The Closing of the Metropolitan Frontier
Cities of the Prairie Revisited

Daniel J. Elazar

with Rozann Rothman, Stephen L. Schechter, Maren Allan Stein, and Joseph Zikmund II
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With a new introduction by the author

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To the memory of Shirley Raskin Abelson, 
who spent her life serving the people of the prairie
Contents

List of Maps ix
List of Figures x
List of Tables xi
Introduction to the Transaction Edition xiii
Acknowledgments xxii

Part 1 Overview
1 The Civil Community in the Federal System 17
2 Closing the Metropolitan Frontier 52
3 Political Culture and the Geology of Local Politics 82
4 Continuing the Generational Rhythm 112
5 Federalism versus Managerialism in the Civil Community 133

Part 2 Case Studies
6 From Industrial City to Metropolitan Civil Community: The Politics of Constitutional Change in Pueblo, by Stephen L. Schechter 163
7 Changing Expectations of Local Government in Light of the 1960s: The Cases of Champaign and Urbana, by Rozann Rothman 192
8 The Agricommercial Tradition on the Metropolitan Frontier: Decatur, by Maren Allan Stein 218
9 The Effect of External Factors on the Medium-Sized Civil Community: The Case of Joliet, by Joseph Zikmund II and Daniel J. Elazar 235
Notes 253
Bibliography 269
Index 277
Maps

1 Metropolitan Areas in Illinois, 1977  4
2 Metropolitan Areas in Minnesota, 1977  5
3 Metropolitan Areas in Colorado, 1977  6
1.1 The Decatur Civil Community  19
1.2 The Peoria Civil Community and Urbanized Areas  20
1.3 The Pueblo Civil Community  21
1.4 The Rockford Civil Community  22
1.5 The Springfield Civil Community  23
1.6 The Champaign and Urbana Civil Communities  24
1.7 The Duluth and Superior Civil Communities  25
1.8 The Quad Cities Urbanized Area  25
1.9 The Madison-St. Clair Counties Urbanized Area  26
1.10 The Joliet Civil Community  27
2.1 The Geohistorical Location of the Cities of the Prairie  79
6.1 Pueblo County: Major Settlements, Facilities, and Arteries  167
6.2 Major Political, Historical, and Socioeconomic Sections  176
8.1 Macon County  223
9.1 Joliet in the Northeastern Illinois Region  236
Figures

1.1 The Civil Community and Its Components 18
1.2 The Three-Sector Approach to Urban Impact Analysis 28
3.1 The Political Cultures of the Cities of the Prairie 86
4.1 The Three Dimensions of a Constitution 115
5.1 The American Government Matrix 137
5.2 The Jacobin Model 139
5.3 The Managerial Pyramid 140
5.4 Organization of the City of Champaign 144
5.5 Organization of the City of Urbana 145
6.1 Voter Turnout in Pueblo Council Elections and the 1954 Charter Referendum 187
Tables

1 Distribution of United States Population by Size of Place, 1950–80 2
1.1 Major Determinants of Outcomes in the Three Sectors of the Urban Economy 29
1.2 Major Federal and State Institutions in the Cities of the Prairie 32
1.3 Cities of the Prairie: Sources of Local Government Revenue, 1971–72 34
1.4 Per Capita Expenditure, per Capita Aid, and Dependency, by City Population Size Class, 1962, 1975, and Growth, 1962–75 36
1.5 Federal, State, and Local Government Offices in the Rockford Civil Community, 1960 and 1980 38
1.6 Federal, State, and Local Government Offices in the Rockford Civil Community, 1960 39
1.7 Federal, State, and Local Government Offices in the Rockford Civil Community, 1980 40
1.8 State Partisan Political Preferences, 1964–80 46
1.9 Cities of the Prairie: Partisan Political Preferences, 1968–80 47
1.10 Cities of the Prairie: Partisan Political Preferences, 1972–80 48
2.1 Growth of the Ten Metropolitan Areas, 1960–80 64
2.2 City Land Area and Population Density, 1950–75 65
2.3 East St. Louis Population by Race 66
2.4 Growth of the University of Illinois and Champaign-Urbana, 1950–70 67
2.5 Migration and the Cities of the Prairie, 1970 and 1980 68

