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Metropolitan Democracies

Transformations of the State and Urban Policy in Canada, France and Great Britain

Edited by

Philip Booth

Bernard Jouve



METROPOLITAN DEMOCRACIES



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Preface

The origins of this book lie in a seminar of the French and British Planning Study Group held in Sheffield in September 2002, which was supported financially by the French Embassy in London, the University of Sheffield's Department of Town and Regional Planning, the Université du Québec à Montréal and the Research Chairs of Canada programme. The translation of some of the chapters was made possible by virtue of financial support from the Faculté des Sciences Humaines and the Centre de Recherche sur les Innovations Sociales at the Université du Québec à Montréal. To all of these our thanks are due. The book first appeared in French under the title Démocraties metropolitaines: transformations de l'Etat et politiques urbaines au Canda, en France et en Grande-Bretagne, published by the Presses de l'Université du Québec in March 2004.

The maps both here and in the Canadian edition were prepared by André Parent, cartographic technician at the Department of Geography at the Université du Québec à Montréal and by Paul Coles at the Department of Geography at the University of Sheffield. Dale Shaw and Paul O'Hare at the University of Sheffield worked to produce and sub-edit the English edition. Their work has been invaluable to the successful completion of the book.

Philip Booth Bernard Jouve

Sheffield/Montréal

Chapter 1

Metropolitan Cities at the Crossroads of Globalisation and Changing Politics

Bernard Jouve

This book stems from a seminar held by the French and British Planning Study Group at the University of Sheffield in September 2002, organised by Philip Booth. The theme of the seminar was 'Acting together in urban regeneration in France and Great Britain'. It quickly became apparent that this theme transcends the question of urban planning itself, referring to a more general set of issues related to the organisation of politics in modern democracies, the renewed practice of political participation, and the foundations of citizenship. We thus decided to expand on the general set of themes, increase the number of contributors, and broaden the framework of comparison by including Canada. This decision can be explained by the vitality of participatory democracy in cities such as Montreal and Toronto, but also by the fact that Canada, in developing a policy of integration based on multiculturalism, has become a model no longer regarded as 'exotic,' but one that is brought up more and more often in debate.

Indeed, due to the extent of migratory flows between developing countries and the developed world, the emergence of sub-national identity movements based on nationalist sentiments and the rising power of community-based social relations, 'the Canadian way' is being raised more and more in discussion, and appears to some as the best solution, in terms of both effectiveness and justice, enabling the integration/differentiation dialectic within pluralistic societies to be addressed (Kymlicka 1998). Metropolitan cities and the policies that are developing within them, present an opportunity to observe the 'Canadian model'. This question of communitarianism is one of the main factors behind the comparison. The chapters that follow address these questions: What are the dynamics common to all three states which are currently changing the practice of democracy and the definition of citizenship in their metropolitan cities? Aside from differences stemming from their various histories in the process of becoming nation-states, the values that give them shape, and their political and administrative cultures, can a process of convergence towards the 'Canadian model' be observed? The choice of Britain, France and Canada as case countries is one based on the fact that they represent a continuum between The 'single and indivisible' universalistic two major approaches to citizenship. approach is exemplified within the French Republic, and the Canadian category-based approach which recognises and facilitates the expression of cultural, linguistic, ethnic

and religious differences. Great Britain currently occupies the middle ground between these two poles.

A Series of Questions

This book also addresses another series of questions related to the evolution of intergovernmental relations and the governance of metropolitan cities. In Canada, the influence of the federal government in urban policies is quite limited because of the way jurisdictions are distributed among different levels of government, with 'municipal affairs' being the prerogative of provincial governments. This division of labour may soon be changed. Paul Martin, current prime minister of Canada, has made clear his intention to develop a strong partnership between the federal government and the municipalities, particularly the metropolitan cities. This proposal will no doubt raise the ire of the provinces, ever inclined to see municipalities as their own 'creations'. In France and Great Britain, over the last twenty years or so, urban policy has been a vehicle for the reconstruction of intergovernmental relations, due to the opposing logic and rationality of each level of institution. The main reforms, launched by the governments of Margaret Thatcher and extended by Tony Blair, resulted in the centralising of intergovernmental relations to the advantage of the central government. Great Britain, home of Local Government, saw the political influence of local communities, as well as that of democratically elected urban institutions, diminish. This change took place to the benefit of economic actors that were heavily involved in developing urban policies through new institutionalised forms of public/private partnership within new structures named Quasi-Autonomous Non-Governmental Organisations (QANGOs). This policy has been progressively modified, first by the government of John Major and then by Tony Blair's government, both increasing the number of 'partners' involved. Thus urban policies have gradually become a space policy in which the reconstruction of the relationships between civil society and politics can take place.

