

Critical Review 2

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1 City Immigrants

The importance of metropolitan areas for immigrants occurs often. Kleniewski states that most immigrants regardless of their national origin usually select city life. Furthermore, the enclave feeling one gets in urban areas is a result of the mix of various cultures getting together and living in close proximity to each other.

There were three stages to immigration. The first stage was between 1860 and 1890. This consisted primarily of Northern European countries. They had a common language base with the native born American population; the difference was only in the dialect spoken. They also shared a common religion; they were predominately protestant. Where the immigrants of the second stage, between 1900 and 1924, were from Central and Southern Europe. Although they were European, they spoke various languages, and were predominately Catholic. The last wave of immigrants, still in progress, are predominately from Asia, and South America. This can be seen in New York City's northern districts, where once populated predominately by Irish, and Jewish peoples, are now mainly of South American decent. Additionally, the best litmus paper test for new immigrant groups are to take demographic surveys of the [New York] City's public schools. When I had visited several of the City's public schools, I had noticed a large number of South American, Eastern European (from former USSR countries), and Asian population.

Xenophobia, and nativism are two very dominate aspects of American culture. While on one hand Americans espouse the "land of opportunity" motto, they oft times react negatively towards immigrants. For example, there were the "No Irish Need Apply" signs, &c. These acts of nativism are prevalent in times of economic hardship.

There are three major reasons why people emigrate from their countries. The three identified by Kleniewski are for reasons of economic hardships (the need for jobs,) to join family members and to flee political persecution. The number one cause for migration, however, seems to be jobs. During the nineteenth century employers in America were hard pressed to find enough native-born workers to fill the jobs in the emerging Industrialism. I find that it's little surprise then that these immigrants would come to cities, since they were associated with the industrial sector of the economy. Additionally, there was chain immigration, an informal sector where current immigrants would contact family members back home and urge them to come back with promises of jobs &c. There are also various of types of immigrants. For

example, I noticed that many of those migrants that worked at my old school were only there temporarily. They would send money back to their homeland, and were to return when they were done. These types Kleniewski calls, sojourners.

2 Policies of Urban Centres

Turning our attention to the local government, most of the power was handed over to the state government, almost totally neglecting the need for a strong governmental institution at a local level. Originally controlled by local wealthy merchants (volunteers) the cities were small enough to be managed. As the industrial revolution took place, formal governments evolved. While these formal governments were voted in, many officials would take bribes from these merchants. Power shifted from the city councils, which were representative of the residents, into the hands of the mayor. In this way the upperclass minority, would have a stronger political power. As opposed to the lowerclass, whose district representatives sat in the council. This shift created the *political machine*.

The political machine is a system where the mayor sits at the top, but his connection with the “little guy” down at the bottom is through a long line of political beaurocrats. In the early 20th century there was a move to fix these political dens of inequity from a national level. These machines diminished as immigration declined and the working class moved up.

The next question was who *really* governs the cities, and to what end? A view that stemmed from these questions was the *pro-growth politics* theory. To answer the latter question (to what end?) is seemly simple: to promote growth. The theory is that there may be varying groups with dissimilar, almost extreme interests, but they all focus on the growth of the city. This growth spans from infrastructure, through social institutions (i.e.: health, education). But a more subtle question is who exactly governs? Mainly actors in local politics that stand to gain from the city’s economic growth, real estate brokers, for example. Additionally the importance of social class has been raised recently, and its role in urban centres. Some have theorized that social class is an important factor for membership in the political scene.

Several issues regarding the economic systems of urban centres can be said. For one, economic conditions are directly affected by the political tug-of-war of who gets what, and who pays for what. The private and public

financial sectors are closely interrelated. Although it may seem that they are separate cities rely on private institutions as much as private institutions rely on cities for financial support. And finally, cities are subject to overall economic conditions, rather than their own isolated economic conditions.

Affecting economic conditions is also the existance of the “metropolitan” area. These metropolitan areas are geographical areas that extend past the urban borders into the suburban locales. However, the major stunting factor in metropolitan areas, is the fragmentation of the power that the urban centre as over these fringe locales. A prime example is the New York City metropolitan area. This includes the densely populated city of New York, the various counties on Long Island, some counties into New York State (Westchester, and Orange counties) several areas into New Jersey (Fort Lee, the Pallisades) and some of Southwestern Connecticut (Bridgeport &c.) The reason for this fragmentation of power is mainly due to class, and race. Affluent Americans have decided to sever their bonds with the urban central (New York City) due to their want by constructing Gated Communities. For example, Staten Island, also known as Richmond County, is wanting to secede from New York City due to it’s geographic isolation. They want none of the burdeon of supporting the City, yet all the rewards from living close to it.

While these gated communities stay moderately away from the economic bases of the cities, corporate downsizing, streamlining of the business, affected by the company’s stock prices cause major changes in the local economy. Additionally, the shift from one type of investment capital towards another (ie: manufacturing to service) has major impacts on the urban economy. In addition to the three basic types of jobs, routine production services, in-person services, and symbolic-analytic services there is the informal sector which has a significant impact on the city. Factory jobs, McDonald-like jobs, and consultant-type jobs all provide a way of systematically tracking workers (mainly through on-the-books work). However, As well as providing many immigrants with subsistent wages, the informal sector provides jobs in the garment industry, in-home service, sidewalk vendors &c.

Those conditions arise mainly through the “footloose” nature of corporations. The money isn’t centralised in one location, just look at current day Chester. Hence there are a few amenities offered to business so that they may stay in the cities, or move to the cities. One of them is tax abatement. For the privilege of selecting a city for that company to set up shop in, the city might often waive some or all of the taxes. The problem with this is that

it shifts a disproportionate amount of the costs to the tax-payer. And even when the company has, indeed, moved, it may not necessarily have created new jobs. Another problem with the tax abatement amenity is that the corporations may use it as leveraging for remaining in the city at a reduced tax cost. They may threaten the city with moving out if the city doesn't comply. All in all, companies, for the most part, are now expecting public subsidies on private projects. The government, in many cases, is powerless against corporations and give in to their bargaining demands. As what is occurring now in Philadelphia, it's not necessarily corporations, but also sports teams looking for these "amenities."