3.1 Visible Ethnicity in the Cities of the Prairie, 1960 and 1970 92

3.2 Cities of the Prairie: Black Population, 1950–80 96

3.3 Cities of the Prairie: Hispanic Population, 1970–80 98

3.4 Cities of the Prairie: Relative Educational Achievement, 1960 and 1970 99

3.5 Presidential Primary Results in the Counties of the Cities of the Prairie, 1968–80 107

5.1 Rockford Government Expenditures by Function, 1978 149

5.2 Citizen Opinion on Merger of Champaign and Urbana 152

6.1 Development of Pueblo’s Urban-Industrial Order 172

6.2 Party Affiliation as a Percentage of Pueblo’s Registered Voters 184

7.1 Population Changes, Champaign-Urbana, 1840–1970 195

8.1 Intergovernmental Sources of Local Revenue, 1962–77 225

9.1 Population Growth of Selected Townships in Will County, 1950–70 243

9.2 Population Patterns for Joliet and Surrounding Townships 244

9.3 Effect of Annexations on City and Township Populations, 1960–70 245

9.4 Population Characteristics of Joliet, 1960–70 246
Introduction to the
Transaction Edition

Americans have had a long, complex, and usually positive relationship to their local communities and local self-government system. The American myth places local government at the center of the American governance system as the fountainhead of American democracy. Nevertheless, in a century which to the naked eye seems to have been dominated by nationalization, centralization, and then globalization, an outsider might expect a significant diminution of interest in local government affairs and local communities. It is the genius of the American federal system that there has periodically throughout this century been a resurgence of interest in local government and in the effectiveness of local governments as keystones of the system. This periodic resurgence has been connected to the tide of American political and governmental activity, occurring at the beginning of every generation as part of a generational buildup to its own “New Deal.” Although the “New Deal” of each generation focuses its attention on the federal government, it ripens when all three arenas are involved due to this buildup.

One such period of generational buildup occurred in the fifteen years following World War II. That period opened up the new world of postwar America and the metropolitan-technological frontier. During those first fifteen years, the locus of domestic public action was most heavily in the local arena. Not surprisingly, the issues of community, power, local government, reformed reconstitution, and citizen empowerment were raised by scholars and practitioners trying to make local government better. This was also the period of transition from the “two cities” produced by the urban-industrial frontier to the “single city” of equal citizens in a metropolitan area. The political machines which had emerged within the two cities framework were no longer needed and were eliminated, at the very least because they were no longer considered to be worth the cost of the political corruption that accompanied them. Finally, the civil rights movement pushed American society to its greater openness in equal citizenship for all.

The Cities of the Prairie study was begun in 1959 during this peak of interest in local government, structural and constitutional reform, com-
munity power distribution, and issues of local participation. Formerly, these
issues were studied from the perspective of separate “levels.” That is to say,
an examination of government at the local level treated local, state, and
federal levels separately. What our project brought to the table was a differ­
ent perspective: a federalist perspective that implicitly expected an inter­
mingling of federal, state, and local activities in every arena of govern­
ment, most especially in the local arena. As we learned more about this
complex but quite functional system, we chose to call the organized local
arena, including its local and extra-local public and private institutions
and actors, the “civil community,” a parallel to the federal and state civil
societies.

Civil community is a more complex animal than local government
taken alone, but it more accurately reflects local governing in a complex
age in which people turn to different arenas of governing for different
purposes or even for different aspects of the same purpose. I use the term
“federalist” here as it has been used in the most federalist of countries and
situations, including what Edward Corwin referred to as both “dual” and
“cooperative” federalism, in some judicious combination appropriate to
the setting at hand. The old idea that federalism had to be dual to be real
federalism and the more recent twentieth century response that federal­
ism, to work, had to be cooperative are both too extreme when taken indi­
vidually. For example, in one respect federalism always has to be dual. At
least it does in the development and maintenance of a full range of insti­
tutions of government for every arena. Federalism also always has to be
cooperative, at least in giving the institutions of one arena a role in activi­
ties in others.

This represents an attempt to apply a more nuanced understanding
of federalism to the great issues of local self-government. After a full gen­
eration (forty years) of studying them in three separate waves and discover­
ing all the changes that have taken place, we are still able to conclude that
localities can govern themselves in the very complex world of the latter
half of the twentieth century. This is possible not because they maintained
the power they once had, but because they organized themselves in accor­
dance with the changing state, national, and global power situations. To
do so, localities have to draw upon their resources and those in the other
governmental arenas, but can only do so in the last analysis.

On one hand, we deal with all the great questions mentioned above.
On the other, we deal with them in the context of a specific polity, the
United States of America. We would venture to claim that we could obtain
similar results in some of the other true federal polities such as Switzerland or Canada, though each would be different in specifics and in political culture. That is one of the reasons why the fundamental principle of this series has been that of location in space, time, and culture. This triad enables us to get a handle on the complexity that is introduced into the exploration.

All cities of the prairie are located within or immediately adjacent to the Mississippi River drainage system. Here is what is usually called the American Heartland, that is to say, the states west of the Great Lakes, of the Upper Midwest, and of the Great Plains. That is their location in space, which in the most immediate local sense may not appear to have changed, but in the changing world as a whole can be said to have changed a great deal in the past forty years. While we explored past histories of these communities since their founding in the nineteenth century, our focus is on the fifty years between 1949 and 1999, a location in time that has led communities along and forced them to adapt themselves to worldwide changes wrought by time.