During the same period, France opted for a different institutional arrangement by means of decentralisation. From 1982 onwards, a series of laws succeeded one another, giving local governments more fields of jurisdiction and responsibilities. This transformation of government structure eventually led to a significant amendment of the Constitution in 2003, which now stipulates that France is a decentralised state.

Picking up on a classic investigation in political science which aims to determine the impact institutions and various kinds of legislative framework have on the content of public policies, it seemed pertinent to compare these three countries in order to answer, in part, the equally traditional question: Who governs the cities? In a general context characterised by an acute neo-liberal agenda, the reconstruction of states and the rise in power of metropolitan cities as essential spaces for new forms of network-based regulation that come with globalisation (Castells and Hall 1994; Castells 2000), how does this 'new' division of labour between central governments and cities play out? What degree of autonomy do they enjoy? How does globalisation, the reconstruction of social relations within metropolitan cities, and the transition towards a 'second modernity' (Beck 1992) affect the practice of democracy and redefine citizenship?

Finally, this book is intended to add to the body of literature, which has grown particularly abundant recently, on the transformation of politics in Western countries. Indeed, while the institutional framework in Canada, France and Great Britain may differ, the issue of the radical reform of the democratic relationship and of citizenship in action is equally high on the political agenda of cities in all three countries. This redefinition of the relationship between civil society and the political realm is certainly not new. Over the last 30 years, there has been a multitude of reports, conferences, books and articles addressing this 'political crisis', the widening gap between elected representatives and their constituents, and the inability of the 'political world' to fulfil the expectations of civil society. This diagnosis is put forward both by political essayists (Lamoureux 1999; Comor and Beyeler 2002; Courtemanche 2003) and academics (Norris 1999; Skocpol and Fiorina 1999; Pharr and Putnam 2000; Balme et al. 2003) all of whom point to the growing mistrust of politics by 'civil society'. It is precisely in this context that urban policies in the three countries examined here – but the sample group could easily be broadened - are currently taking on particular importance.

This mistrust towards the political realm is mainly expressed in relation to an organisational mode that is centred on the principle of political representation, and therefore on the central role played by elected representatives in the decision-making processes regarding resource allocation and arbitration of conflicts. Conversely, there are growing expectations in favour of a renewed democracy, based on dialogue, deliberation and partnership; in other words, on the pluralisation of the political system. The 1990s were thus characterised by a major phenomenon whereby the subnational territory and the local level have become, for many observers, specialists and decision-makers, the alpha and omega of any overhaul of the political system. As transformation of the political order is deemed impossible through action at the central government level, it is felt that any effective intervention must take place at the level of local governments. The proximity of political and administrative decisionmakers and citizens at the local level is believed to naturally facilitate innovation, change and the opening up of decision-making systems (Loughlin 2001). This theme is not new. It can be found as early as the 1960s and 1970s in many Western countries. In some cases, it has served to fuel radical criticism of the face of the modern state, subservient to the interests of capitalism and, above all, a source of indoctrination and alienation. The local level, then, came to be synonymous with 'small is beautiful', the counter culture and alternative self-management projects. These radical views have since disappeared. What remains is that the case for the state as an authority based on which a renewed political order can be built, giving more room to the 'citizen approach', to quote from the alternative society movement particularly in style these days, is closed. Neither conservatives, by ideology, nor liberals (in the North-American sense), nor the social democrats, from experience and by defiance, support this platform. Thus, sub-national political spaces and, in particular, metropolitan cities, are being turned to for solutions once again. Hence, the example of Porto Alegre and its participative budget is often raised to show that politics can be done differently including, and perhaps especially, with disadvantaged social groups (Gret and Sintomer 2002).

