Cynthia Ghorra-Gobin. *Les Etats-Unis entre local et mondial.* Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2000. 288 pp. 13,72 EUR, paper, ISBN 978-2-7246-0814-4.

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Sustainable development and metropolitan government for US metropolitan areas?

Cynthia Ghorra-Gobin presents a large part of her experience, and most recent research on United States Metropolitan Areas in this book. She holds a Ph.D. in Urban Planning from UCLA, and is Director of Research for the French National Scientific Research Center (CNRS) and also teaches at the University of Paris IV (Sorbonne) and at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques (Sciences Po). For this geographer and urban planner, *Les Etats-Unis entre local et mondial* (*The U.S. between local and global*) represents a continuation of her previous books, especially *Los Angeles le mythe americain inacheve* (1998) and the useful textbook *Les Etats-Unis. Espace, environnement, societe, ville* (1993). The book is based not just on the work of geographes, but also historians, economists and sociologists, so it is of interest for anyone in the need for a short, sharp, multi-disciplinary synthesis, in French, about the latest trends in the US Metropolitan Areas.

Ghorra-Gobin looks in detail at the changes occurring within the 314 US metropolitan areas in respect to the major trends of globalization of economies, activities, and migration, as well as the global networks of communication. The author assesses the main impact and trend of globalization on US metropolitan areas, such as the (re)location of activities to the suburban areas and clusters, the increase of social segregation and the trend to identity-based political involvement. And she makes her point: although globalization impacts the metropolitan area as a whole, the local scale of city-government does not match the goal of a sustainable development of metropolitan areas, mainly because it is fragmented between many municipalities and unincorporated areas.

US metropolises are of interest because many of them have been created and developed after the Independence and the creation of a Nation-State, which highly differs from European cities. Although cities do not depend on the Federal government, but on the State, the Federal involvement in city policies (welfare, redevelopment, etc.) has went back and forth, along with many criticisms about its cost for tax-payers. As a conse-

quence, the author argues the needs for a new definition of metropolitan government, and explores a few experiments of metropolitan megagovernments, within the framework of decentralized and remodeled federal and state politics.

Chapter 1 considers the metropolis as a setting for globalization. Due to the American context of the book, French readers must be aware that the word metropolis in the book refers to Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) as they are defined by the US Bureau of Census, which does not always seem consistent with a definition for large cities with nation-wide and international central functions, where a long-time cumulative process of growth and concentration of activities and population has occurred, all "processes that transform a town into a metropolis".[1]

The book summarizes the main changes occurring within metropolitan areas as a consequence of globalization and the shift to an information society. The new economic organization has led to a new spatial dynamic, where suburban areas have become the main place of activity for residents during the 1980's and 1990's. The rise of edge-cities and specialized high-tech clusters in suburban areas grows out of an apparent decline or specialization of CBDs. Because it occurs in different times and spaces, this dynamic tends to increase regional discrepancies (i.e. the growth of southwestern and western metropolises). It also increases intra-urban disparities between wealthy suburban municipalities and poor central residential districts.

Basically, the urban sprawl has been produced by an ideology of low-density, nearly rural landscapes of private home-owners, favored by public policies and projects such as freeways and the emphasis on single-family housing. The consequences are to be found in the quasi "secession of the successful"[2], who live within wealthy enclaves highly connected to the information economy, and a highly segregated population which

doesn't have access to the employment opportunities (spatial mismatch). This first chapter discusses the main theoretical and conceptual framework in order to understand the local vs. global gap that is developed during the next four chapters. We may certainly object that the tremendous influence upon local politics of the School of Public Choice, inspired after James Tibeout's work, is not emphasized enough.

In a second chapter, the relationships between globalization, migration and minorities are explored through the assertion that globalization of migration has led to complex flows and interactions between communities. The benefits gained by Civil Rights fights is criticized because it is inconsistent with the new minority patterns, in which Hispanic populations have become the largest minority in California and Texas. The main issue appears to be the representation of minorities in voting and in government institutions. In spite of redistricting of voting areas (e.g. in Los Angeles), the author argues that black, Hispanic and Asian minorities do not have a full political representation, especially at a local scale.