While to many Midwesterners, other Americans, and others outside of the U.S., the Midwest seems like a homogeneous, even bland, region of the country, whose blandness is embodied in shaped speech patterns and an openly “square” way of life, when studied closely real internal differences become apparent. Those are the differences produced by the coming together of differences in ethnicity, religion, culture, and experience. Here, too, we have tried to take note of and partially explain all those differences and their consequences in local self-governance as aspects of location in culture.

I began this study in the hope of helping resolve a key issue of American local government at the time - the argument between those who claimed that American cities were ruled by a power elite and those who argued that cities were pluralistic with different elite groups forming around different issues. At the time, the studies of individual cities to support one position or another were tumbling off the presses. However, virtually all suffered from two defects. First, they were “snapshot” studies of a single period of two to five years that did not take into account longitudinal developments and changes. Second, as local studies in the old dualistic meaning of the term, they did not really take into account those events in which outside actors were directly involved. This included, in some cases, the impact of the adjacent suburban areas which were looked upon at the time as simply extensions of the city’s population beyond its formal
boundaries rather than as incipient communities in their own right that were at least semi-independent actors within the civil community environment.

Thus, when I observed the beginnings of the civil rights revolution in the cities of the prairie during the first round of the study in the early 1960s, I found that it was essentially ignored by the movers and shakers in most of the communities because it involved young African Americans. That is to say, these African Americans were members of a group who had been automatically excluded from political and civic life and therefore could not be believed to be important. By the time of the second round in the 1970s, it was apparent that this was a truly important movement that transformed the face of the cities. "Hot button" issues of the first round, such as downtown off-street parking and dog leashing, had dropped away as irrelevant or superfluous. Not only were African Americans and other peoples of color participating in local politics, they were being elected to city councils, local governing boards, and chief executive positions. By the third round, the entire issue was past, except for symbolic outbursts. Equal participation was taken for granted. None of this could have been known in a snapshot study. Not only was the snapshot approach inadequate for discussing community power, but in general activists kept changing in the cities of the prairie essentially on no more than an eight-year basis.

The fifty-year history that we examined followed three major shifts in the community agenda - which in turn provided situational reasons for changes in leadership. The first period was a period of reform and reconstitution. This period, from the end of World War II to the middle of the 1960s, either witnessed or brought about the decline of machine politics where such existed, or a modernization of governmental roles, functions, and structures to replace earlier ways. The talents brought forth to play leadership roles were either those with special talents at achieving constitutional change or those who erroneously thought that constitutional change would eliminate the necessity for citizens to be involved in government on a daily basis.

In machine-controlled cities such as Joliet and Peoria, the end result came about when the business community perceived that the cost of allowing the machine to operate exceeded the benefits it brought them by a sufficient measure. Structural reforms consisted of the introduction of city manager government and at-large city council elections to replace the ward system where machine politics flourished. Where that was not the essential problem, the changes were introduced just to promote adminis-
trative efficiency. Municipal charters were streamlined or “updated.” Professional city managers and planners were brought in to make local government work better.

The second period lasted from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s. This was a period of civic mobilization: each civil community was different. Pueblo made the most elaborate and successful effort. The city manager, regional planner, and chairman of the county board led the effort to mobilize citizens of all groups in Pueblo society to work together to pursue civic improvement through a network of commissions and committees. This network would integrate previously excluded populations such as the Latinos. In Rockford and the Quad cities, the expansion of the community of activists included blacks and other peoples of color. The old movers and shakers were replaced in the chamber of commerce, the labor unions, and the progressive newspaper whose leaders disappeared from the scene either because of age or legal difficulties. Each city had an appropriate mobilizing device for its situation.

During the second period the bottom dropped out of the seemingly endless prosperity of the postwar years. The economies of the cities of the prairie all collapsed except where upheld by massive state institutions - such as in Springfield, the capital of Illinois, or the state university at Champaign-Urbana.

The third period, from the mid-1980s to the present, involved a response to the challenge, most particularly the economic challenge. This involved major shifts in location for all, including the elimination of their self-contained economies and their connection with the larger regions around them and beyond to the new globalization. This shift in location was essentially a product of local effort to exploit possibilities. Rarely was it simply a matter of some good fortune blown in from the outside. True, Springfield and Champaign-Urbana could connect in their singular ways as state capital and seat of the University, while Peoria and Rockford had to respond by building a whole new economic base after their heavy industries had collapsed because of outside forces. Duluth cleverly shifted itself from relying on its natural resource-base and turned to exploiting its position as a potential tourism and regional medical center (from the area from western Ontario to Sault Ste. Marie). Alton capitalized on the shift northward of the Greater St. Louis metropolitan region to include the recreation areas of the lower Illinois and Mississippi Rivers. It was this combination of local initiatives based upon larger targets which melded into the larger global direction that made the third period a successful
 Introduction to the Transaction Edition

one for most of the cities of the prairie. While almost everything that was
done was a group effort by local and other governmental arenas, it was the
local initiative that made the difference.

