inner-city schools may be the most likely to lack the resources and funds to comply with the act and thrive.

Critics also point out that there may be widespread cheating in the program to obtain better results. Teachers at 123 schools in California, for example, admitted to helping students cheat on exams given to meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind. According to *San Francisco Chronicle* reporters, "Incentives to bend the rules are strong in the No Child Left Behind era, when persistently low scores can shut down a school, trigger a takeover or force teacher transfers, experts say" (Asimov et al., 2007:A1).

Faith-Based Initiatives

Under President Bush, Congress increased funds to private religious organizations to provide social services such as prisoner reentry programs, drug counseling, homeless shelters, and food banks. How was this done? In part by "earmarks." A *New York Times* analysis (in Henriques and Lehen, 2007:A7) observes that the number of earmarks (narrowly-tailored appropriations that bypass the normal appropriations and competitive bidding processes) increased sharply in recent years: From 1989 to January 2007, Congress approved about 900 earmarks to religious groups, totaling \$318 million. In comparison, fewer than 60 earmarks for faith-based groups were passed in the 1997–1998 congressional session.

Aside from earmarks, Bush bypassed Congress and operated instead through executive orders and regulatory changes at the cabinet level to insure faith-based

programs. In 2002, Bush created the Faith-Based and Community Initiative (WHOFBCI) in the White House, which, according to its press release (White House, 2006), awarded more than \$2.1 million in grants to religious organizations in fiscal year 2005 by seven federal agencies. Again bypassing Congress, in 2006 Bush created, by executive order, the Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The center is charged with coordinating Homeland Security's efforts to remove obstacles to faith-based and community organizations in providing disaster relief services.

Typically, faith-based initiatives are popular with groups considered part of the base of the Republican Party, including evangelical Christians. Many others question their constitutionality and/or their effectiveness. Others question the use of executive orders and other devices to bypass Congress. Indeed, some called him an imperial president.

To conclude: During Clinton's presidency, the U.S. economy surged, a not-unimportant factor in promoting more jobs and more livable cities. During this strong economy, Clinton fulfilled his promise as a centrist Democrat, getting a welfare-reform bill passed (that enraged "progressives" and those called "leftists" by those who weren't).

Later, George W. Bush ran for U.S. president as a "compassionate conservative." Whether his administrations lived up to the compassionate part is a matter of great dispute. However, most agree that his nonfiscal policies (not his second administration's bailouts of private firms, for example, part of his fiscal policy) were more conservative than those of any other administration in living memory.

With what some call "fend for yourself federalism" (Morgan et al., 2006) under Bush, federally funded urban programs were slashed, thanks to a combination of factors, including ideology (a preference for privatization, including faith-based social programs and its view of poverty as being due primarily to personal character flaws), war spending, a budget deficit, tax cuts of about \$1.3 trillion, and perhaps politics: Gore beat Bush among urban voters, and two groups long defined as urban voters—African Americans and Hispanics—did not vote overwhelmingly for Bush.

THE QUESTION RECONSIDERED: WHO RUNS THIS TOWN?

Federal regulations, state laws, areawide planning suggestions, special-district decisions, county legislation, neighborhood requests. This list suggests that cities are not masters of their own fate. Instead, they are just one layer of government operating within a web of government—some call it a marble cake—of overlapping and intersecting layers.

To attain one's political goals, knowledge of the formal structures of government is essential. Knowing who's in charge in this governmental maze—who to blame, where to go for an authorization, where to protest a decision—is the first step in getting something done in city politics.

Here is a case study of one citizens' group, Bananas, that successfully worked its way through the maze of political structures. It highlights the necessity of appreciating the complexities of government's formal organization. It also shows that, in the United States, any meaningful response to the question "Who runs this town?" must take into account the web of government reaching from Washington, D.C. (and beyond), to the neighborhood day-care center.