Lastly, other analysts see in the metropolitan cities spaces within which it is possible to implement mechanisms of adaptation to globalisation and advanced

capitalism, and to control its most harmful effects in terms of exclusion and increasing insecurity. Based on the writings of K. Polanyi on the importance of local spaces in the 'great transformation' linked to the development of industrial capitalism in Great Britain (Polanyi 1944), many observers see the metropolitan city, and no longer the nation-state, as the level at which development models can be generated that succeed in combining both economic growth and social justice.

This book proposes, in both analytical and empirical terms, a scientific debate over what closely resembles a 'Neo-Tocquevillian mirage'. What is the real scope of renewal in participatory and deliberative democracy in British, Canadian and French metropolitan cities? Are dialogue and partnership between elected representatives and civil society (community and ethnic groups, economic actors) actually transforming the basis of the political order? This book also aims to address, in some measure, this second series of questions.

With these questions in mind, we approached experts at British, Canadian and French universities. Before briefly introducing them, a cautionary note is called for. This book is not intended to be a point-by-point comparison between Canada, France and Great Britain. That would have required designing an inclusive research program based on a precise methodological protocol, something that was turned down by all of the participants. We had neither the material resources nor the time. However, it is our hope that the arguments presented here will enable just such an international program to get underway, with other countries being integrated as well. The purpose of this book is rather to identify the thrust of such a program and to formalise a common research agenda regarding the complex and ambiguous relations currently developing between globalisation, the reconstruction of nation-states, the practice of local democracy and the transformation of citizenship in Western metropolitan cities.

Chapter Contents

It is precisely this issue of globalisation and its effects on the transformation of citizenship that is at the centre of the first two chapters of this book. Duchastel and Canet point out that the changes accompanying the globalisation in all manner of exchanges have the effect of calling into question a form of citizenship that increasingly seems outdated. Traditionally, citizenship was considered only in terms of the state being the main socio-political construct in the regulation of societies. Given that globalisation brings with it changes in territoriality, political regulation and citizenship, Duchastel and Canet are interested in the emergence of new forms of citizenship and have developed a typology of various forms of democracy: centralised representative, decentralised representative, supranational, corporate, protest-based, and radical. The heuristic nature of this typology lies mainly in the fact that it formalises a transformation of the political order in which territoriality plays a major role. Globalisation has meant that the term territoriality in modern societies is no longer solely centred on the state and its political, administrative and legislative bodies. The state is most certainly not extinct and its institutions continue to exert great influence over the relationships between sub-state actors. That said, alternative forms of practising democracy, no longer dependent on election-based representation, are emerging at new territorial levels. The strictly supranational level constitutes one of these new reference points with regard to politics in particular. This is both through integration processes such as the European Union and also within international forums such as the World Trade Organization or the World Social Forum (and its 'regional' variations in Africa, Europe and Asia, etc.). The local level is also the seat of this reconstruction with a democracy that is increasingly expressed in protest-based or even radical terms; and which calls into question the principle of authority associated with a state-centred model of political practice.

