

Regional Cooperation and Sustainable Growth: A Study of Nine Councils of Government in the Northeastern Illinois Region

Bonnie Lindstrom

Great Cities Institute
College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs
University of Illinois at Chicago

A Great Cities Institute Working Paper



UIC



Regional Cooperation and Sustainable Growth: A Study of Nine Councils of Government in the Northeastern Illinois Region

Bonnie Lindstrom

Great Cities Institute
College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs
University of Illinois at Chicago

A Great Cities Institute Working Paper

November 1997



The Great Cities Institute

The Great Cities Institute is an interdisciplinary, applied urban research unit within the College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). Its mission is to create, disseminate, and apply interdisciplinary knowledge on urban areas. Faculty from UIC and elsewhere work collaboratively on urban issues through interdisciplinary research, outreach and education projects.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Alan Anderson, Dave Bennett, Donald Klein, Lynn Montei, Beth Ruyle, Victoria Smith, Carol Thompson and Christine Wilson for their help with successive drafts of this paper.

Additional Copies

Great Cities Institute (MC 107)
College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs
University of Illinois at Chicago
412 S. Peoria Street, Suite 400
Chicago IL 60607-7067
Phone: 312-996-8700
FAX: 312-996-8933
ã Bonnie Lindstrom

This paper is available on the Great Cities Institute Web Site: www.uic.edu/cuppa/gci

Great Cities Institute Publication Number: GCP-97-9

The views expressed in this report represent those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of the Great Cities Institute or the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Research	2
Historical Development	2
Role of County Government	5
Functional Responsibilities	6
Three Agendas For Growth	7
Pro-Growth Agenda	9
Managed Growth Agenda	10
Fair Share Agenda	11
Explanations for Importance of Councils in Setting Subregional Agendas	11
Political Fragmentation	11
Regional Diversity/Subregional Homogeneity	12
Entrepreneurial Role of Executive Directors	14
Conclusion	15
References	17

Regional Cooperation and Sustainable Growth: A Study of Nine Councils of Government in the Northeast Illinois Region

Abstract

Nine councils of government in the Chicago region exemplify a new institutional arrangement in regional governance. Formed partially from the need of mayors and managers to consult on issues specific to their subregions and from the mandate of ISTEA for local consultation on transportation issues, the councils of government have become articulate advocates for suburban and regional rather than urban or rural policy agendas. They exemplify a new form of functional regionalism that emphasizes cooperation and collaboration in transportation planning, solid waste management, regulatory standardization and intergovernmental agreement. The research examines the historical development, functional responsibilities, and subregional economic development agendas of nine councils of government in the six county northeast Illinois region and suggests explanations for their emergence and effectiveness.

Regional Cooperation and Sustainable Growth: A Study of Nine Councils of Government in the Northeast Illinois Region

Introduction

In the 1990s, the driving force for a renewed emphasis on regionalism is based on a growing understanding of local interdependence and the need for economic survival of the region as a whole (Orfield 1997; Pierce et al 1993; Hill et. al. 1995; Rusk 1993; Savitch and Vogel 1996). From questions of political efficiency and coordination raised in the 1950s and 1960s, the new regionalism asks questions of regional economic and social viability within the context of global economic competition. This new focus on regionalism occurs concurrently with research on institutional arrangements in a postfederal, postindustrial age (Clarke 1993; Clarke 1995; Logan and Swanstrom 1990). Research on regionalism has centered on the structural parameters and institutional arrangements which promote regional conflict or cooperation (Parks and Oakerson, 1989; Savitch and Vogel 1996). Research on the viability of local economic development strategies in a postfederal period has been preoccupied with analyzes of central city dynamics (Clarke and Gaile 1992) while theories and research on suburban and regional dynamics emphasize interjurisdictional competition (Schneider 1989; Schneider and Kim 1996) or pro-growth or managed growth orientations in regional development (Molotch 1976; Maurer and Christenson 1982).

This paper analyzes the development, functional responsibilities and subregional economic development agendas of nine councils of government in the Chicago region. These subregional councils represent the revitalization of councils of government as viable institutional arrangements facilitating intergovernmental cooperation for system-wide problems (transportation infrastructure and solid waste management, for example), membership services (joint purchasing agreements) and legislative lobbying. These councils of governments are not institutionally linked to a multi-purpose regional body. Each developed independently and at a different time in the past 40 years to meet the specific needs of the mayors and managers in their subregions. The councils work together to lobby the state legislature on policies that have an impact on municipal governance and to propose regulations and ordinances to standardize service delivery. They vary in terms of the services they provide their members, their role in transportation and land use planning, their relationship with their county governments, and their subregional economic development agendas. Their emergence in the past decade offers one example of a new institutional arrangement that has the possibility to bypass partisan gridlock and find regional solutions in the Chicago metropolitan region.