CASE STUDY: WHAT BANANAS LEARNED ABOUT THE FORMAL STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT

The sign over a small building in north Oakland, California, reads BANANAS. No fruit is for sale there. Instead, on the front porch lie ice-cream containers, fabric remnants, and wood scraps—all ingredients for children's play projects.

Inside the building, organized chaos prevails. A dozen women are answering phones and giving information about day care as actively as stockbrokers tell their clients about hot prospects. Parents and children stream into and out of the information area. A social service worker answers the "Warm Line," a pre-crisis counseling service for parents with day-care needs.

What's going on here? The name says it all: Bananas, a multipurpose community service, helps to prevent parents from "going bananas" by providing various kinds of assistance with their preschool children. It does all this in 11 languages, including English, Mien, Thai, and French.



Fig. 13.6 BANANAS. This group of women in San Francisco's East Bay learned their way around governmental structures. After years of hard work, they got what they wanted. (Cathy Cade)

Bananas didn't happen overnight. It grew out of years of frustration, organizing, and political struggle. The program director had gained some prior political experience during her fight to organize an employees' union on the University of California at Berkeley campus. Staff members learned by personal experience. Their first lesson was how to deal with and through governmental structures. To a significant degree, Bananas exists today because it learned this lesson.

In 1972, a small group of women—Bananas—became concerned that Berkeley had no place where parents could get information to help to set up play groups for preschool children. (Later, the group moved to nearby north Oakland; Bananas now serves the northern part of its county, Alameda.) This nonhierarchical group had no money or community support, but

the members did have energy and commitment to their cause. They began to organize information assistance to parents, children, and day-care providers. After 4 years of hard work, they began to deal with city officials, trying to get government support for their activities.

In the process, they discovered whom to approach ("know-who") to get their project moving. Here are some of the lessons they learned.

1. *Find out who makes the decisions in city government.* Berkeley has a council-manager form of government. The city manager has the final word under this system, and negotiations for funding were carried out directly with him. Bananas didn't deal with the mayor. The specific budget recommendation came from the city manager since his office prepares the city budget.

2. *Find out what the city is authorized to fund.* There is no prohibition in Berkeley against using taxpayers' money for day-care activities. If there were, Bananas would have had to seek funding elsewhere.
3. *Find out what government agencies have an interest in the activity (and how they relate to city government).* Berkeley, like other towns, exists in a web of governments. Bananas had to learn the structure regarding child care. At the level closest to home is the Berkeley Unified School District, a special district run by an elected school board. The board, which is not accountable to city government, was often in disagreement with city officials. The school district provides child care for preschool children in the schools. Thus, it is an interested party regarding other day-care activities in the community. Bananas dealt with the school board, not the Berkeley City Council, to coordinate information and referral activities.

Bananas also dealt with another interested party: the Berkeley Parks and Recreation Department. This city department administered a voucher system, paying low-income and working mothers a stipend for day care. Bananas' staff members worked with the Parks and Recreation Department on a daily basis to refer voucher recipients to appropriate day-care centers.

Yet another interested party was the county. Alameda County, in which Berkeley is located, operated day care-related programs. The county's Social Services Department administered a federal program giving child-care vouchers to eligible recipients. When Bananas felt that the county was not taking full advantage of the voucher program, they pressed for wider benefits. To accomplish this, they went to the County Board of Supervisors, not the Berkeley City Council.

Bananas also dealt with a state-mandated regional center for child care, a clearinghouse for so-called special-needs children. To provide clear guidance to parents, Bananas had to go to this regional planning organization for information.

Then there was the state of California. It, too, was (and is) involved in child care. (The state subsidizes

certain types of day care for children with special needs.) Bananas learned about the direct aid the state could provide to their clients.

Indirectly, through the county programs, Bananas was involved with federal funding. They also found out that the then Department of Health, Education and Welfare (later divided into two cabinet-level departments, Health and Human Services and Education) provided direct funding to a few special day-care operations.

