Places Worth Caring About: Local Democracy In America

City Hall, Rome, NY

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Porto, Portugal
Outline

1. Urban Sprawl & Suburbanization

2. Local Democracy

3. Rusk “City Elasticity Theory”

4. Concluding Thoughts
a trashy and preposterous human environment with no future
-James Howard Kunstler (The Geography of Nowhere)

“places not worth caring about”
-James Howard Kunstler (The Geography of Nowhere)
GDP/Capita 1992 (PPP)

- US: 100%
- Germany: 76%
- France: 77%
- UK: 69%
- Japan: 87%

GDP/Capita: 2002 (PPP)

- US: 100%
- Germany: 74%
- France: 73%
- UK: 72%
- Japan: 78%
Let People Do What They Want

Lone Mountain Compact

absent a material threat to other individuals or the community,

people should be allowed to live and work where and how they like.

Happiest People in the World

Pew Foundation Study
Share of Urban Growth in Suburbs

METROPOLITAN AREAS OVER 1,000,000

- Canada from 1951
- US from 1950
- Others from 1965

Europe of Tourists & Planners

Paris: Avenue de l’opéra
Paris from a Rental Car

Paris suburbs

European Planner’s View of USA?
Urbanized Land in the United States

Higher Density = Longer Commutes

Higher Density: More Congestion

Air Pollution & Density: US

Planning Versus Reality
New York Urbanized Area Density
PROVISIONAL ESTIMATE BY SECTOR: 1800-2000

Manhattan
Urbanized Area (Total)
Balance NYC
Outside NYC

New York Urbanized Area Population
PROVISIONAL ESTIMATE BY SECTOR: 1800-2000

Outside New York City
Balance New York City
Manhattan
New York Urbanized Area Density

POPULATION & HOUSEHOLDS: 1950-2000

US Sprawl Stopped in 1960s

New Development Due to Household Growth
Draining the Cities?

- Busing
- Education
- Taxes
- Crime
- Services
- Corruption

“Landlocked” Central Cities Population (000)

Government Close to the People

Thomas County Courthouse, Colby, KS
Does Canada Seek a US Merger?

Economies of Scale: US + China?
Local Democracy in Metropolitan Paris
1,300 GENERAL GOVERNMENT UNITS

The Importance of Local Democracy

Paraphrasing Lincoln

… government of the people by the people and for the people

… is government that is closest to the people
Population per Local Government Unit

STATES: 2000

Population per Government Unit

Less Local Democracy →
State & Local Governments by Size
STATES BY QUINTILES: 2000

State & Local Taxation Per Capita
STATES BY GOVERNMENT SIZE QUINTILES: 2000
Government Employee Payroll/Capita
MID-WEST LITTLE BOX” V. PACIFIC “BIG BOX”

Municipal Costs: Smaller is Lower
Consolidation: False Economies

Larger & Smaller Government
VICTORIA & HALIFAX: POPULATION
Larger & Smaller Government
VICTORIA & HALIFAX: ELECTED OFFICIAL COSTS

Per Capita

Halifax
Victoria

$5.00
$4.50
$4.00
$3.50
$3.00
$2.50
$2.00
$1.50
$1.00
$0.50
$0.00

Job Growth Quintiles: 1980-2002
EMPLOYMENT GROWTH BY QUINTILE

Lowest Growth
Low Growth
Medium Growth
High Growth
Highest Growth

0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
120%
140%
Job Growth Quintiles: 1980-2002
STATE & LOCAL TAXATION PER CAPITA: 1980

Job Growth Quintiles: 1980-2002
EMPLOYMENT GROWTH BY QUINTILE

Job Growth Quintiles: 1980-2002
POLITICAL & ECONOMIC ENTRENCHMENT

Years Since Core City Reached 100,000 Population
Distinctive Competences (Subsidiarity)

Paraphrasing Lincoln

… government of the people by the people and for the people

… is government that is closest to the people

Competitiveness, Cautions & Fads

3 Competitiveness Lists

5 of 10 areas with greatest job growth (1980-2002) not listed, including #1 & #2

Rise of the Creative Class

1999 List: Portland #30
2004 List: Portland #6
David Rusk’s City Elasticity Theory

Census Regions and Divisions of the United States

Sterling County Courthouse, Sterling City, TX
City Elasticity Theory: Poverty Rate
LARGEST CITIES: LOUISVILLE BEFORE MERGER

Poverty Rate: 2000
Louisville: 50th of 66

City Elasticity Theory: Poverty Rate
LARGEST CITIES: LOUISVILLE AFTER MERGER

Poverty Rate: 2000
Louisville: 21st of 66
Households in Poverty: 2000
PRE-MERGER AND POST MERGER LOUISVILLE

Poverty Rate by City Elasticity
URBANIZED AREAS: 2000
Median Income by City Elasticity

URBANIZED AREAS: 2000

Residential Segregation & Population Growth

METROPOLITAN AREAS OVER 1,000,000: 2000
Change in Residential Segregation
METROPOLITAN AREAS OVER 1,000,000: 2000

Genuine Consolidation Justifications?

New York: Fear of Losing #1 to Chicago
Indianapolis: Retaining Political Control
Toronto: Settling a Political Score
Louisville: Reclaim #1 State Rank from Lexington
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The Universal Dream

Honjo (Tokyo suburb)
Why Local Democracy is Superior

- People have more control
- Less anonymity
  - People know their elected officials
  - Not other people’s money
- Not dependent upon a fickle, limited attention span press
- Special interests have less control
- Less bureaucracy

Conclusions

1. “Urban Sprawl” is urban growth

2. Local democracy is more efficient and effective.

3. Large cities may be too large