Regional Cooperation and Sustainable Growth A Study of Nine Councils of Government in Northeast Illinois

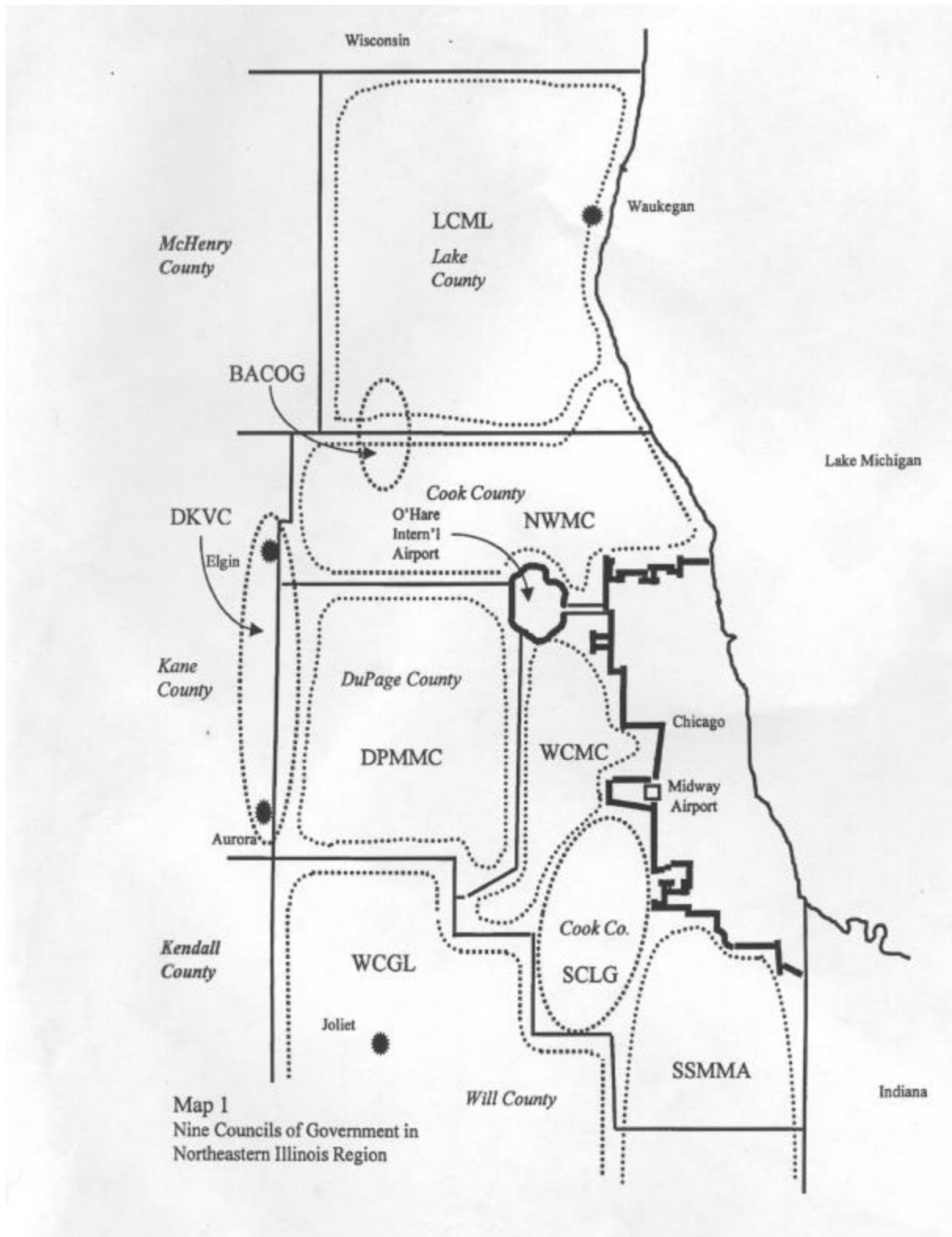
Research

The research investigates the nine councils of government in the six county northeastern Illinois region. The research only includes councils with professional staffs; councils developed for consultation on a specific transportation issue and municipal leagues without staffing are not included. There are four councils in Cook County: the Northwest Municipal Conference (NWMC) comprised of municipalities in north and northwest Cook County and southern Lake County); the West Central Municipal Conference (WCMC) comprised of municipalities in west Cook County stretching from O'Hare International Airport on the north to the Stevenson Expressway on the south and from Chicago city limits on the east to DuPage County on the west; the South West Conference of Local Governments (SWCLG) comprised of municipalities in a corridor beginning at Midway Airport and extending southwest to Will County; the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA) comprised of municipalities from Chicago city limits on the north to Will County on the south. There are three councils comprised of municipalities in three of the collar counties: Lake County Municipal League (LCML); DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference (DPMMC); and the Will County Governmental League (WCGL). In addition, there are two councils spanning county jurisdictions: the Barrington Area Council of Governments (BACOG) and the DuKane Valley Council (DKVC). (See map on page 3.)

Historical Development

There are three dominant patterns for the evolution of the nine councils of government in the Chicago region. In the first pattern, the council began as a municipal league or a dinner club meeting monthly to discuss issues of common concern (1950s to 1970s). In the 1990s under the mandate from the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), the council assumed responsibility for transportation planning and then began actively developing intergovernmental cooperation among their members and a joint legislative agenda with the other councils. The second pattern began with the requirement of the federal government for involvement of the municipalities on transportation issues first with the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) in the 1970s and then with ISTEA in the 1990s. The municipalities then saw the advantages of expanding the agenda to include legislative lobbying, membership services, and intergovernmental activity. The third pattern includes the two councils that developed as intergovernmental rather than municipal conferences (See Table 1).