So, who runs this town? Bananas moved through the governmental maze to find out. At the level of formal structure, they discovered, often the hard way, that power and authority in their area of concern, child care, were shared by different layers of government and several city bureaucracies.

Eventually, Bananas got what they wanted but not before they learned how informal networks of power operate. That is a theme continued in Chapters 14 and 15.

ANOTHER LOOK

U.S. citizens and scholars agree that the role of government at all levels has increased dramatically since the 1930s. They disagree on whether this is desirable, necessary, or inevitable in mass society. (Yet, most think that this trend will likely continue.)

Concerning local government, U.S. traditions favor fragmented authority and power. While many political scientists (particularly liberals) describe the current crazy quilt of local government as "irrational" and "inefficient," voters have not supported major structural change. Particularly in gloomy economic times, voters have turned their attention elsewhere: how to get more (or the same services) for less (taxes)—at the same time. Some hope that contracting out public services will be an answer to the tax crunch, but critics think that privatization is fraught with possibilities for inequity, corruption, and even a new sort of bossism.

Meanwhile, observers wonder if local governments—whatever their structure—matter much in a global society. To public choice theorists (e.g., Tiebout, 1956), locality does remain important because people choose a particular place to live so

that they can choose among bundles of services. But others say that people's residential choice is not dictated by such market logic (Chapter 8). Further, critics argue that local politics can no longer meet the burdens that citizens place upon it because a series of factors, including the powers of higher levels of government which combine to hem in local governments and render them powerless to manage the quality of community life.

Perhaps. But at the same time there are local officials and ordinary citizens who reject powerlessness. Some practice spirited acts of nonviolent resistance by taking responsibility for their fellow beings and a small piece of the sky. Others, using the rhetoric of populist rebellion, form private armies and stockpile weapons against what they fear or hate: faraway, big government and urbanism as a way of life. Between these two reactions to powerlessness lies a chasm of difference—and direction. In my view, one looks backward to the values of a (real or romanticized) frontier past and the other accepts (for better and worse) the urban present and the global urban future.

Long ago, two social scientists predicted that there would be an enduring battle between these two orientations. In *Small Town in Mass Society* ([1958] 1968), sociologists Arthur J. Vidich and Joseph Bensman observed that some small farmers and rural town dwellers resisted "perhaps irreversible" trends toward *Gesellschaft* values. They cautioned that the defeat of ruralism in the United States could lead to a populist backlash based on rural hostility and defensiveness:

Populist democracy [identified with grassroots democracy and "Americanism"] may become the basis for new social movements which could subvert the foundations of the present by holding to romanticized images of the past. An organized nativistic movement based partly on a xenophobic isolationism could shelter...defensive populists [and] a variety of other groups whose resentments are less crystallized but which could find a focus in some form of nativism.

([1958] 1968:346)

This populism had its origins in an earlier democratic ideology, but as Vidich and Bensman warned, it could

go sour and become nativistic, antidemocratic, and quasi-totalitarian.

If some accommodation is not worked out between populist patriots (and other groups that have become influential since *Small Town in Mass Society* was published, such as religious conservatives and angry, unemployed people) who uphold "traditional" values and modernists who uphold urbane values of heterogeneity, tolerance, and cosmopolitanism, we can predict that power—not authority—will prevail. Perhaps that is why Vidich and Bensman ended their community study with a plea to avoid a direct confrontation between the opposing orientations.

KEY TERMS

Annexation The addition of territory to a unit of government. Annexation usually involves a city's adding adjacent land to meet the problems of metropolitan expansion.

Areawide planning organization See council of governments.

Authority Power used in such a way that people see it as legitimate.

Charter The basic law of a local governmental unit that defines its powers, responsibilities, and organization. State constitutional or statutory provisions specify the conditions under which charters will be granted.

Charter city A city whose powers are defined by a charter from the state. Contrast: *general-law city*.

City council The policymaking and, in some instances, administrative board of a city. City councils are typically unicameral bodies.