In his chapter, Hamel examines the transformation of democracy at the metropolitan level by focusing on the social, economic and political transformations Briefly reviewing the evolution of urban that accompany metropolitanisation. morphology, which is given concrete expression through a generalisation of the urban level, Hamel further emphasises the fact that the mode of political integration centred on the state and its institutions has run out of steam. Metropolisation is characterised by more pluralistic societies, where the question of recognising the distinctiveness of individuals and social groups structures is on the political agenda. Hamel argues, what is involved here is the transformation of a political order centred on the state and on the gradual assertion of metropolitan cities as new political territories within which a dual process of differentiation and social integration is taking place. Hamel sees in this current process historical conditions for the gradual assertion of a metropolitanbased citizenship in which both 'classic' institutions, having the legitimacy that stems from elections and urban social movements, will play an essential role. Far from opting for a mechanical interpretation of the causal relationship between globalisation and the assertion of metropolitan citizenship, Hamel stresses, conversely, that there are limits to the extent to which the current political order can be surpassed. Established institutions, structures of decision-making systems, positions of prominent members of the elite are all at stake. Hamel is understandably cautious regarding the real short and medium-term repercussions of the dynamics that are currently at play. He does, however, identify several themes that, in his opinion, constitute the vehicles for political reconstruction: poverty; social inequality; the integration of immigrants and cultural communities; and protection of the environment. Like Duchastel and Canet, Hamel in fact considers that globalisation is bringing about a change of scale in the regulation of modern societies; regulation that entails, on the one hand, mechanisms for resource allocation to individuals and social groups and, on the other hand, the resolution of conflicts between these actors, and, finally, the crystallisation of new identity-based relations. As such, metropolitan cities constitute a new level of collective action that is gradually emerging as an additional level among the global, national and local levels. The new division of labour does not so much come from a zero-sum gain in which what is 'gained' by one territorial level is 'lost' by another. Even in Western Europe, where the process of supranational integration has made most headway, there remain very few authors who support the thesis of the dissolution of the state. The 'end of territories' must instead be considered as the calling into question of a solely state-centred mode of doing politics (Badie 1995). We are presently witnessing a re-engineering of regulation systems and multi-level governance (Hooghe and Marks 2001) in which the state continues to play an essential role. The state does not dominate to the same degree as it once did; its 'grip has been loosened' (Le Galès 1999), but it has nonetheless not become obsolete.

The 'death of the nation-state' often appears to be greatly exaggerated (Anderson 1995).

This aspect is dealt with in further detail in the chapters written by Dabinett, Booth, Newman and Thornley, and Boudreau. Dabinett reviews in detail the evolution of urban policies in Great Britain over the last twenty years. demonstrates that urban policies have, since Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1979, been one of the main vehicles for the transformation of public power in Great Britain. Confronted with the economic slowdown and recession, the conservatives of the day made a case against state-centred corporatist regulation. Ideologically hostile to the whole Keynesian legacy and the welfare state, 'Thatcherism' brought in a clearly neo-liberal set of policies from 1979 to 1990. It eliminated exchange control, lifted price and wage controls, and then deregulated the capital market starting from 1986 by making drastic cuts in social expenditures, privatising whole sectors of the economy and public utilities and directly confronting the trade unions (the British miners' strike, put down in 1985, comes to mind). The free-market formula itself was by no means new or innovative. It could be found laid out in very similar terms during the same period in the United States under the Reagan administration, and again in New Zealand, which became, starting from 1984, a laboratory for testing free-market principles'. One of the particularities of Great Britain lies in the 'treatment' the government had in store for the cities. 'Thatcherism' was not just limited to a series of macro-economic measures guided by the principles of von Hayek. A territorial – urban, to be precise – foundation also existed. In fact, in the mid-1980s, the metropolitan institutions of British cities were disbanded by the Conservative government on the grounds that they were inefficient and contemptibly bureaucratic. New national programs aimed at 'helping' the cities restructure were designed and implemented. The referent used by the Conservative government changed: the economic crisis was not only sector-based; there was an urban crisis as well. To date, few other countries have so firmly rooted the solution to recession and the transformation of the state in urban policies. In Great Britain these action plans, metropolitan institutions, and new modes of political regulation were all vehicles for solving the problem. Great Britain made the transition from the Welfare State to the 'Workfare State' (Jessop 1994) essentially by making the cities the central issue, turning urban policies into a political and ideological conflict zone between the Conservative and Labour parties. This dynamic is clearly examined in the chapter that Booth devotes to Sheffield, archetype of the single-industry British city, having experienced the pangs of economic restructuring from the 1980s onwards. In the space of 10 years, Sheffield lost 44,000 jobs in the iron and steel industry. Municipal politics, historically dominated by the Labour Party, could not help but be transformed. Booth points out the city council's various phases of adaptation to the new economic order and to the urban policies launched by the Conservative government. After a phase in which the Labour elite hardened their resolve, taking on a veritable wrestling match with the central government, in the end, they bent to its demands, particularly in terms of creating new structures of governance which included private actors and adopting those policies which resulted in a very distinct tendency towards adhocracy – generating an elitist and notability-based system of political functioning - and towards the multiplication of decision-making bodies.