The Northwest Municipal Conference exemplifies one of the patterns of development. The conference began in 1958 with eight northwest suburbs concerned about mutual problems (water supply, flood control, refuse disposal police and fire coordination, and zoning in unincorporated land) met monthly. In 1997, the conference had 35 suburban members (including North Shore suburbs and suburbs in Lake and DuPage counties), five township governments, and represents over 1.2 million people. The South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association began in 1968 when mayors and city managers of reform governments in the subregion saw the successes of the Northwest Municipal Conference in addressing subregional problems. Similarly, the DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference began when the mayors saw the need to talk together and work cooperatively. The mayors



**Regional Cooperation and Sustainable Growth
A Study of Nine Councils of Government in Northeast Illinois**

**Table 1
Historical Development**

Council	Type	Year Began	Year Admin	Number of Staff
Barrington Area Council of Governments	LUP	1969	1969	1/2 FT
DuKane Valley Council	IGL	1969	1985	2 PT
DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference	ML	1962	1970s	6 FT
Lake County Municipal League	ML	1981	1995	3/4 FT
Northwest Municipal Conference	ML	1958	1967	9 FT
South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association	ML	1968	1978	8 FT
Southwest Conference of Local Governments	TPC	1983	1984	1/2 FT*
West Central Municipal Conference	TPC	1980	1986	7 FT
Will County Governmental League	IGL	1981	1993	4 FT

Note: Type: ML = Municipal League; TPC = Transportation Planning Council; IGL = Intergovernmental League; LUP = Land use planning; Year Admin = Year professional administrator hired. *1/2 FT with Southwest Council of Local Governments

were ready to pay for more staffing after they experienced the efficiencies possible and that better policies were developed through cooperation.

A second pattern is the formation of the council based on the requirements of the federal government for local consultation on transportation issues in the 1970s. The West Central Municipal Conference began with the formation of the Central Region Council of Mayors representing 15 municipalities in the Burlington Northern Corridor of the Chicago region. After cooperating well on transportation issues, the mayors decided to develop a municipal conference. In 1986, the conference hired full time staff to increase its influence at the state level and to provide membership services. An additional 20 municipalities have joined the conference. Similarly, the Southwest Conference of Local Governments began as a transportation planning council (the Southwest Council of Local Governments). The mayors wanted a conference to directly address mutual problems (primarily problems that spill over their borders) and formed the Southwest Conference of Local Governments.

The third historical pattern is the development as an intergovernmental council with a membership that includes county government. The DuKane Valley Council, comprised of 23 municipalities in eastern Kane County and the western edge of DuPage County along the Fox River, was formed to promote "the orderly development of the area" ("DuKane Valley Council Letter, Winter 1989). The membership of the council includes two county governments (Kane and DuPage), representatives from other units of government (five townships, four park districts, one school district, two libraries, three conservation and reclamation special districts and one airport authority), corporations (Amertech Illinois), chambers of commerce, nine colleges and universities, and two public utilities. The municipalities in the council have begun recently to move toward greater self-sufficiency from the other members.

The Barrington Area Council of Governments (BACOG) is a council comprised of seven upper income suburbs in northwest Cook and south Lake counties united in maintaining a comprehensive land use plan initiated 27 years ago through citizen opposition to a proposal by a major developer to build 18,000 housing units in South Barrington. BACOG is a planning council and does not provide advocacy or technical assistance on issues other than land use management.

Role of County Government

The DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference evolved as the non-partisan reform municipalities in the county recognized that the policies of the county government (a partisan political machine) were detrimental to their interests. The recognition of this divergence in both political culture and policy orientation created the need for vigilance on specific issues that the members identified as critical. The conference has now moved from essentially a watchdog role vis-a-vis the county government to advocating and implementing proactive policies.

In contrast, Cook County has played a major role in encouraging the development of subregional agencies within its jurisdiction. One example of the county's strong support is that the position of the executive director of the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association was underwritten at first with county CDBG funds. This strong encouragement for the councils is consistent with the county's policy of using CDBG funds to build administrative capacity at the municipal level and to encourage intergovernmental cooperation (Rich 1993).

The Lake County Municipal League and the DuKane Valley Council (which are the newer COGs in the region) operate within very different parameters set by their county governments. Both of

Regional Cooperation and Sustainable Growth A Study of Nine Councils of Government in Northeast Illinois

these councils operate primarily to facilitate monthly meetings and to encourage discussion and problem solving among their members. Lake and Kane counties have retained functional responsibility for land use and transportation planning. Kane County plays a very strong role in land use management; lobbying state legislators is also done by the county. Lake County, with a very strong, centralized county government, retains responsibility for land use and transportation planning. The county also provides water, sewer, and police services, has taken over Cellular 999 calls, and provides the membership services such as joint purchasing agreements that the other councils provide their members.

Functional Responsibilities

The five major areas of functional responsibility that the councils have are: (1) inter-governmental cooperation; (2) lobbying state and congressional legislators for policies of benefit in municipal governance; (3) cost containment policies, such as joint purchasing agreements; (4) transportation planning; and (5) land use planning (see Table 2). The nine area councils differ in terms of their functional responsibilities. The five councils with full time staffs (DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference, Northwest Municipal Conference, South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association, West Central Municipal Conference, and Will County Governmental League) have responsibility for transportation planning and legislative lobbying. The other four councils operate with different functional responsibilities. The specific activities that each council undertook initially differed in terms of membership needs and the relationship with each county government. Successful initiatives were then utilized by the other councils (See Table 2).