City manager A professional administrator, appointed by the city council, in a council-manager form of government.

Commission form of government A form of city government in which both legislative and executive powers are exercised by commissioners. Not to be confused with a city commission. Features include (1) the concentration of legislative and executive power in a small group of commissioners elected at large on a nonpartisan ballot; (2) the collective responsibility of the commission to pass ordinances and control city finances; (3) the

individual responsibility of each commissioner to head a city department; and (4) the selection of a mayor from among the commissioners, effectively reducing that office to one of largely ceremonial functions.

Council-manager form of government A form of city government in which the city council appoints a professional administrator, the city manager, to act as the chief executive. With variations from city to city, the essentials of this plan are (1) a small council of five or seven members elected at-large on a nonpartisan ballot, with power to make policy and hire and fire the manager; (2) a professionally-trained manager, with authority to hire and fire subordinates, who is responsible to the council for efficient administration of the city; and (3) a mayor chosen separately or from within the council but with no executive functions.

Council of governments (COG) A voluntary organization of municipalities and counties concerned with areawide problems in a metropolitan area.

County A major local government subdivision in the United States. Counties may perform a variety of local government functions, including provision of welfare and social services, administration of libraries, and road repair. Counties are typically governed by boards of supervisors or county commissioners. In rural areas, counties usually act as the general-purpose local government. In urban areas, they act as the general-purpose government for unincorporated territory and provide some services to residents of both unincorporated and incorporated areas within them.

Dillon's rule A rule (not a law) enunciated by Iowa Judge John F. Dillon, a nineteenth-century authority on municipal corporations, stating that a municipal corporation (such as a city) can exercise only those powers expressly granted to it by state law, those necessarily implied by the granted powers, and those essential for the purposes of the organization. If any doubt exists, it is to be resolved against the local unit in favor of the state.

Federation An approach to municipal governmental reorganization that assigns areawide functions to an areawide or metropolitan government and

leaves local functions to existing municipalities. Example: Toronto's Metro government.

General-law city A city created pursuant to the general law of the state in which it is located rather than under a charter.

General revenue sharing An approach to the transfer of federal funds to lower levels of government—states and general-purpose local governments. Under general revenue sharing, states and local governments may use federal monies as they decide; there are no strings attached. This contrasts with program-related monies.

Home rule Power vested in a local government, such as a city, to craft or change its charter and manage its own affairs, subject to the state constitution and the general law of the state. Under home rule, state legislative interference in local affairs is limited.

Hyperpluralism The belief of some political scientists that city governments suffer from too many (*hyper*) private groups and public authorities playing the political game, which results in the paralysis of urban policymaking and the consequent bureaucratic takeover of political functions.

Incorporation The formation of a new city from previously unincorporated territory. State law specifies how new cities are to be incorporated.

Mayor The titular head of city government. The degree of a mayor's legal authority varies. In mayor-council governments, there are strong and weak mayors. In council-manager governments, the city manager runs the city's day-to-day affairs.

Mayor-council form of government A form of city government in which the mayor is elected to serve as the executive officer of the city and an elected council serves as the legislative body.

Municipality The U.S. Census Bureau's term for general-purpose units of local government other than counties. Municipalities include cities, towns and townships, and boroughs.

Reapportionment Redrawing of legislative district lines so that representation in elected government bodies is proportional to the actual population. In 1962 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Baker v. Carr* that representation had to be on a one person, one vote basis.

Special district An independent unit of local government established to provide one or more limited functions, such as water. Special districts are usually created to meet problems that transcend local government boundaries or to bypass taxation and debt restrictions imposed upon local units of government by state law.

Urban county (1) A county with responsibility for providing urban services for incorporated or unincorporated areas within its borders; (2) a county where there is a substantial and densely settled population, giving it the character of a city; or (3) a county that meets specific criteria enabling it to receive certain federal funds.