Newman and Thornley also highlight this conversion of the local Labour elite in their chapter on the partnership that the new mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, has been developing, since he was elected, with the economic actors in that city. Leader of the Greater London Council in the 1980s and nicknamed 'Red Ken' because of his direct opposition to Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government, Livingstone represents, almost to the point of caricature, the Labour Party's ideological move towards the centre and its transformation into New Labour under the leadership of Tony Blair. While his personal relationship with Blair has for much of his mayoralty been highly antagonistic, Livingstone nonetheless shares the same vision of political modernity as the current British prime minister, one which goes hand in hand with partnership and concertation with civil society and, above all, with economic actors. In the case of Livingstone, Newman and Thornley emphasise that this approach can be partly explained by the strong dependence, in terms of budgetary resources, of London's new metropolitan institution - the Greater London Authority, headed by Livingstone - on the central government. While having the indisputable legitimacy that comes from having been elected by direct universal suffrage, the new mayor of London has almost no resources of his own. He has chosen to lessen his dependence on the central government and to 'govern' by mobilising private actors, even adopting the popularised neo-liberal ideology and declaring, as cited by Newman and Thornley, that at 'the heart of the Mayor's job is making sure that London's success as a city economy continues. This requires more than just taking account of business issues in making decisions. It means forging an effective and productive partnership with business'. Thus can be seen the extent to which the ideology of this former highranking member of the orthodox wing of the Labour Party has evolved.

In her chapter on Toronto, Boudreau also puts forward the organic link that continues to exist between metropolitan cities and their responsible authorities, in this case, the provincial government of Ontario. The choice of metropolitan government structures is the direct result of a unilateral decision taken by Mike Harris's Conservative government, which opted for a municipal merger to which many residents of the former central city were opposed. The case of Montreal, developed in the chapter by Latendresse, illustrates this same dependence of Canadian metropolitan cities generally on the provincial level of government, a dependence which Andrew does not hesitate to describe as a 'shame' (Andrew 2000, p.100). As it happens, this situation is not particular to Canada (Jouve and Lefèvre 2002a; Jouve and Lefèvre 2002b).

The transformation of metropolitan institutions in Toronto and Montreal was brought about with the use of much rhetoric about the 'entrepreneurial city'. As such, the ideology of the government parties that opted for these mergers were of little importance, unlike the 1970s (Keil 2000). In Ontario, it was the Conservatives who chose to merge the municipalities, while in Quebec, it was the social democrats of the Parti Québécois. It is more in the impact of the reform that differences continue to exist. In the case of Montreal, Latendresse stresses the importance of resistance from within the political sphere to the process of municipal merger as well as the various institutional configurations that this reform has brought about regarding the mediation between elected officials and civil society. No doubt due to the fact that municipal reform in Toronto is older, but also, and especially because it was part of a process, launched in the mid-1990s, to transform the government of Ontario,

Boudreau further analyses how the metropolitan reform in Toronto was rendered possible by making use of a territorial political culture, carried by the left-of-centre municipalities, making consultation and the mobilisation of civil society one of the main elements of their action plans. In Toronto, the transformation of the metropolitan institutional framework fit into a pattern of classic partisan opposition between various levels of government, but also constituted a vehicle used by the Conservative Party (in office in Ontario since 1995) for imposing the 'Common Sense Revolution' so cherished by Mike Harris, premier of Ontario from 1995 to 2002; in other words, for adopting a neo-liberal agenda. Thus, Boudreau demonstrates the striking ambiguity of this policy. On the one hand, it purports to be more open to consultation, particularly in the planning of and through a participative budget, and through the promotion of diversity. On the other hand, it has actually resulted in centralising the metropolitan political system that, beyond any form of consultation, does not hesitate to launch large-scale urban projects aimed at making the economic capital of Canada more competitive, yet without stopping to consider the consequences in terms of social polarisation.