Fostering intergovernmental cooperation is the mission of the DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference. Mutual aid agreements for police and fire departments, cluster land use mechanisms for boundary agreements, county wide standards for storm water management, train whistle regulations, and a Telecommunications Ordinance for the region (done jointly with the other four COGS) are examples of intergovernmental cooperation promoted by the conference.

The top priority of the Northwest Municipal Conference is legislative lobbying; the conference focuses one third of its staff on legislative issues. The staff tracks legislation that affects municipalities at the beginning through enactment of new legislation and publishes a legislative report card on how state legislators voted. The conference is now examining a proposal to expand the legislative program to the federal level. Working from the base initiated by the Northwest Municipal Conference, the Suburban Mayors Action Coalition of Cook (comprised of the West Central Municipal Conference, the Northwest Municipal Conference, and the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association) has an office in Springfield, publishes a legislative report card, and works with the DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference on issues of unfunded mandates, revenue rating, and pension benefits. The councils also lobby the state legislature on regulatory issues.

Membership services are the critical component for many of the COGS. The tax caps imposed by the state legislature on municipal governments have necessitated cost containment measures. The Northwest Municipal Conference began with two administrative programs: joint purchasing and joint training. The joint purchasing program has now become county wide. Similarly, the programs initiated by the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association provide economies of scale for the small, fiscally weak municipalities in the association. These programs include a municipal bond bank and employee assistance programs. One program, an investment pool, is now used by all five COGS with full time staff.

The Northwest Municipal Conference and the West Central Municipal Conference are now exploring the issue of subregionalization of fire and police as a cost containment measure.

The councils in Cook, DuPage and Will counties have had responsibility for transportation planning delegated to them by their county governments. The three fully staffed councils in Cook County (the Northwest Municipal Conference; South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association; and West Central Municipal Conference) have varying responsibilities for transportation planning. The Northwest Municipal Conference, for example, has the responsibility to coordinate with the major transportation agencies in the area (Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT); the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS); the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC); and Cook County). The mayors in the Conference allocate federal road and transit funds to the municipalities.

Three Agendas For Growth

Irrespective of the specific historical pattern for the formation of the council of government, each of the five COGS with full time staff are now addressing economic development issues. The five (DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference, Northwest Municipal Conference, South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association, West Central Municipal Conference and Will County Governmental League) are developing economic development initiatives for their subregion and actively promoting specific growth strategies for the region. The other four (the Southwest Conference of Local Governments, the Barrington Area Council of Governments, the DuKane Valley Council, and the Lake County Municipal League) operate in a more limited way, cooperating with the others on specific policies but not developing new initiatives.

There are three agendas for regional growth promoted by different councils of government: (1) strongly pro-growth; (2) managed growth; and (3) "fair share". The economic development agendas of each council reflect the fiscal and demographic strains and growth potential for each subsector.

**Regional Cooperation and Sustainable Growth
A Study of Nine Councils of Government in Northeast Illinois**

**Table 2
Functional Responsibilities and Economic Development Initiatives**

Council of Gov't Economic Development	Membership Services	Legislative Lobbying	Transportation & Public Works	Land Use Planning	
Barrington Area Council of Gov'ts	No	No	No	Yes	No
DuKane Valley Council	No	No	No	No	No
DuPage Mayors & Managers Conf.	Auctions	Yes	Yes	No	No
Lake County Municipal League	Training	Yes	No	No	No
Northwest Municipal Conference	Auctions	Yes	STP*	No	Workforce dev.
	Joint Purchasing Joint Training and Education Joint Fire and Police Recruitment/ Testing Employee Assistance		Solid Waste		Board Economic Development Committee
South Suburban Mayors and Managers Assoc.	Joint Purchasing Risk Management Employee Assistance Municipal Bond Bank Auctions	Yes	STP* Solid Waste	No	Business Growth Corp. Small Business Development Center
Southwest Conference of Local Governments	No	No	No	No	No
West Central Municipal Conference	Auctions WCMC Benefit Pool Employee Assistance Program Joint Purchasing		Yes	STP* Solid Waste	No Brownfields Pilot Project Community Development Corp.
Will County Governmental League	No	Yes	STP*	No	No?

Bonnie Lindstrom

9

**STP: Surface Transportation Planning*

Regional Cooperation and Sustainable Growth A Study of Nine Councils of Government in Northeast Illinois

Pro-Growth Agenda

The two councils of government strongly promoting pro-growth economic development are the Will County Governmental League and the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association. Both councils represent municipalities adversely affected by the deindustrialization of the Chicago region. The Will County Governmental League is aggressively promoting economic development in partnership with the Will County Center for Economic Development. This strong pro-growth agenda is an outcome of the devastation that global economic restructuring has had on the Joliet area in Will County. In the 1980s, unemployment in Will County was in the double digits and the highest in the nation. Business and civic leaders formed the privately funded Will County Economic Development Foundation to entice new businesses and to retain existing businesses (Lindstrom 1996). Before the appointment of an executive director in 1993, the Will County Governmental League had not taken a strong pro-growth position. Under the director's leadership, the League now strongly supports any infrastructure initiative that will promote economic development. The director added the transportation planning component to the League's responsibilities in 1993 and is actively working to promote the extension of I-355 south into Will County, the development of the third airport at Peotone, a high speed rail line, and a commuter rail study. Changing demographics in Will indicate that since the early 1980s, most of the residents work outside of the county, necessitating the need to integrate Will County into the regional transportation network.

