H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Jon C. Teaford. *Post-Suburbia: Government and Politics in the Edge Cities.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997. 210 pp. $32.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8018-5450-7.

Reviewed by Owen D. Gutfreund (Columbia University)
Published on H-Urban (September, 1997)

Over the last twenty years, Jon Teaford has published more than half a dozen books about the history of urban politics, from the colonial period through the late twentieth century. His latest volume adds to this work, by focusing attention on the twentieth century political history of the metropolitan periphery, offering an analysis of how suburban political structures have evolved in the face of metropolitan sprawl.

Teaford starts with the premise that a fundamental shift has occurred in American settlement patterns, so that areas along the metropolitan periphery that were once suburban have evolved into a new type of city, with everything that more conventional cities have to offer. This book is about government and politics in this new realm, which Teaford embraces as "the world of the future" (p. 8). The main thrust of his argument is that the political culture and governmental structures that evolved in these new edge cities were characterized by a schizoid self-image, economically urban but culturally and emotionally suburban, urbanized yet simultaneously anti-urban. The result is a marriage of necessity, a combination of localism and regionalism constantly in a state of flux, under perpetual renegotiation, trying to reconcile the conflicting "ideals and demands of the changing world along the metropolitan fringe" (p. 3).

In practice, this meant that the political culture in these emerging new cities was built around a devotion to the rhetoric of localism, while actually allowing county governments to take on many functions traditionally left to municipalities. Over the course of the century, government became more and more splintered by the rampant proliferation of tiny municipalities, while at the same time special agencies, stronger county governments, and contractual arrangements between villages provided for limited regional government.

In order to tie this theory to specific locales, Teaford draws from the histories of six suburban counties: Nassau and Suffolk Counties, on Long Island; Oakland County, outside of Detroit; DuPage County, adjacent to Chicago; St. Louis County, which surrounds the city of the same name; and Orange County, south of Los Angeles. The political histories of each of these counties are not identical, yet they share enough common elements that they seem to form a pattern. In each case, they have grown and urbanized to the point where they arguably rival or even supersede the adjacent city, by some measures. Nassau/Suffolk was the first suburban area designated as an independent SMSA by the federal Census Bureau. Oakland County has more residents and more office space than neighboring Detroit. DuPage County includes oft-cited edge city Naperville, and boasts of numerous major corporate headquarters, including the McDonald's Corporation. Orange County houses two and a half million residents, more than all but a handful of the nation's more traditional cities. Finally, St. Louis County has twice the population of the formally designated city of St. Louis.

Post-Suburbia is organized into seven chapters. The first chapter contains the basic statement of the author's thesis, staking out the analytical underpinnings of the book and making broad generalizations about American suburbs and metropolitan change in the twentieth century. The following five chapters are arranged chronologically, from the 1920s through the late 1980s, each drawing supporting examples from the six counties, as necessary. The seventh and final chapter is a recapitulation of the main thesis, that competing tensions on the metropolitan periphery produced a "pragmatic compromise" that married suburban homes and commercial development, village government and regional authority.

Teaford starts by pointing to the 1920s and 1930s as "The Age of the Suburban Haven," during which time Americans moved to the suburbs as urban refugees, seeking to escape the city by moving to a combination of a sylvan setting, socially homogeneous neighborhoods made up of "the right people," and easy access to the city for business and shopping. These communities had intentionally small governments, staffed by volunteer,

nonpartisan slates of elected officials. The primary mission of these governments was to "preserve and protect." Many municipal services that residents had come to expect from their government were not actually provided by the tiny local government, but sometimes were instead provided by special assessment districts or regional service agencies. Sanitation, schools, sewer, water, and fire protection often fell into this category.

Sporadic attempts at centralizing power in the county government, ostensibly for the purpose of more rational or efficient service delivery, were generally rejected by voters as overaggressive centralization that would threaten "home rule" and encourage "big-city" style government. Less ambitious reforms were more successful, so that by the end of this period, Nassau county had established a national model for a county government that had a strong executive combined with a legislative body (or board of supervisors) made up of locally elected representatives from the villages, towns, and cities within the county. This was a compromise, allowing increased regionalism within a system steeped in the rhetoric of localism.

Teaford's next chapter describes what he call "The Emerging Post-Suburban Pattern, 1945-1960," in which suburbs became much more than just residential havens. Now "work" and "play" joined "home" in the suburban equation. Commerce and industry became welcome partners, if properly managed and zoned. The suburbs now needed businesses to tax, so that suburbanites would not have to pay the full costs of the services they received. So, shopping centers and industrial parks sprouted in what Teaford refers to as "so-called suburbs." He uses this term because he argues that the addition of commerce and industry to these communities meant that they were no longer suburban, but had instead become "post-suburban," or urbanized, in a new way.