The adaptation of metropolitan cities to the new order brought about by the most recent changes in capitalism - production network, the increasing importance of the financial dimension of the production system, etc. – arises again in the chapter written by Fontan, Klein and Lévesque on the Montreal experience of economic restructuring. Like other metropolitan cities in North America and Europe, the former economic capital of Canada was and continues to be deeply shaken by the wave of de-industrialisation that accompanied the recession, beginning in the 1960s. While it currently has quite a varied business portfolio, the Quebec metropolis nonetheless saw its traditional production base severely hit by the recession which here, as elsewhere, resulted in both soaring unemployment rates (particularly within the industrial sector) and a devaluation of certain industrial spaces in the urban fringe which have rightly been described as 'abandoned or marginalised districts'. This spiral of decline was essentially curbed by the vigorous mobilisation of actors from civil society, particularly organised community actors from within the Community Economic Development Corporations (CEDCs) and the unions, creating financing tools that made it possible to prevent the closure of firms that were having difficulties and to assist in their recovery. This model of economic development was alternative, not only in that it was not based on the two main classic actors -the state and private enterprise - but also because the frame of reference for action in this social or solidarity-based economy was different, with priority being given to the fight for jobs rather than to growth. Taking the examples of reconversion in the southwest districts of Montreal and the revitalisation of the Dominion plant due mainly to the intervention of the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (FTQ, Quebec Federation of Labour) through its Fonds de solidarité (solidarity fund), Fontan, Klein and Lévesque see in the partnership that developed in Montreal, regarding industrial redeployment, an alternative development model. In this model, the organised actors of civil society, representing the interests of the workforce, succeeded in structuring the terms of trade, mobilising resources and laying the foundations of a 'plural economy', such that several different 'models' of economic development could coexist within a single metropolis.

The chapters devoted to France touch on themes that, for the most part, bear the stamp of decentralisation. Promoted as a major theme of François Mitterrand's first seven-year term of office, decentralisation is still at the top of the political agenda among the political and administrative elite in both central and outlying regions. It is currently in a phase of revival with the significant change to the Constitution and the strengthening of the authority of the regions in intergovernmental relations. Launched in 1982 by the Minister of the Interior, Gaston Defferre, it had the triple objectives of rationalising government operations, making elected representatives more accountable and bringing political decision-making closer to citizens, decentralisation in France was marked by a series of very significant changes in the balance of power and the organisation of metropolitan governments. managerial point of view, decentralisation mainly resorted to a contract-style of operation, a legal formula that first appeared in the 1970s. The contract-based approach to public policy of all kinds (urban planning, the environment, economic development, municipal policy, public safety, culture, etc.) had the effect of shifting more responsibility to intermediate political and administrative decision-making levels, and is based on the principle that proximity, a key theme of the government led by Jean-Pierre Raffarin, makes it possible to go beyond institutional divisions, generates compromises and adjustments, and better responds to the specific needs of local spaces. In his chapter, Warin reviews these dimensions of modern public action by addressing the dynamics at play in proximity-based, management-by-contract, public policies. In doing so, he identifies several constraints that call into question the efficiency of the contract approach. First, is the difficulty of harmonising various action plans that differ in their objectives, financing, and management styles. Secondly, there is the delicate nature of the 'dialogue' that develops between public services, that ensures the public interest in France, and the voluntary sector. And, finally, there is the individualisation of the delivery of public services that has led to an unprecedented increase in user requests in terms of new rights-claims vis-à-vis public services, resulting in a differentiated application of public policy with all that this implies in terms of equal treatment of citizens before the law and in terms of equity.