The South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association is also strongly supporting a pro-growth position for the municipalities in the south Cook area. These municipalities have been the hardest hit in the region by deindustrialization and economic restructuring. The two major initiatives of the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association are (1) provision of programs which offer financial expertise and services to its members; (2) initiatives for subregional economic development; and (3) coalition partnership with proponents of the third airport for regional development. Subregional economic development initiatives include a local development corporation (The South Town Business Growth Corporation) and the Small Business Development Center. The Association strongly supports infrastructure projects necessary for regional economic development: a south suburban airport (in east Will County); the extension of I-355 to I-394 and then east to the Indiana state line; a new commuter railroad; and a high speed rail line. Rather than concentrating on job creation within the subregion, the priority of the association is to foster transportation alternatives to the job opportunities at the edge.

The strongly pro-growth economic development agendas proposed by the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association and the Will County Governmental League have been developed as a response both to the fiscal strains and demographic pressures the south sector is experiencing and to the sector's strong growth potential because of the availability of inexpensive farm land in south Will County. The Will County Governmental League articulates the pro-growth policy agenda of its membership, county officials, and the Will County Economic Development Foundation. The South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association is equally determined to articulate the needs of its diverse membership. The Association, however, operates within a different institutional structure. Cook County, with four councils of government representing four different subregions, cannot be as united behind one council's agenda. In addition, the City of Chicago in its dominant position within Cook County sets the structural parameters and policy options of the other municipalities with the county. This is particularly true for the municipalities in south Cook. Richard M. Daley's proposal for a third regional airport near Lake Calumet would have meant the elimination of several municipalities in the Association. The Association strongly opposed the plan and now strongly supports a third airport on farmland in Will County. The strong development coalition possible in Will County between the council and the county is absent in

south Cook.

Managed Growth Agenda

The two councils proposing a managed growth economic development strategy are comprised of mature municipalities that are considered the economic powerhouses of the region, with strong job creation and residential development. The DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference represents the 34 suburbs in the wealthiest county in Illinois. While the main missions for the conference are intergovernmental cooperation and working with the mayors to keep them informed, the accomplishments of the conference have been storm water management, solid waste, and cooperation on land use mechanisms and boundary agreements to limit the power of the developers to play one municipality against another. The conference is also working on programs for sustainable growth and diversity. DuPage County sustained rapid development in the past 30 years. The new challenge the conference sees is "greater attention to the qualitative character of DuPage than to its high pace of growth" (Diversity in DuPage 1996, 1).

In its policy orientation, the conference exemplifies a caretaker regime (Kerstein 1993), promoting a conservative growth agenda, which is supportive of managed economic development and concerned with limiting taxes. The primary emphasis in economic development is to retain existing employers and businesses rather than pro-actively seek potential businesses (Toward a Framework for Economic Development in DuPage County 1995). Under the direction of its executive director, the DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference is now in the forefront on the issue of changing Illinois school funding. The DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference is an influential advocate of both providing property tax relief and increasing state funds for Illinois schools. This is impressive in that the three most powerful opponents of this agenda in the state legislature represent DuPage County voters. The managed growth agenda policies proposed by the DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference is paralleled by the DuPage County Regional Planning Commission reports linking regional sprawl to higher property taxes.

The Northwest Municipal Conference, also working on issues of managed growth, has concentrated on transportation infrastructure and cooperation with the City of Chicago on issues related to O'Hare International Airport. The transportation planner was instrumental in the development of the Wisconsin-Central railroad line, the first new commuter line to Chicago, and is working on the development of a second new commuter line, the Elgin, Joliet and Eastern Railroad, an outer belt line which would circle Chicago, operating from Waukegan to Joliet and the Indiana border. The Workforce Development Committee of the conference is addressing policies of job accessibility, linking workers from Chicago with suburban jobs. The executive director is working with the City of Chicago on issues of common concern about O'Hare Airport such as noise abatement and further economic development of the land vacated by the military.

Fair Share Agenda

The West Central Municipal Conference, addressing development issues of relevance to its 36 older, inner ring suburban jurisdictions, is promoting a "fair share" economic development agenda. The conference has aggressively pursued policies that would limit further expansion into exurbia at the expense of the older, inner ring suburbs. The issue is whether federal and state funds for transportation and infrastructure should be spent in the outer suburban areas for further regional growth or shared equally with the older inner ring suburbs. The West Central Municipal Conference has taken a strong position that the older suburbs should have their fair share of transportation and infrastructure funds in order to remain viable. The executive director has initiated an EPA Brownfields pilot program (the West Central Municipal Conference is the only

regional association in the country to have a Brownfields pilot project), a solid waste disposal program, and a Community Development Corporation for economic development. The conference is working to promote the north-south commuter rail corridor that would increase job opportunities in western Cook suburbs and help prevent continued decentralization of the northeast Illinois region.

Explanations for Importance of Councils in Setting Subregional Agendas

Except for the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG), councils of government in the United States are not generally viewed as the answer to regional planning (Savitch and Vogel 1996; Judd 1995). That the five councils in the Chicago region have been able to set proactive policy agendas for their subregions is due to (1) the political fragmentation of the Chicago region; (2) regional diversity and subregional homogeneity; and (3) the entrepreneurial skills of the executive directors (See Table 3).