Parenthetically - without really being planned in this way - Volume 1, Cities of the Prairie: The Metropolitan Frontier and American Politics covers the period of reform and reconstitution. Volume 2, Cities of the Prairie Revisited: The Closing of the Metropolitan Frontier, covers the second period of civic mobilization. Volume 3, Cities of the Prairie: The Next Generation, covers the third period of economic revival.

The republication of volumes 1 and 2, along with the publication of volume 3, brings the study to completion and makes it available in a uniform format. The issues mentioned in this new introduction, as well as many others, are examined in these three volumes, offering a comprehensive picture of: trends in local self-government; the organization of community power; the achievement of local, state, and national goals equally; the relationship between politics and economics; patterns of political culture; civil community constituents; politics' promise and the problematics of a continuing frontier; and how federalism shapes or reshapes all of these points.

It hardly need be said that a forty-year study of so many civil communities scattered over one million square miles owes much to many. First, there are the project's institutional homes: the Institute of Government and Public Affairs at the University of Illinois whose director, Gilbert Y. Steiner, was responsible for asking me to do the more modest study that led to the larger one; the Center for the Study of Federalism at Temple University which picked up the mantel of the study in its second round; the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs whose staff contributed much to the third round; and Transaction Publishers, whose chairman of the board, Irving Louis Horowitz, and president, Mary Curtis, have brought out this new edition.

The research for the first round was undertaken by this writer alone. I was joined in the second and third rounds, however, by the following scholars working through the Center for the Study of Federalism: Joseph Marbach, Karl Nollenberger, Rozann Rothman, Stephen L. Schechter, Benjamin R. Schuster, and Maren A. Stein, supported by John Wesley Leckrone, Julie Herlands, Kimberly Robinson, Mark Ami-El, and Rachel Elrom. Needless to say, the study would not have been possible if not for the help, cooperation, and information provided by the hundreds of informants interviewed for the project. They are noted in the appendix to each volume. Our gratitude to them has no bounds.
As I close this study after forty years, a full biblical generation, I see before my eyes the cities of the prairie, which began as ten federally defined metropolitan areas and are now seventeen civil communities. I am filled with affection for them, and appreciation for the cooperation of their people in the conducting of this massive endeavor. Formally, there were three major interventions to look at the cities three times during the course of the generation. In fact, there was no time when the cities were out of my mind or a time when I or one of my colleagues were not able to drop in on one or more just to keep up.

Interaction with those cities in the total geographical context taught me how to better evaluate the beauties of the so-called “flat” Upper Mississippi Valley, whose natural order is shaped by its rivers and lakes and enhanced by the more or less carefully cultivated cities on their banks. When one goes deep into the mountains northwest, their spectacular scenery often makes the visitor wish there were no human presence to distract. When one visits the densely populated northeast and south, one thinks of the natural phenomena of topography, physiography, climate, and weather as distorted, as having lost their beauty because of too much civilization, so that they only interfere with comfortable living. It is in the great Mississippi Valley and its environs that the beauties of the landscape are so frequently enhanced by human settlement, the settlement of people in order to enjoy the natural phenomena rather than seek to avoid them. All of the Midwestern cities seem to have become nature-enhancing as they have evolved, but the medium-sized city is most successful at it. Large enough to provide civilization, which is what cities are designed to provide, it is also small enough that it does not lose the intimate connection with nature nor its people that connect them with one another. So I thank the cities of the prairie, not only for their help, but for all that they have unexpectedly given me, and perhaps even unbeknownst to them. My concern for and with them and their future will persist as long as I am around.

Daniel J. Elazar
Acknowledgments

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Special acknowledgment is due all those citizens of the cities of the prairie who assisted us in our research, as interviewees or in other capacities.
The 1980 census confirms what had been at least marginally evident since 1960, that among the new centers of urban growth in the United States are medium-sized communities of 40,000 to 250,000 people (table 1). What the table does not fully reveal is that over 40 percent of all the inhabitants of metropolitan America, one-third of the nation's population, live in urban civil communities in that size range, and another 15 percent of the total live in cities approaching it. As cities, these medium-sized communities constitute the largest single class in the United States and have done so for better than half a century.

The trend in American settlement patterns since World War II is clear from the United States Census breakdown. In 1950 large cities of over 500,000 population constituted the largest single group: 17.6 percent of the total population of the United States. Small cities of 10,000 to 50,000 were second with 13.4 percent, and medium-sized cities were third with 12.3 percent. By 1960 the large cities' share had dropped to 15.9 percent, which was almost matched by the small cities' 15.5 percent. The medium-sized cities had also gained, reaching 13.3 percent. Between 1960 and 1970 the large cities dropped slightly to 15.6 percent and were surpassed by the small cities, which reached 16.4 percent. They were almost matched by the medium-sized cities at 14.7 percent. By 1980 the medium-sized cities constituted 16.2 percent of the total population, with large cities declining to only 12.5 percent.