The question of the direct participation of residents/citizens in public policymaking is also discussed in the respective chapters written by Chabanet, on the implementation of municipal policy in Vaulx-en-Velin, a 'sensitive' town in the outskirts of Lyon, and by Toussaint, Vareilles, Zepf and Zimmermann, which deals with the redevelopment of a public space in Villeurbanne, a municipality which is also situated in the Lyon suburbs. The challenges of consultation faced in these two examples are radically different. In Vaulx-en-Velin, which symbolises the crisis experienced by the former working-class suburbs of large French cities, it is the issue of integrating young immigrants into the political system that is at the heart of controversy and political dynamics and that is sometimes expressed in radical or even violent ways. Urban policy, introduced in the 1970s and 1980s, has increased in importance in the French political and administrative life, to the point of requiring the creation of a ministry in its own right, charged with a seemingly impossible mission. It is in charge of solving many problems, namely that of social and economic exclusion, of new forms of poverty that result in a process of disaffiliation, and of the integration of immigrant communities into a 'single and indivisible Republic' that does not recognise the existence of any form of distinctiveness that would call into

question its homogeneity, even though French society accepts cultural diversity (Wieviorka 2003). Under this policy, there has been radical confrontation between the representatives of disadvantaged social groups living in these 'districts of exile' (Dubet and Lapeyronnie 1992), , and a political and administrative system in which local elected representatives play a central role on account of the implementation of decentralisation laws and the transfer of many areas of jurisdiction from the central government. Taking the example of a residents' association in one district of Vaulxen-Velin, Chabanet analyses in detail the meeting and the clash between opposing forms of legitimacy and reference territories. After presenting the problem of immigration in France, Chabanet addresses in detail the way in which these relations have taken shape over more than ten years. The consultation involved in an urban development project in Villeurbanne was conducted in a clearly more civilised manner. The stakes associated with this project were admittedly not as high as those related to the municipal policies in Vaulx-en-Velin. There was, for instance, no urban crisis nor social exclusion involved here, but there was nonetheless an attempt to modernise municipal politics by turning more readily to consultation with residents when making choices regarding urban planning, particularly when dealing with public spaces. Through a clinical examination of the consultation process with residents, Toussaint, Vareilles, Zepf and Zimmermann highlight the balance of power and domination at the centre of relations between local elected representatives and their technical services on the one hand and 'residents/citizens' on the other. Can the institutionalised processes of public concertation that structure political exchanges between the political sphere and civil society within the context of municipal policies, or in an undertaking as mundane as redeveloping a public space, enable change in the local political order and call into question the central role of elected representatives in the decision-making process? This is the question that runs across these two chapters.

Houk addresses another important dimension of the implementation of decentralisation laws in France: the reconstruction of metropolitan leadership through the transformation of exchanges between local elected representatives. To this end, Houk analyses the development and implementation of the 'Paris-Marseille-Lyon' Law of December 1982, which transformed the internal political organisation of these three metropolitan cities by establishing a sub-municipal level of political management, the district councils. At first envisaged by the socialist government of the day as a tool aimed at weakening the leadership of Jacques Chirac, then mayor of Paris, this measure led to very distinct changes in the balance of relations between various local political leaders. Gradually, the regulation mechanisms between the city councils and the arrondissement councils changed, particularly in Paris and Lyon. Councils for the arrondissements, while endowed with a limitied budget and few technical and administrative resources of their own, have became major political stake-holders, structuring partisan and personal battles within the political establishment in the various metropolitan cities. How did this development come about? What role do concertation and locally based management play in the process by which a sub-municipal level of government comes to assert its authority? Houk addresses these various questions in detail.

The chapters of this book vary in terms of scope. The approaches chosen by the authors also vary, in large part reflecting the content of the differing political, economic and social contexts of the issues discussed. The integration of these

perspectives into a single coherent examination constitutes one of the main challenges of any comparative undertaking, particularly when the comparison takes place within the framework of a collective effort. But this is also what makes this study significant on both a scientific and human level, since it involves an opening up of a new set of questions and moves to uncharted waters. To borrow a useful expression from Négrier, comparison in the social sciences rests on an 'ethic of movement', which results in 'accepting the transformation of the subject under investigation through the dynamic of comparison' (Négrier 2003, p.10). The conclusion of this book takes this position, attempting to restate a general set of issues while drawing some general lessons from its chapters.

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