Not all readers will agree with the author's interpretation in this regard. While it is clear that these suburbs were becoming increasingly urban and economically more complex (in Teaford's words, this change should have been apparent to "any halfway conscious American" (p. 2), the author's contention that they ceased to be part of the metropolitan region and instead became a new "post-suburban" metropolis of their own is open to debate. In his disappointingly brief bibliographic essay (there is no proper bibliography included in the volume, leaving the substantial body of secondary literature on suburbanization uncredited), Teaford acknowledges that there has been some scholarly disagreement on this point. By his own admission, Teaford's position on this issue places him in the same camp as Joel Garreau (*Edge City: Life on the New Frontier*, 1991) and Robert Fishman (*Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia*, 1987) on this issue, and specifically in opposition to that set forth by Leonard Wallock and William Sharpe ("Bold New City or Built-Up 'Burb: Redefining Contemporary Suburbia" in *American Quarterly*, vol. 46 no. 1, March 1994).

However, regardless of the reader's opinion on this matter, *Post-Suburbia*'s greatest strength is its in-depth history research into the political and governmental innovations prompted by these changes on the metropolitan periphery. These new urbanized areas were ruled by an ever-increasing number of governments, a result of rapid and aggressive incorporation (mainly for defensive purposes, to fend off real and imagined annexation attempts) matched with a proliferation of special multi-village utility districts. At the same time, suburbanites increasingly turned to homeowner's associations as a new means of retaining local control.

The tensions between localism and regionalism, between increasing the suburban tax base and maintaining the escapism of the suburban experience are the topic of Teaford's fourth chapter, "Maintaining the Balance of Power," which spans the late 1950s and the 1960s. During this period there were some attempts at consolidating suburban counties with their associated cities, a trend which Teaford calls "metropolitanism." With the notable exceptions of Nashville and Indianapolis, these efforts at consolidation failed in the face of fervent localism. In St. Louis, consolidation was rejected in 1959 and again in 1962. Also in 1962, Nassau and Suffolk opposed even a heavily watered-down attempt at regional government, the New York City Area Metropolitan Regional Council. Likewise, many Oakland County municipalities boycotted the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, so that only about one quarter of the eligible governments ever participated. In Orange County, the Southern California Association of Governments faced similar difficulties. [It should be noted that this chapter included a particularly interesting capsule history of the boundary disputes and annexation battles in Orange County, as the Irvine Company developed the Irvine Ranch.]

While metropolitan consolidation was defeated in many instances nationwide, Teaford argues that it opened the door for a less objectionable form of regionalism: suburban consolidation. In the 1970s and 1980s, suburban counties were reorganized along more centralized lines, with more authority and expanded responsibilities. For example, St. Louis County, in a series of small, incremental reforms, took over a greater share of

fire, sewer, garbage, parks, transportation, and some police functions. Oakland County, also in separate measures, acquired power to oversee a county airport, an economic development agency, and a countywide library system. Similarly, Orange County implemented a countywide transit system, and undertook a huge county airport project (John Wayne Airport). At the same time, many functions were kept local, still administered by the villages, townships, homeowners associations, and special assessment districts.

In other words, county governments began to act as umbrella-municipalities, to some extent unifying the suburban portions of the metropolitan area and providing some governmental cohesion to the "postsuburban" region that had become its own metropolitan area. According to Teaford's interpretation, the "metropolitan area" now excluded the core city, and the counties now served as the unifying governments for the newly urbanized, suburban cities of the future.

By the 1980s, the post-suburban transformation had proceeded so far that, Teaford argues, "the curtain ascended on the suburban age" (p. 172). All six counties had population densities in excess of one thousand residents per square mile, with Nassau county well over four times that level. Some towns in Oakland County collected more than half their tax revenues from business. In DuPage County, developers were buying entire residential subdivisions to redevelop as office buildings. Orange County built a Performing Arts Center and a Convention Center, and also attracted two major league sports franchises (the baseball California Angels, and football's Los Angeles Rams). A resounding backlash ensued: "urbanization had proceeded too far and it was time to rebel" (p. 173).

Voters pushed slow-growth and controlled-growth reforms. DuPage county voters rejected the opportunity to host the new Chicago White Sox. The county executive was voted out of office because he was overly interested in expanding the county airport, attracting major league sports teams, and building a new County convention center. In Nassau and Suffolk, slow-growth initiatives were launched at the local level, including a fierce battle to protect the remaining portions of the Long Island Pine Barrens. In Orange County, a low-growth referendum obtained approval from 44 percent of the voters. Suburban voters restrained their county leaders, reminding them that they were not mayors and ought not stray from the suburban ethos: development was only to be indulged to generate tax revenues that would subsidize residential amenities, so suburbanites need not pay the full cost of the municipal services they demanded. This compromise, along with the structural tension between centralized countywide government and locally-controlled village-based government, are the two main themes that tie *Post-Suburbia* together.

Post-Suburbia is clearly organized, well written, easily readable, and supported by well-researched case studies. Jon Teaford has called our attention to a branch of history that has been under explored–the examination of local politics and governmental reform in suburban America. While some of his analytical and ideological conclusions will certainly meet with some disagreement, there is no doubt that this book is a valuable addition to the growing body of scholarship concerning the transformation of metropolitan America in the twentieth century.

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Citation: Owen D. Gutfreund. Review of Teaford, Jon C., *Post-Suburbia: Government and Politics in the Edge Cities.* H-Urban, H-Net Reviews. September, 1997.
URL: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=1300

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