

terests will only be served by looking at the metropolitan area as a whole, and planning and working for its development.

GOVERNMENTAL OBSTACLES

The fundamental metropolitan problem is not that there are difficulties in supplying public services or ameliorating social and economic disparities. It is that governments in metropolitan areas are often unable to cope with these issues. The system of local government in the United States has many achievements to its credit, but, like any social system, it also has its disadvantages. Within metropolitan areas, many important issues of public policy can no longer be handled by local communities acting alone; their small areas of jurisdiction are inadequate for either administering area-wide services or resolving area-wide problems.

The close ties of people and businesses to one another in metropolitan areas have no parallel in government. While social and economic relationships have shifted to an enlarged metropolitan scale, governments and the loyalties they inspire have remained local. As Roscoe Martin has put it:

The metropolitan area has no capital, courthouse, or city hall, no corporate existence, no body, no soul, no sense of being, indeed no being in any concrete meaning of the term. Al Smith was from the sidewalks of New York, not from the sidewalks of the New York-Northeastern New Jersey standard consolidated area.⁶

Metropolitan areas are governed not only by traditional cities, towns, and counties, but also by a wide variety of special districts that overlap other boundaries. The complexity of local government can be illustrated by listing the array of local jurisdictions responsible for Park Forest, a suburb of Chicago, as of 1956: Cook County, Will County, Cook County Forest Preserve District, village of Park Forest, Rich Township, Bloom Township, Monee Township, Suburban Tuberculosis Sanitarium District, Bloom Township Sanitary District, Non-High School District 216, Non-High School District 213, Rich Township High School District 227, Elementary School District 163, South Cook County Mosquito Abatement District.⁷

Fragmentation of this kind may appear to bring government "closer to the people," but it compounds the difficulties of achieving coordination within metropolitan areas. Political responsibility for government performance is divided to the point of obscurity. Public control of government policies tends to break down when citizens have to deal with a network of independent governments, each responsible for highly specialized activities. Even where good channels are developed for registering public concern, each government is so circumscribed in its powers and in the area of its jurisdiction that important metropolitan action is virtually impossible for local governments to undertake. If a few governments are prepared to agree on joint measures or coordinated programs, their efforts can be blocked by others that are unwilling to cooperate.

Local governments, fragmented as they are, nevertheless keep the metropolis running. They operate the schools, maintain the streets,

⁶ Roscoe C. Martin, *Metropolis in Transition: Local Government Adaptation to Changing Urban Needs* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1963), p. 141.

⁷ Edward C. Banfield and Morton Grodzins, *Government and Housing in Metropolitan Areas* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1958), p. 18.