Political Fragmentation

The councils are successful in promoting subregional agendas because they provide a venue for the articulation of policy options in one of the most politically fragmented metropolitan areas in the United States. The State of Illinois, with its history of granting local governments extensive local control, has the largest number of local governments with taxing authority in the nation (Simpson and Moll 1993). Before the passage of the new Illinois Constitution in 1970, nonmunicipal governing districts (such as park districts) were established and able to issue bonds in their own right in order to circumvent the limitations of municipal taxing caps (Fiske 1989). In addition, the use of special districts to provide regional services has added to the fragmentation. In 1980, the total number of governments in the six county northeastern Illinois region was 1,188. There were 261 municipal governments, 113 township governments, 313 school districts, and 501 special districts (Green 1986).

The Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC), the metropolitan planning agency for the region, is an advisory commission with no statutory authority. NIPC operates under a mandate from the state legislature to provide technical assistance and to plan for orderly development in the six-county region. Under its mandate for transportation planning, NIPC is strongly encouraging future toll road expansion into Lake and Will counties. Grassroots groups, civic groups and other intergovernmental agencies challenge NIPC's projections of future growth in the region based on population and employment forecasts. The Metropolitan Planning Council, a nonprofit organization, has assumed the voice for managed growth, with proposals for a new tax system, integrated regional transportation and land use policies, affordable housing initiatives, and reinvestment in inner suburbs as well as continued growth in exurbia.

Regional Diversity/Subregional Homogeneity

Computer maps of the six county Northeastern Illinois region based on census and fiscal data show a region with serious inequities (Orfield 1996). The suburbs in south and west Cook and the older satellite cities have weak tax bases, higher crime rates, lower levels of education spending, higher unemployment rates and lower median household incomes. The suburbs in south Lake County, the North Shore, northwest Cook, and DuPage have strong tax bases, low crime rates, high levels of education spending, low unemployment rates and high median household incomes. These regional inequities are evident in analyses of housing, median household income, and percent minority for each council (see Table 3). The positions each council takes on regional growth and economic development reflect its economic and demographic situation vis-a-vis the region.

The membership for the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association are municipalities severely impacted by the deindustrialization of the region and in a corridor of racial change. These suburbs are small to medium size, older communities with a declining economic base. In 1990, only four suburbs had a median household income greater than \$47,600, the median for the region. Six of the suburbs are majority African American; 21 of the suburbs have 15 percent or more African American residents.

Two of the 26 municipalities in the Will County Governmental League are larger, older satellite cities (Aurora and Joliet) with significant minority populations. The three centers of regional growth are around Joliet, northeast Will near the south suburbs of Cook, and around Bolingbrook at the border with Cook and DuPage counties.

The DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference, which includes all of the municipalities in DuPage County, is comprised of mature, larger suburbs (only eight have less than 10,000 residents). The economic base of the county is high technology and service-oriented firms. DuPage, with a concentration of high technology firms and research facilities, is considered the "Silicon Valley" of the region (Squires et al 1987, 35). The socioeconomic profile of the residents is fairly homogeneous: middle-income, professional households. While six of the municipalities (primarily the older satellite cities) have a minority presence greater than ten percent, the remaining 27 have few African American residents and a minuscule number of Hispanics.

**Regional Cooperation and Sustainable Growth
A Study of Nine Councils of Government in Northeast Illinois**

**Table 3
Socioeconomic Differences of Nine Area Councils of Government**

	Median Size	Median Housing	Median Income	Percent Black	Percent Hispanic
?					
Barrington Area Council of Governments (N=7)	6,200	\$343,700	\$101,000	.4	1.1
DuKane Valley Council (N=21)	20,150	130,400	47,301	1.8	5.5
DuPage Mayors and Managers (N=33)	25,500	157,700	51,700	2.3	5.7
Lake County Municipal League (N=39)	10,000	185,400	57,000	2.9	5.7
Northwest Municipal Conference (N=35)	29,970	206,300	60,380	1.7	4.1
South Suburban Mayors and Managers (N=37)	14,700	78,100	37,500	28.3	4.4
Southwest Conference of Local Governments (N=21)	13,400	108,900	41,500	2.9	4.0
West Central Municipal Conference (N=34)	13,800	114,300	37,000	8.9	9.3
Will County Governmental League (N=26)	18,500	118,000	41,100	6.5	4.6
Suburbs in six county Northeastern Illinois region (N=257)	15,100	143,000	47,700	6.6	5.2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 Census of Population and Housing, Summary Tape File 3A.
Prepared by the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission.

The economic development agenda of the Northwest Municipal Conference, comprised of municipalities on the North Shore, south Lake County and the northwest area adjacent to O'Hare International Airport, concentrates on improved transportation infrastructure (primarily mass transit and rail) and related workforce issues, reflecting the development needs of the municipalities in this sector. The 35 municipalities in this conference include those suburbs with the strongest tax base and the most affluent households in the region. Seventy-four percent of the suburbs report median household incomes greater than the regional median. With the exception of Evanston, all of the other suburbs are less than four percent African American.

The municipalities in the West Central Municipal Conference comprise inner ring suburbs in a narrow band stretching from O'Hare Airport on the north to the Stevenson Expressway on the south and between the City of Chicago and DuPage County. Half of the suburbs have fewer than 10,000 residents; only three have more than 25,000 residents. The socioeconomic profile of the residents in these suburbs is similar: 62 percent of the suburbs report that median household income of their residents as between \$30,000 and \$39,999 while 74 percent of the suburbs report median housing values between \$75,000 and \$149,999. These small suburbs vary greatly in terms of minority residents. While all of the suburbs have some minority residents (either African American or Hispanic), 12 are 15 percent or more minority, three are majority African American and one is majority Hispanic.