In fact, these figures underestimate the medium-sized category as defined here and in the original Cities of the Prairie study, which uses a population breaking point of 40,000 at the lower limit and 200,000 at the upper. The larger cities in the census's medium-sized category tend to share the lower or even negative growth rates of the cities in the two categories above, while those between 40,000 and 50,000 tend to be growing. A recalculation using those categories rather than those of the United States Census Bureau would probably place the medium-sized group in the number one position among the five categories of cities.

This pattern carries over into the metropolitan areas. Those under 500,000, dominated by medium-sized cities, have been growing faster than
Table 1. Distribution of United States Population by Size of Place, 1950-80

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Urban Places %</th>
<th>Urban Places No.</th>
<th>1,000,001-1,000,000 %</th>
<th>1,000,001-1,000,000 No.</th>
<th>500,001-250,000 %</th>
<th>500,001-250,000 No.</th>
<th>250,001-100,000 %</th>
<th>250,001-100,000 No.</th>
<th>100,001-50,000 %</th>
<th>100,001-50,000 No.</th>
<th>50,001-10,000 %</th>
<th>50,001-10,000 No.</th>
<th>10,001-10,000 %</th>
<th>10,001-10,000 No.</th>
<th>% Rural</th>
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<td>64.0</td>
<td>4,743</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>1,030</td>
<td>13.7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>69.9</td>
<td>6,041</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>1,566</td>
<td>18.1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td>7,062</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>73.7</td>
<td>8,765</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.7</td>
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<td>4.8</td>
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<td>2,440</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

those above 500,000, at least since the mid-1960s.1 Medium-sized cities are growing both within larger metropolitan regions and as centers of small metropolitan areas in their own right. Their growth reflects certain fundamental changes in the social patterns of the already urbanized and developed countries of the world, including new economic conditions, new approaches to the organization of local government services, and changing value choices by citizens. Moreover, their impact on the national and world scene is growing as the large cities decline and the more manageable civic life of smaller places generates a cosmopolitan leadership in a wide variety of fields, consisting of those who are beginning to reach beyond their local environment. A small sign of the times was the election of Richard J. Carver, Peoria’s mayor, to the presidency of the United States Conference of Mayors in the mid-1970s. Yet in the concern for studying the very large metropolis, as the focus of urbanization in past decades, or the very small town, seen as a manageable place to examine the intricacies of urban life, the medium-sized civil community has been substantially neglected as a focus of study. This neglect is all the more a problem in light of the statistical findings on optimal city size, which suggest that cities in this size range achieve optimum performance on most measures.

One exception is the Cities of the Prairie project, a comparative study of medium-sized civil communities in ten metropolitan areas in the upper Mississippi-Missouri valley, initiated in 1959. In that project thirteen civil communities, in ten metropolitan areas, were studied intensively:

1. Champaign-Urbana, Illinois
2. Decatur, Illinois
3. Duluth, Minnesota
4. Joliet, Illinois
5. Belleville, Illinois, in the Madison–St. Clair counties area
6. Peoria, Illinois
7. Pueblo, Colorado
8. Rock Island and Moline, Illinois, and Davenport, Iowa, three of the “Quad Cities”
9. Rockford, Illinois
10. Springfield, Illinois

Six civil communities in the same metropolitan areas were studied less intensively:

1. Superior, Wisconsin, in the Duluth–Superior standard metropolitan statistical area (SMSA)
2. Alton and East St. Louis, Illinois in the Madison–St. Clair counties area
3. East Peoria and Pekin, Illinois, in the Peoria SMSA
4. East Moline, Illinois, part of the Quad Cities
Introduction


The initial work, undertaken between 1959 and 1963, was conducted under the auspices of the Institute of Government and Public Affairs of the University of Illinois. Since 1967 the project has continued under the auspices of the Center for the Study of Federalism of Temple University. One of the first comparative studies of urban politics in the United States, its findings were published in two books, Cities of the Prairie: The Metropolitan Frontier and

American Politics and The Politics of Belleville: A Profile of the Civil Community, as well as in a number of separately published articles. The latter have been collected and revised for inclusion in Building Cities in America. Significantly, several of the central theses developed in that study and presented in Cities of the Prairie—particularly those delineating the patterns of American political culture and the character of local-state-federal relations—are now widely
accepted as standard elements in current political science theory and have been the basis for extensive research within that and other disciplines.

When I began the initial work, I committed myself to a long-term study of the same cities and metropolitan areas. The idea was to restudy them periodically over at least a generation. I did so because of great dissatisfaction with the snapshot character of most urban research and the lack of longitudinal coverage. In 1970, with the assistance of graduate students, staff, and faculty associates of the Center for the Study of Federalism, I resumed studies in selected civil communities from among the original group, specifically Champaign-Urbana, Moline, Rockford, and Springfield, Illinois; Davenport, Iowa; Duluth, Minnesota; and Pueblo, Colorado. Subsequently we returned to Decatur, East St. Louis, Joliet, and Peoria, Illinois, as well.

