

Manchester Community College
Social Sciences Division
Urban Geography

Lecture 11. Metropolitan Governance and
Fragmentation

Adjunct Lecturer:
Donald J. Poland, MS, AICP
E-mail: dpoland@mcc.commnet.edu
Web: www.donaldpoland.com

1

Chapter Twelve

Metropolitan Governance and Fragmentation

2

Urban Governance and the Growth of Services

- What is it that local governments do? An awful lot, it turns out.
 - Infrastructure—the streets, sidewalks, lighting, airports, sewers, mass transit, and water pipes that allow urban businesses and residents to thrive—are publicly owned.
 - Public safety is arranged through the operation of police, fire, and emergency departments.
 - A city's public face appears through public spaces, parks, recreation facilities, and monuments to great historical figures or to abstract ideals.
 - The goal of universal education is manifest in the networks of public schools, public universities, and free libraries.
 - The incomplete goal of housing and welfare is reflected in the varieties of public housing, free medical clinics, and income assistance programs.

3

Urban Governance and the Growth of Services

- Metropolitan governance also has to do with it regulation of the conduct of private enterprise and of human activity.
 - City operations are involved in zoning different land use, requiring permits for almost any activity; regulating traffic, criminal, and potentially hazardous activity; inspecting facilities for health violations; levying taxes and user fees; and making the kinds of decisions that have repercussions throughout the city and its environs.
- Many cities were incorporated before the formation of states or the federal government. Therefore, there is a tradition in the USA of local control over decisions.

4

Urban Governance and the Growth of Services

- American settlements differed from settlements in Europe.
 - Land was widely available, and new settlements were buffered by large tracts of unused land. This allowed settlements to spread indefinitely, and led to far less control over the emerging city shape.
 - Here, more than elsewhere, economic considerations—land value—determined what went where, often with the highest land value located at the city center.
 - This spatial freedom—the ability for residents to pull up stakes and venture further out—marked and continues to mark American cities.

5

Urban Governance and the Growth of Services

- **Expanding Urban Services:** Urban governments acquired more functions and responsibilities over time.
 - In the early 1800s government exercised extensive control over the city's economic activities.
 - Most cities owned and controlled markets, ports, and warehouse facilities.
 - Much of the early urban revenues came from the fees paid by stall owners and from the imposed on violators.
 - Yet, the change toward a free-market system, where goods could be bought and sold in all locales and for all process, spread throughout American cities.
 - Government regulation of the economy declined. What replaced these functions was move toward a "service" city in which the government increasingly took charge of a wide variety of service functions—especially safety, education, and infrastructure—as well as the tax basis to pay for these functions.

6

Urban Governance and the Growth of Services

- **Public Safety:** Evolved from volunteer to paid services.
- **Education:** Largest expense of local government. Education was not always available to all—1800s.
- **Infrastructure:** the basic facilities, services, and installations needed for the functioning of a community—transportation, communications, water and sewer systems and power plants. Importance increase as population and size of city increases.
- Over time, cities have been either persuaded or forced to add numerous new services. Public health and public welfare for instance, take a large slice of modern city budgets.
 - One of the most irritating trends, according to local officials, is the tendency of the state legislatures, the federal government, and courts to require that cities perform a function without giving them the money to pay for it. These are termed unfunded mandates.

7

Financing the City

- **Financing the City:** The needs of collective consumption led to the expansion of civic responsibility. However, one of the paradoxes of municipal governance within the US has been that the necessary financial resources and authority of cities has lagged behind the demands imposed on cities.
- The US Constitution endowed states with tremendous range of powers, but cities are considered simply "**creatures of the state.**" They have been historically limited in their ability to raise revenue.
- The main source of revenue for municipal services was and is **property taxes**, a tax based on the assessed value of one's property. **Mill Rate:** one-thousandth of the value. **Sales tax**, regressive. Hotel Tax. City Income Tax. Intergovernmental Revenue.

8

Who Governs the City

- **Stages in Urban Governance:** There were several stages of urban governance in the United States
 1. **Elite Dominance:** Cities were run by an elite—first patricians, by virtue of birth and breeding, but later simply those who achieved commercial success. Lasted to the mid-nineteenth century.
 2. **Machine Politics:** Consisted of a strong party organization that generated votes for favored candidates. The party would dole out favors—sometimes actual cash, sometimes patronage jobs, sometimes bail—in return votes. Three characteristics. Hierarchical – clear leadership and organization. Populist – it appealed to the interests of the lower class. Territorial – City divided into wards, precincts, and blocks.
 3. **Reform Politics:** The cities should be run by experienced administrators who were trained and serving the public interest.
 4. **Professional Politics:** The move from retail to wholesale politics.

9

Who Governs the City

- **Power in the City:** Students of urban politics have long debated the basis of urban power, especially the modern city. Blatant manifestations of power, from business elites or political machines, have given way to a more subtle type of politics. But this does not mean that certain interests are not served. Three important players:
 - **Households:** are the ultimate authorities as voters who elect the city leaders and as residents who use city services.
 - **Businesses:** are essential to the economic base of a city, providing jobs and paying much of the cost. Often ask to be left alone in regards to regulation and anti-growth tactics. At the same time they also seek government help in expanding services that benefit their needs.
 - **Local State:** plays a role as both a player in its own right, trying to serve the interests of the entire city, as a referee among competing interests, and as one component of the overall machinery of government with very real limits to its authority.