A second global vs. local issue has the greatest consequences for the local environment. Largely embodied by NIMBYism (Not In My Back Yard) and LULUism (Locally Unwanted Land Uses), this preservationist attitude deals with both the preservation of local environment and property values. Ghorra-Gobin narrates some case studies of unwanted land uses, and argues that environmental justice in metropolis might be a federal matter, whereas states and cities are looking for more flexibility. Environmental justice experiments may have begun in the 1980's in Los Angeles when the municipality projected to locate a waste incinerator in a mostly black neighborhood. A citizens defense association then began the process of finding an alternate location, trying to negotiate between general interest and private interests, as defined by the environmentalist goal of a global grassroots democracy. The author also re-

veals the ambiguity of such policies for industrial location in poor neighborhoods, where NIMBYism is an issue, but an incinerator might also lead to new job opportunities for local residents.

Social welfare reform is another part of the debate about local and global interactions within US metropolis. Basically, cities have faced a permanent drop of federal funding since the end of 1970's, while dealing with an increase of poverty. The Clinton administration's reform of social welfare has finally introduced a major change, shifting from financial help to empowering neighborhoods into a financial help to individuals, in the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. This reform transfers the main financial responsibilities of welfare to the state. Nevertheless, the professional screening of welfare applicants is to remain the city's responsibility. But, considering the high concentration of potential applicants within central cities, this reform does not appear to address the issue at the right scale for political action. For instance, it is not clear whether cities will be able to provide applicants with entry levels jobs opportunities or not, since those applicants are already subject to a skill mismatch (describing the gap between the level of jobs available in central city et resident population) and a spatial mismatch (non-proximity of entry levels jobs and less qualified job-less population).

This argument highlights the fact that federal, state and city government levels might not be suitable places for metropolitan governance, which must take into account the impacts of globalization within metropolitan areas. Arguing that US metropolitan areas' governance is not consistent with the sustainable development, Ghorra-Gobin proposes in the last chapter a set of experiments and propositions for the modernization of metropolitan governments. In California, negotiations for giving back to cities the power to discuss property taxes occurred in 1999-2000 (in spite of Proposition 13, which limits this tax up to 1% of

the assessed value of a property). In Los Angeles also, the city's charter has been revised to give the mayor a more flexible executive power. And generally speaking, both federal agencies and cities (i.e. Phoenix) are evaluating and benchmarking their cost related efficiency, comparing public services to private contractors. Finally, the regional - metropolitan scale demonstrates the ability of an inter-governmental system to address planning and environmental issues at a suitable scale. Metropolitan Planning Organizations such as the Southern California Association of Governments now produce both a regional comprehensive plan, and a regional transportation plan, so that planning, land use and transportation might be implemented at a proper scale. Nevertheless, fiscal resources are still dependent on social disparities and political fragmentation, And finally, these experiments also demonstrate the lack of a real political and democratic life at the metropolitan scale.

This implies that US metropolitan areas are still to be considered as a hidden presence on the political scene. But the author tends to think that the real problem might be the question of citizenship. Because of the secessionist attitudes, residential areas well connected to a global economy, such as gated communities[3], are setting up a distance between them and the segregated territories of minorities and new immigrants, the important question could be the emergence of a metropolitan citizenship, much more than the simple idea of a metropolitan governance.

Notes

[1]. For references regarding the different meanings and interpretations of the word metropolization, French readers can refer to the collective book C. Lacour et S. Puissant, eds., *La metropolisation--Croissance, diversite et fractures* (Paris: Anthropos-Economica, Collection Villes, 1999).

[2]. R. B. Reich, "Secession of the Successful," *New-York Times*, New-York, January 20, 1991, p. VI-16.

[3]. For references regarding the impact of gated communities over US Metropolitan Areas, and their trend towards a political secession through their incorporation as independent cities: R. Le Goix, "Les 'communautes fermees' dans les villes des Etats-Unis: les aspects geographiques d'une secession urbaine," *L'Espace Geographique*, vol. 30, no. 1, pp. 81-93.

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