In addition to replicating the earlier work, these new studies added
new dimensions of specificity—probing the influence of foundings and reconstructions, the relation between economic and political power, the associational frameworks of civic life, and the expansion of the role of government locally as a developmental phenomenon. In all cases the central focus was the effect on local government and politics of the greatly increased federal intervention of the 1960s and early 1970s. This represented a natural follow-up to the original study, which focused on the changes of the first half of the postwar generation (1946–61).

In the interim, the number of medium-sized civil communities in the states from which the original group was chosen has at least doubled, a sign of the accuracy of the forecast that emerged from the first study. Colorado and Minnesota have each added four more medium-sized metropolitan civil communities, and Illinois has added five. Among the fastest-growing cities in the 25,000 to 50,000 class in the United States between 1960 and 1970, for example, were Brooklyn Park (147.2 percent and fifteenth in the nation), Coon Rapids (104.3 percent and thirty-second), and Fridley (92.7 percent and thirty-ninth), Minnesota; Arvada (159.1 percent and sixteenth), Littleton (93.6 percent and thirty-eighth), and Fort Collins (73.2 percent and fifty-first), Colorado; Northbrook (134.6 percent and twentieth), Palatine (126.4 percent and twenty-second), North Chicago (106.1 percent and twenty-eighth), Normal (97.6 percent and thirty-fifth), Mount Prospect (85.1 percent and forty-third), and DeKalb (78.4 percent and forty-sixth), Illinois; and Menominee Falls (73.4 percent and forty-ninth), Wisconsin.

On the other side of the ledger, Alton, Illinois, lost 7.8 percent of its population in that period, one of the fifty cities in that category with the steepest decline and the only one in the Cities of the Prairie study to be included in that category. Virtually all of the rapid-growth cities were in major metropolitan regions, the exceptions being Normal, Illinois, part of the Bloomington–Normal metropolitan area, one of the new medium-sized metropolitan areas in that state, and DeKalb, Illinois, and Fort Collins, Colorado, both on their way to becoming small metropolitan centers in their own right. During the same period, most of the civil communities of the original study had their own demographic ups and downs. While all but one had modest population gains between 1960 and 1980, half of the central cities lost population. Except in the case of Superior, which had been losing population since its 1910 peak at the end of its land frontier, those losses represented a reversal of the previous trend and reflected the general pattern of older central cities, especially in the Northeast. Indeed, the central cities that did grow were those two west of the Mississippi or on the periphery of the greater Northeast.
Introduction

The Changing Focus of Local Political Studies

This study replicates the original research design, examining major political developments during the fifteen-year period from 1962 to 1977, thereby completing the examination of those civil communities over a full generation and creating the basis for a more systematic and substantial longitudinal comparison than has ever been undertaken in the study of urban politics.

Interest in the systematic study of community power and local politics has its origins in the Progressive Era, in the work of journalistic probers of urban bossism in America. Those journalists, including such figures as Lincoln Steffens and Ida Tarbell, approached their inquiries on a comparative basis, but as journalists without a scientific orientation. After the First World War, sociologists and political scientists began to enter the field in a more systematic manner. The sociological inquiries of Robert S. Lynd and Helen M. Lynd are landmarks in the effort. They were paralleled in political science by the work of Charles E. Merriam and his associates at the University of Chicago, particularly Harold F. Gosnell. After World War II this line of inquiry was advanced by the work of C. Wright Mills, Floyd Hunter, Robert Dahl, and Edward Banfield, all of whom have provided the present basis for assessments of community power and politics. Their work has been supplemented by what is by now a substantial list of studies by their colleagues and students.

One feature common to all these studies is an almost exclusive focus on the urban political community as an entity detached from its larger political environment. This indeed was, in some respects, a necessary first step in establishing the structure and patterns of local politics as existing in their own right. At the same time, it represented a grave deficiency in the ultimate character of the works.

While this basic work in community politics was being undertaken within this limited framework, Morton Grodzins and his colleagues at the University of Chicago (including Banfield, who is far more prone to include external factors than other authors) initiated explorations of local government, metropolitan and nonmetropolitan, within the context of the American federal system. The Cities of the Prairie project was an outgrowth of the Grodzins school and represented, from the first, an effort to study American urban politics within the larger context of the American political system and its sociocultural environment.

Thus a central premise of this study is that it is neither possible nor desirable to study local political systems apart from their larger geohistorical, cultural, economic, and political settings. Communities are located not only in space, but also in time (history) and culture. Not only is it possible, for
example, to “map” the geohistorical and cultural location of a particular community, but it is necessary to do so to understand how it functions socially and politically and how it relates to the larger civil society of which it is a part. Refining the Grodzins model, the first project focused explicitly on urban politics within the larger context.