PROJECTS

1. **City government.** Determine the legal structure of the city in which you live or that of one nearby. Is it a general-law or a charter city? If a charter city, is it a home-rule charter city? Next, determine the form of the city government: mayor-council, council-manager, or commission. What are the major commissions, boards, departments, and agencies of the city?

2. **Local government context.** Examine the various layers of government, of which your city (or a nearby one) is just one. For instance, what kind and how many special districts lie within the city? What are significant state and federal involvements in the city? How have cutbacks at the federal and/or state levels in the past decade affected local services?

3. **Privatization.** If a nearby city has turned over public services to private contractors, analyze the impacts. Has privatization been cost-effective and efficient? Are customers happy with the service providers? Are there complaints, and if so, what kinds?

4. **Public-private sector relations.** Compare and contrast U.S. public-private sector relationships with those in at least two European and one Latin American country. How does each nation deal with the interests of various groups, including labor unions, nonprofit associations, groups representing professionals (e.g., doctors, professors)? Are there structural mechanisms to deal with possible conflicts among these groups—say, on regional or national policy matters affecting them?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER LEARNING

For a hopeful view of the state of U.S. cities, see *Comeback Cities: A Blueprint for Urban Neighborhood Revival* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 2001) by Paul S. Grogan and Tony Proscio. Trumpeting a post-2000 urban renaissance, they point out that by 2000 the nation's overall poverty rate (11.3 percent)—and that of central cities (16.1 percent)—was lower than it had been in 25 years. Even air quality had improved in some cities. (Note: "Comeback cities" can suffer setbacks in short order. Events and processes beyond cities' control, such as the rising price of key food commodities, the continued outsourcing of middle-class jobs, and the subprime mortgage meltdown starting in 2007, negatively affected many U.S. cities.)

Sociologist Peter Dreier (2004), among others, has a darker view than Grogan and Proscio. He claims that President Bush's administration neglected cities, that the economic recovery of the 1990s bypassed the nation's most troubled and poor urban and suburban neighborhoods, and that income inequality increased.

Neoconservatives Edward Banfield and James Q. Wilson wrote *City Politics* in 1963 (New York: Vintage), although decades old, it contains a clear and readable explanation of state-city relations and formal city structure.

M. Gottdiener's *The Decline of Urban Politics: Political Theory and the Crisis of the Local State* (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage, 1987) argued against neoconservative definitions and explanations. The book, written a generation ago, still signals a view long held by some social scientists.

In *The Fractured Metropolis: Political Fragmentation and Metropolitan Segregation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), Gregory R. Weiher argued that local government is far from democratic. In his view, it serves mainly parochial interests and is meant to avoid diversity in order to protect local advantage.

Do privatization and public-private partnerships work? For a ringing endorsement, see David Osborne and Ted Gaebler's *Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit Is Transforming the Public Sector*, published in 1992 and discussed in this chapter. For a critique, see law professor Paul R. Verkuil,

Outsourcing Sovereignty: Why Privatization of Government Functions Threatens Democracy and What We Can Do About It (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007). For a brief assessment of privatization efforts, see Mildred Warner's 2006 report, "Restructuring Local Government," http://government.cce.cornell.edu/default.asp?http://tgovernment.cce.cornell.edu/coc/viewpage_r.asp?ID=Privatization.

Some political scientists think that the nation-state and the city became interdependent decades ago. See, for example, Ted Robert Gurr and Desmond S. King, *The State and the City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

Several organizations conduct urban policy research. Most notable is the National League of Cities, established in 1924 by and for reform-minded state municipal leagues; it represents more than 1,300 cities. It keeps member cities informed on national policies that have local impact and undertakes research and analysis on policy issues that affect cities.

The Washington, D.C.-based Conference on Alternative State and Local Policies, founded in 1975, provides, in its own words, "a national forum to assist progressives in developing strategies for change." Its publications range from books on state and local tax reform to legislative briefs and policy memos.

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