Metropolitan dynamics and institutional fragmentation in the United States.

1950-2010
Goal of this presentation

- Glimpse at the metropolitan process and its history in the United States
- Formulate hypotheses about its political implication for people in these areas.
- Present an ongoing research project and get feedback.
Context: metropolis matters

- Globalization
  - Global network of cities.
  - External dimension.
- Metropolitanization
  - Local networks of municipalities in urban regions.
  - Internal dimension.
Context: research project

- *Democracy in the Metropolis*
- Doctoral project conducted at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne (EPFL), in collaboration with Stanford University.
- How people relate to metropolitan areas and how it affects their civic and political engagement?
- Historical Atlas of Metropolitan Areas
  - Assemble data and compute series of indicators on the evolution of metropolitan areas since 1950.
  - [http://metroatlas.github.io](http://metroatlas.github.io)
  - All data is accessible, every analysis is reproducible
Metropolis

Local governments

Citizens
Metropolitan areas are measures of everyday spatial life

- Statistical definition, not administrative.
- Core Based Statistical Areas (CBSA) have two criteria:
  - Urban core (>10’000)
  - Commute matrix
    - “High degree of social and economic integration with the core as measured by commuting ties”
- Caveats
  - Use of commuting as a proxy, there are other types of mobility (leisure, school...)
  - Use of a core-based definition. In practice, there is at least one core. But there can be more than one.
  - Granularity: measure at county scale.
- This definition is largely shared by other countries.
Metropolitan area definition is generalizable

- The definition is core-based.
- Cores can be neutralized by grouping Core Based Statistical Areas according to their commuting ties to form Combined Statistical Areas (CSA).
  - This grouping neutralizes the single-core effect except for metro areas without urban cores, which there is no case of in practice.
- Primary Statistical Areas (PSA) are either single or multi-core.
- Data is largely available across all US counties: this definition is as close as we can get to a generalizable definition of people’s everyday space.
California CBSAs and PSAs

- Sacramento
- San Francisco-Oakland
- San Jose-Sunnyvale
- Riverside-San Bernardino
- Los Angeles-Long Beach
- San Diego
- San Francisco Bay Area
- Los Angeles
Metropolitan areas are a 20th century phenomenon

• Before WWII
  – Clear separation between big cities and rural places
    • Small rural places
    • Mono-centrix industrial cities
  – Not many in-between places

• After WWII
  – Upscaling of urban environment
    • Out of big cities boundaries
    • Engulfing previously rural small places and towns
  – The bulk of the growth has happened in small municipalities or unincorporated communities in large urban environments revolving around multiple urban cores
Mobility produces the Metropolis

- Metro areas are a product of mobility:
  - Early public transit (streetcars) have led to the extension of new suburbs outside of the core cities
  - Car has led to the advent a more diffuse, less centric urban development
    - Highways: Interstate Highway System

- Metropolis or region?
  - Edward Soja:
    - Metropolis is core-based
    - Region is diffuse urbanization
  - I do not distinguish between the two, PSA already neutralizes cores
1950: industrials cities and rural communities
1980: suburban America
2010: metropolitan regions
Metropolis
From big cities and rural communities to multi-core urban regions

Local governments

Citizens
The political effect of metropolitanization is fragmentation

- Institutional fragmentation is the scalar distance between the space of everyday life and the space of political action.
- Two contributing factors:
  - Increase in commuting and other forms of everyday mobility
  - Decrease of political scale by the creation of new municipalities (municipal incorporation)
San Antonio, TX

- Very low fragmentation.
- Two central cities, one of overwhelming importance.
- San Antonio hosts 65% of the metro population.
- Consolidation of the central city territory by annexation.
San Francisco Bay Area, CA

- Very high fragmentation.
- Several central cities.
- San Francisco hosts only 10% of the metro population.
- Creation of new municipalities.
Measuring fragmentation

• Two main ways of defining fragmentation:
  – Count of government
  – Market share (population, expenditures, GDP…)
• Generalized Hischmann-Herfindahl Index [1950]
  – Market share of population
• For a CBSA C, composed of N institutions $i$—counties and incorporated places—with a population of $Pop_i$, the fragmentation index $F_c$ is:

$$F_c = 1 - \sum_{i=1}^{N_c} \left( \frac{Pop_i}{\sum_{i=1}^{N_c} Pop_i} \right)^2$$

• A CBSA with only one county and no incorporated place would have a fragmentation index of 0.
• A CBSA with a population distributed in many counties and incorporated places would have a fragmentation index tending to 1.
1950: cities and suburbs

- Very high fragmentation.
- Several central cities.
- San Francisco hosts only 10% of the metro population.
- Creation of new municipalities.
1980: out of the county

- Very high fragmentation.
- Several central cities.
- San Francisco hosts only 10% of the metro population.
- Creation of new municipalities.
2010: integrating regions

- Very high fragmentation.
- Several central cities.
- San Francisco hosts only 10% of the metro population.
- Creation of new municipalities.
2010: primary statistical areas

- Very high fragmentation.
- Several central cities.
- San Francisco hosts only 10% of the metro population.
- Creation of new municipalities.
Central latitudes of mainland USA are more fragmented

• The fragmentation belt, where political power is more diffuse in metropolitan areas.
  – NorthEast (Gottman’s Megalopolis)
  – Central Midwest
  – San Francisco
• North and South are less fragmented:
  – Great Lakes Region, Oregon, Washington
  – Florida, Texas
• But there are exceptions
  – Dallas-Fort Worth, early bi-core metro area
  – Atlanta
Metro areas are merging

- Separated metropolitan areas are becoming more integrated, merging into a single PSA.
- This is likely to disturb the «fragmentation belt» pattern.
- Metropolitan areas are more and more networks of cities.
  - The importance of suburbanization is decreasing.
Proportion of population in central cities

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Metropolis
From big cities and rural communities to multi-core urban regions

Local governments
Institutional fragmentation is on the rise, concentrated in the central latitudes

Citizens
Institutional fragmentation changes policy-making

• Local governments have a lot of autonomy in the US
  – Tax
  – Public services
  – Land use

• No metropolitan governments
  – Few exceptions: Twin Cities, Indianapolis
  – Many failures to pass
  – State incentive to coordinate is the usually the strongest form of metropolitan policy-making
Institutional fragmentation mediates civic and political engagement

• Political engagement
  – Traditional political engagement, with party and election driven activities.
  – Multi-topic, vertical
  – e.g. vote, campaign, campaign contribution...

• Civic engagement
  – Topic-based, horizontal
  – e.g. donate to an association
  – Lasting coalitions or ad-hoc mobilizations

• There is a generational shift from political to civic engagement.
  – Young people are less politically engaged.

• Fragmentation changes the incentives to engage either politically or civically.
Institutional fragmentation mediates civic and political engagement
Institutional fragmentation fosters civic engagement

- Metropolitan fragmentation reinforces the generational trend.
- In very fragmented institutional environments, votes and elections affect a small share of the space of interest.
- Coordination is key to influence policies in this context.
Metropolis
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Local governments
Institutional fragmentation is on the rise, concentrated in the central latitudes

Citizens
Fragmentation gives incentives to act civically more than politically
Next steps

• Other ways to measure:
  – Metropolitan areas: vary the commuting threshold
  – Fragmentation:
    • Zeigler-Brunn Index
    • Metropolitan Power Diffusion Index

• Finer granularity:
  – 10y instead of 30y

• Model of engagement in fragmented metropolitan environment
  – Build a dataset of political and civic engagement