The project was based on the thesis that the American political system in its local as well as its larger dimension has been shaped by four decisive forces: the frontier and its continuing stimulation of technological innovation and social change; migration and the transplantation of cultures; sectionalism and the development of distinctive geohistorical settings for American politics; and federalism that has provided the operating principles and framework for political and social response to these factors. The civil communities of the study were examined within the context of these four themes and in light of the particular temporal rhythm of American politics, in an effort to indicate how they have interacted with them. The results have led to what we believe are the foundations for an integrated multidimensional theory of metropolitan politics within the American federal system that can be extended, with appropriate modifications, to an examination of urban politics in other political systems as well.

The Resurvey

The first survey covered the first half of the postwar generation (1946–61). Since that time there have been a number of significant developments in the communities, not the least of which involves the massive infusion of federal funds during the height of the “Great Society” programs in the mid-1960s. Taking a long view of history, the rapid institution building and the widening scope of government activity during that period marked the peak of the postwar generation, and the culmination of a form of politics most powerfully enunciated by the New Deal.

The most immediate objective of the resurvey was to examine the significant issues and events of the second fifteen-year period and the changes that had occurred since the end of the first period. In our investigation we were particularly interested in local responses to those national trends and issues of the 1960s and early 1970s that bore directly on the themes of our study. The original themes and specific issues examined in the resurvey include:

1. Civil Community and Federalism, the position of the civil community within the state and national political systems, and the influence of the “Great Society” and “New Federalism.”

2. Metropolitanism, the position of the medium-sized civil community
Introduction

within its metropolitan region, and the effects of recent state and federal efforts to stimulate “substate regional planning” and “intergovernmental cooperation” within metropolitan areas.

3. Democracy and Republicanism, the representation of different factions and groups within the civil community, and the local effects of the black and ethnic revolution vocalized during the previous decades as expressed in political and institutional changes and reflected in challenges to the legitimacy of local power systems and institutions.

4. Constitutionalism, the position of government and government reform in the local civil community, and the effects of post-1961 legislation regarding redistricting, reapportionment, home rule, planning, electoral reform, campaign practices, and the like.

5. Frontier and Sectionalism, the diffusion of technological and managerial developments, and the changing geohistorical location of the civil community in response to the metropolitan-technological frontier as it reached its peak.

6. Political Culture, the effect of the foregoing changes on the local public’s expectations from government, politics, and political leaders.8

Following the original research design, the investigation involved: (1) selective interviewing of political and community activists in depth; (2) systematic observation; (3) extensive review of the local press; (4) collection of socioeconomic and voting data; and (5) utilization of other relevant studies as well as public documents and special reports. Because the investigation involved a resurvey, special steps were taken to utilize and extend earlier findings in a number of ways: (1) reinterviewing key respondents interviewed in the early 1960s to review the findings and probe for both attitudinal and behavioral changes in the ensuing fifteen years; (2) updating earlier findings by following up on issues that were initiated before the first survey but resolved after, and by collecting newly released information on the first survey period; (3) comparing qualitative changes in the types of community activists interviewed and in the ease and manner of the interview process; as well as (4) the primary research task of identifying major shifts in the location of the civil communities and analyzing both survey and resurvey data for salient patterns and medium-range trends of the postwar generation.9

 Amplification of Earlier Findings

The skills and field research efforts of a larger and more varied research staff enabled us to amplify as well as update earlier findings. The mutually reinforcing effects of these two tasks have been successfully tested by various members of the research team through topical and historical studies.
As a result of the first survey, I was able to obtain the surface and immediate subsurface information needed to construct a basic political map for each of the civil communities under investigation. Following the general comparative analysis of these maps, we were able to return to the case study approach to investigate those most typical and atypical communities more intensively.

Two published case studies resulted from the first effort: *The Politics of Belleville* and "Constitutional Change in a Long-Depressed Civil Community: A Case Study of Duluth, Minnesota." The former study was designed to serve as a more detailed illustration of the general model developed in the earlier analytical volume, *Cities of the Prairie*, and to contribute to a more general understanding of the inner workings of one of many relatively autonomous medium-sized communities that function rather successfully within greater metropolitan regions. As I noted in the introduction to that study: "An understanding of the Bellevilles of the United States, how and why they are and remain independent civil communities within great metropolitan regions, and what makes them tick, is crucial to understanding the nature of American urbanization, and perhaps more important, to understanding how an urbanized and metropolitanized America can possibly retain human scale in its social and political life."  

The second case study, of Duluth, analyzed local politics in a relatively unsuccessful and long-depressed civil community outside the mainstream of the American economy and urban development. Though the city was atypical as a "boom and bust" metropolis with a marginal economy, Duluth's politics of adversity were found to share important similarities with the politics of relative prosperity found in Belleville and other cities studied. Within this context, "Duluth may be considered a paradigm of the civil community caught in the backwash of the American economy and a testing ground in which to examine notions of the nature of community political systems developed in more prosperous civil communities."