Entrepreneurial Role of Executive Directors

The entrepreneurial role of the executive director of each council is crucial. Rita Athas of the Northwest Municipal Conference, Dave Bennett of the West Central Municipal Conference, Lynn Montei of the DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference, and Beth Ruyle of the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association have had a determinate role in tailoring the policies and programs of their agencies to meet the specific needs of the mayors and managers in their subregion. They exemplify Schneider et. al.'s construct of the political entrepreneur (1995). Perceiving opportunities for change, they have mobilized their members around core ideas and policies. By identifying the specific needs of their constituent membership, working to achieve consensus, and then articulating economic development agendas tailored for their subregional needs, these political entrepreneurs are reshaping the debate on regional development.

The success of each of these political entrepreneurs is based on an understanding of the specific needs of the mayors and managers in the council. Lynn Montei, for example, has mobilized her membership to move beyond maintaining a watchdog role vis-a-vis county government to advocating and implementing proactive policies. The primary focus of the DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference is the development of policies that promote intergovernmental cooperation. The conference under Montei's direction is now working prospectively to update the skills of its membership in advance of problems, such as cultural diversity, so that the governments will be more reflectively involved. One new proactive position of the conference is a new citizen initiative entitled "Cultivating Insightful Citizens". This focus on intergovernmental cooperation and proactive skill development has been successful. In Lynn Montei's words, "collaborations have become institutionalized".

Beth Ruyle of the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association provides the technical assistance to create programs for the south suburban municipalities in the association and then spins the programs off to function independently. These programs include the Housing Coalition of the Southern Suburbs; Chicago Southland Development Inc. and the Small Business Center (joint community development corporations); and the LincolnNet (providing Internet access to the

municipalities in the subregion). In the 20 years that she has been the director, she has been able to interface with the mayors in the association and to lessen their suspicion of professional expertise. The financial services (an intergovernmental pool for insurance, a municipal bond bank, an investment pool, an employee assistance program, and a fire and police mutual aid agreement) she has developed support the economic viability of these small, fiscally strained municipalities. Her strong opposition to a third airport on the Lake Calumet site and her equally strong advocacy of a third airport in south Will County has united the membership, developing a consensus on the need for job creation at the urban edge.

Conclusion

The emergence of these nine councils of government as viable new institutional actors in the Chicago metropolitan region is the result of the effects of the regional disparities created by economic restructuring and federal programs (such as ISTEA), which mandate subregional cooperation. Developed at first to address issues of subregional cooperation, cost containment policies, and membership services, the councils have moved proactively to lobby the state legislature on policies and regulations critical to municipal governance and to assume functional responsibility for federal programs.

In the 1990s, they are assuming a stronger role in developing a consensus for policies that affect the region as a whole: a more equitable tax system and integrated regional transportation. They have been in the forefront of the fight for more equitable school funding and are strong proponents of increased rail and mass transit infrastructure as a solution to the traffic congestion in the region and the jobs-housing mismatch. They have initiated cost containment programs and membership services and are now exploring the possibility of subregionalization of police and fire services.

The councils have also become influential actors in articulating subregional economic development strategies. The two councils advocating a strongly pro-development agenda (the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association and the Will County Governmental League) reflect the needs of their constituent members, mayors and managers of suburbs hardest impacted by economic restructuring and cutbacks in federal intergovernmental transfers. The deindustrialization that occurred in south suburban Cook County and in Will County in the 1980s created the conditions that would foster a strong pro-growth development coalition. The two councils advocating a managed growth agenda (DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference and the Northwest Municipal Conference) reflect the needs of the mayors and managers of the two subregions, which have benefited from the region's transformation to a high tech and service economy. DuPage County, northwest Cook and south Lake are now considered the "Silicon Prairie" (Coates and Bigness 1997).

For economic development issues at the regional level, however, the consensus breaks down. The councils differ on the critical regional issues of the viability of a third airport in Will County, further tollway expansion, and road and infrastructure funding for growth in exurbia. For these issues, each council works in collaboration with other institutional actors to achieve subregional rather than regional goals.

The councils speak on issues of subregional economic development in a way that other units of government in the region do not. The councils have a history of ownership by their members and stewardship for their subregions missing from other government agencies. The executive directors have successfully mobilized their membership around core policies specifically germane to the mayors and managers in each council and developed a shared consensus on subregional

objectives. Victoria Smith, executive director of Southwest Conference of Local Governments, said that her mayors "Do not always agree on the issues but they try to work together". This pattern of grassroots consent and agreement has worked well in identifying common problems and articulating solutions for each subregion.

The potential to develop regional strategies for development based on a consensual, nonconfrontational model developed by these nine councils is apparent. They provide, in Todd Swanstrom's words, an infrastructure for a process of consent (1996). Their model is apolitical, working outside the rhetoric of the major political actors and political parties in the region. They have no legal authority; their strength is in the way they provide a forum for their membership to deliberate on the needs of their municipalities and on the technical assistance and strategic planning that the executive directors and their staffs provide.

