

Chapter V

METROPOLITAN REORGANIZATION

Problems such as water supply and sewage disposal, or relocation, illustrate the ways in which governmental responsibilities today have burst out of the boundaries of local communities in metropolitan areas. In other fields as well, such as transportation and air pollution control, local governments acting independently have become increasingly unable to meet the needs either of their own citizens or of the broader metropolitan population.

Local governments take many kinds of measures to improve their ability to handle problems that have outgrown existing boundaries and powers. Sometimes these measures are limited to a specific function, such as contracting to buy water from a nearby city, but often they are intended to strengthen the capacity of a government to deal with a broad range of responsibilities. The system of government in metropolitan areas has considerable flexibility, and many alternatives can be exploited. This chapter will review the main approaches that local governments use in enlarging their powers, jurisdictions, or structures in order to handle urban problems more effectively. Each method of reorganizing local government in metropolitan areas has its strengths and weaknesses, and these will be evaluated to give a sense of the applicability and effectiveness of each. Aside from questions of effectiveness, however, governmental reorganization efforts must meet stern tests of political reality. Voter reactions to a number of reorganization proposals will be considered, in order to assess the main political obstacles. Finally in this chapter, metropolitan planning will be considered as another significant way of improving governmental performance of areawide functions, in this case without necessarily restructuring the powers or jurisdiction of local governments.

EVALUATING ALTERNATIVES FOR GOVERNMENTAL REORGANIZATION

A number of criteria can be suggested for evaluating the geographical jurisdictions and powers of local governments, based on considerations similar to the criteria for performing urban functions, as described in chapter III. In principle, local governments should have jurisdiction over a large enough area to permit them to cope adequately with the problems that their citizens expect them to handle. They should be able to raise sufficient revenue, and to do it equitably. They should retain flexibility to adjust their boundaries to meet changing conditions. They should be organized to handle a variety of functions rather than only one or two, so that they can exercise political responsibility for balancing total local needs and resources. They should be able to take advantage of economies of scale, and, at the same time, be accessible to and controllable by the people they serve.