Though broadly historical in approach, these case studies were particularly concerned with the most recent time segment of each civil community's history. Drawing on these and other studies, Stephen L. Schechter built a historical and development dimension into the resurvey design itself through studies in Pueblo, Colorado, and Springfield, Illinois. Through exploratory research, he was able to identify certain critical periods of development for more intensive investigation (of foundation, incorporation, industrial expansion, depression, recovery, and reform) and to develop surrogate measures for mapping the civil communities' political characteristics during these periods and their transition from one period to another.

In another comparative case study, this one on a topical theme, Ben-
jamin Schuster wrote his dissertation on the relationships between economic and political elites in three civil communities (Rockford, Davenport, and Duluth). Rozann Rothman completed a book-length case study of Champaign-Urbana, with special emphasis on the local implications of the home rule and reapportionment provisions of the new Illinois state constitution. Shorter case studies were completed by Maren Stein on Decatur and Joseph Zikmund on Joliet.

Expanding the Scope of the Study

Although the research design was first tested in American cities of the upper Mississippi-Missouri valley, from the first the intention was to produce a research design and models that would be more widely applicable. Since the first survey, the research design has been tested in other cities both within and outside the original area of investigation. Within the boundaries of the first study, we mapped the migration, settlement, and eventual meeting of different cultural streams in selected civil communities of the greater West. While those civil communities shared the common characteristics of that sphere, because of their particular geohistorical location, most also reflected the characteristics of adjacent spheres, as follows: (1) civil communities of the industrial north (Joliet); (2) civil communities of the central prairie (Champaign-Urbana, Decatur, Peoria, Springfield); (3) civil communities of the border south (Madison and St. Clair counties); (4) civil communities of the upper midwest (Duluth); (5) civil communities of the West (Pueblo, Quad Cities). This made the broader generalizations of the original study both possible and reasonable.

In the expansion, Stephen Schechter and John Kincaid retraced the three great westward streams to their American sources in the New England, Middle Atlantic, and southern states. Representative civil communities were selected on the basis of their "goodness of fit" within their respective regions and their comparability with each other and with the civil communities in the original study. Retaining the essential case study character of the original work, the choices emphasized sectional location and "socioeconomic" (in the broadest sense of the term) positions within the respective social systems.

John Kincaid did a comprehensive in-depth study of Jersey City, New Jersey, as the epitome of the Middle Atlantic industrial city, from its entrepreneurial beginnings in the eighteenth century through its period as a haven for immigrant workers from Europe and the machine politics of that time, down to its present status as a port of entry for the most recent waves of Asian and Latin American immigrants and its continuing struggle with machine politics. His work delineates and analyzes the pathology of phe-
nomina that appeared in much more moderate form in certain of the Illi­
nois cities of the prairie, whose geohistorical location clearly had a moderat­
ing effect on such tendencies. In doing so, it adds a whole new dimension
to our understanding of machine politics and “boss rule.”

Stephen Schechter adopted a different approach, undertaking a broadly
comparative effort in ten cities classified as: (1) the satellite cities of southern
New York (White Plains and Mount Vernon); (2) the river cities of central
New York (Albany and Schenectady); (3) the piedmont cities of central North
Carolina (Raleigh and Durham); (4) the prairie cities of central Illinois
(Springfield and Decatur); (5) the oasis cities of southeastern Colorado
(Pueblo and Colorado Springs). His work focuses on foundings and refound­
ings; the stages of development of the civil communities and the continui­
ties and discontinuities in their responses; patterns of urbanization and
metropolitanization; the nature of political conflict and competition; the char­
acter of political leadership; local government organization and the politics
government change; and public policy formulation and administration.

Finally, I did parallel exploratory surveys in Colorado Springs, Colo­
rado, and Rochester, Minnesota, which became medium-sized civil com­
munities in this period, and in the far western civil community of Pasadena,
California.

This book presents the results of our return to the cities of the prairie.
It does not go beyond those civil communities to incorporate the results of
the studies of my colleagues, most of whom will publish their own books
in due course. The book itself is divided into two parts. The first is an ana­
lytic overview of the cities' responses to major themes of the original study,
and the second consists of case studies of particular civil communities and
topics that further elucidate the analysis.

By replicating the research project longitudinally, we hope that we
have contributed significantly to the scientific investigation of local politics.
In our opinion, the resurvey itself represents a significant methodological
advance over the single snapshot character of most urban studies. The half­
generation seems to be an appropriate unit of time for such restudies, allow­
ing comparative analysis over a full generation of thirty to forty years; hence,
at the end of this decade we hope to be back with another installment in
the continuing study of the cities of the prairie.
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