The nine councils of government in the Chicago region exemplify a new institutional arrangement in regional governance. Formed partially from the need of mayors and managers to consult on issues specific to their subregion and from the mandate of ISTEA for local consultation on transportation issues, the councils of government have become articulate advocates for suburban and regional rather than urban or rural policy agendas. They exemplify a new form of functional regionalism that emphasizes cooperation and collaboration in transportation planning, solid waste management, regulatory standardization and intergovernmental agreements. In a postfederal era, the need of municipal officials for cost containment policies encourage solutions that emphasize efficiency and greater economies of scale. In the politically fragmented northeastern Illinois region, these councils of government have become the agents articulating subregional economic development strategies, proposing new solutions for regional cooperation, and working with other political actors to achieve subregional development goals. Whether councils of government as viable institutional actors are emerging in other metropolitan regions remains a subject for further research.

References

- Burns, N. (1994). *The Formation of American Local Governments: Private Values in Public Institutions*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Clarke, S. E. (1993). The new localism: Local politics in a global era. In S. Clarke and E. Goetz, *The New Localism: Comparative Politics in a Global Era*. Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage.
- _____. (1995). Institutional logics and local economic development: A comparative analysis of eight American cities. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. 19:4:513-533.
- Clarke, S. E. and G. L. Gaile. (1992). The next wave: Postfederal local economic development strategies. *Economic Development Quarterly*. 6:2:187-198.
- Coates, J. and J. Bigness. (1997). Illinois rides high on tech scene. *Chicago Tribune*. (September 12) 3:1.
- Creating a regional community: The case for regional cooperation. (1995). A Report of the Metropolitan Planning Council's Regional Cooperation Initiative.
- Diversity in DuPage: Information on the changing characteristics of DuPage's residents. (1996). DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference.
- Fiske, B. P. (ed.). (1989). *Key to government in Chicago and suburban Cook County*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Green, P. (1986). An analysis of intergovernmental cooperation in the Chicago metropolitan region," paper prepared for the Metropolitan Planning Council.
- Hill, E. W., H. Wolman, and C. C. Ford III. 1995. Can suburbs survive without their central cities? Examining the suburban dependence hypothesis. *Urban Affairs Review*. 31:2:147-174.
- Judd, D. (1995). Cities, political representation, and the dynamics of American federalism. In B. Jones, *The new American politics*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Judge, D., G. Stoker, and H. Wolman (eds.) (1995). *Theories of urban politics*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Kerstein, R. (1993). Suburban growth politics in Hillsborough County: Growth management and political regimes. *Social Science Quarterly*. 74:3:615-630.
- Lindstrom, B. J. (1996). Joliet. In W. Erbe, *Local community fact book: Chicago metropolitan area 1990*. Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers.
- Logan, J. and T. Swanstrom (eds.). (1990). *Beyond the city limits: Urban policy and economic restructuring in comparative perspective*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Maurer, R. C. and J. A. Christenson. (1982). Growth and nongrowth orientations of urban,

suburban, and rural mayors: Reflections on the city as a growth machine. *Social Science Quarterly*. 63:2:350-358.

Morgan, D. and P. Mareschal. (1996). Central city/suburban inequality and metropolitan political fragmentation. A paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association meeting, San Francisco.

Molotch, H. (1976). The city as growth machine. *American Journal of Sociology*. 2:302-330.

Orfield, M. (1997). *Metropoliticks: A regional agenda for community and stability*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute.

Parks, R. and R. Oakerson. (1989). Metropolitan organization and governance: A local public economy approach. *Urban Affairs Quarterly*. 25:1:18-29.

Pierce, N. R. with C. W. Johnson and J. S. Hall. (1993). *Citistates: How urban America can prosper in a competitive world*. Washington, D.C.: Seven Locks Press.

Preteceille, E. (1990). Political paradoxes of urban restructuring: Globalization of the economy and localization of politics? In J. Logan and T. Swanstrom, *Beyond the city limits: Urban policy and economic restructuring in comparative perspective*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Rich, M. (1993). *Federal policy making and the poor: National goals, local choices, and distributional outcomes*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Rusk, D. (1993). *Cities without suburbs*. Washington, D. C.: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press.

Savitch, H. V. and R. K. Vogel. (1996). Introduction: Regional patterns in a post-city age. In *Regional politics: America in a post-city age*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Schneider, M. (1989). *The competitive city: The political economy of suburbia*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Schneider, M. and P. Teske with M. Mintrom. (1995). *Public entrepreneurs: Agents for change in American government*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Schneider, M. and D. Kim. (1996). The effects of local conditions on economic growth, 1977-1990: The changing location of high-technology activities. *Urban Affairs Review*. 32:2:131-156.

Simpson, D. and L. Moll (eds.). *The crazy quilt of government: Units of government in Cook County, 1993*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press at Chicago.

Squires, G., L. Bennett, K. McCourt and P. Nyden. (1987). *Chicago: Race, class, and the response to urban decline*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Strategic plan for land resource management. 1996. Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission.

Swanstrom, T. (1996). Ideas matter: Reflections on the new regionalism. *Cityscape: A Journal of Policy Development and Research*. Vol. 2:2 (May) 5-21.

**Regional Cooperation and Sustainable Growth
A Study of Nine Councils of Government in Northeast Illinois**

Toward a framework for economic development in DuPage County. 1995. DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference.

Wolman, H. with D. Spitzley. (1996). The politics of local economic development. *Economic Development Quarterly*. 10:2:115-150.