10

Contemporary Fragmentation in the Metropolis

- Urban geographers are especially interested in issues of urban or metropolitan fragmentation. Complexity has grown as cities have grown, as urban regions have stretched far beyond municipal lines to include more and more rings of suburbs.
 - Today the central cities and the suburbs that surround them are tied together loosely by the same history, a common economy, a metropolitan designation, and a perception of being part of the same urban regions. Cities are prone to some degree of fragmentation.
- Cities are divided on the basis of economic functions, investments, housing quality, social groups, ethnicity, and the like.
 - Suburbanization—the growth of complex metropolitan regions have overlaid a great deal of political fragmentation on existing fragmentation. A metropolitan urban region may contain hundreds of different local governments that share certain interests but differ in other respects.
- Myron Orfield (MN) and David Rusk (NM) Both advocate a solution of creating a single, overreaching local government.

11

Contemporary Fragmentation in the Metropolis

- **Increasing Fragmentation:** Increases in metropolitan fragmentation is largely indisputable. Fragmentation can be traced to three main developments:
 - 1. the physical expansion of metropolitan areas,
 - 2. the increase in the number of incorporated suburban municipalities,
 - 3. the growth of variegation of service delivery areas.
- **A Positive View of Metropolitan Fragmentation:** one approach that advocates fragmented government may be labeled **polycentrim**.
 - The belief that big metropolitan scale governments can become remote and unresponsive to local interests. A citizen is likely to be more successful fighting city hall if the city is small. A related point is that a greater number of suburban governments present people with greater options for where to live.
 - The **Tiebout Hypothesis**, maintains that people seek a better fit between their tolerance for taxes and their demand for service. The choice of a community can be seen as a market decision.

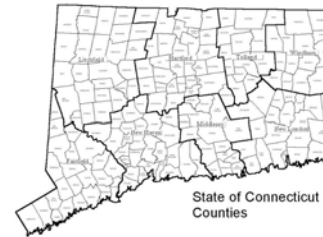
12

Contemporary Fragmentation in the Metropolis

- **Fiscal Disparities:** Although metropolitan fragmentation has its proponents, it has also been decried for a number of reasons. These criticisms take many forms, but one factor that up repeatedly in various arguments is fiscal equity. We discussed earlier, local governments are capable of assessing taxes.
 - The problem is that they vary in their tax base, which refers to all of the taxable property within the local boundaries.
 - What accounts for differences in the tax base? In most places, the key factor is property values. Newer large expensive homes or business versus older homes, building, with fewer amenities.

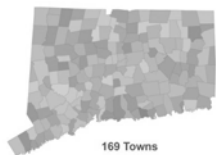
13

State and Counties



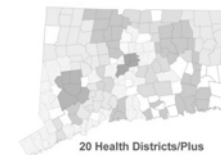
14

Planning Regions and Service Areas



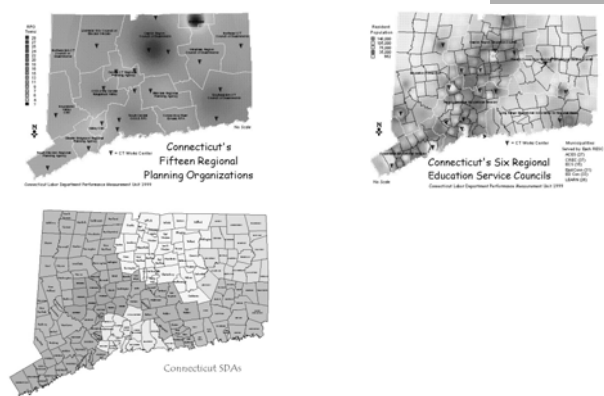
15

Planning Regions and Service Areas



16

Planning Regions and Service Areas



Countering the Fragmented Metropolis

- Several efforts have been made to reduce metropolitan fragmentation or to at least alleviate some of its worst effects. Here, disagreements often erupt because all types of coordination generally correspond with some loss of local control.
- At the same time, all communities need to work together at some point in time for mutual benefit.
 - Several projects that aid the economy and accessibility of all communities, such as airports, highways, and mass transit, need to be handled at the metropolitan level.
- There needs to be an understanding that such projects affect all communities—even if communities are not politically united, metropolitan regions operate as a single economic entity and so need to coordinate policy to pursue particular goals.

Countering the Fragmented Metropolis

- **Annexations:** Several methods exist to counter metropolitan fragmentation, but the most simple is annexation.
 - **Annexation** occurs when one municipality adds another incorporated municipality or unincorporated land to its territory. This has been popular thought history and still is in many parts of the country.
- **City-County Consolidation:** The central city and county level government are merged into one government unit.
- **Metropolitan Government:** Even within metropolitan areas in which annexation and consolidation are impossible, several levels of coordination are seen among the various municipalities. Every metropolitan area has regional organizations with coordinating roles. True coordination, however, comes with the creation of a metropolitan government that enjoys a broad range of authorities superseding those of the municipalities, especially some form of fiscal authority.