

Sprawl and Jurisdictional Fragmentation

Edward S. Mills

This paper is a tentative explanation of the relationship between urban sprawl and jurisdictional fragmentation. Most U.S. metropolitan areas contain at least several general purpose local governments. In Europe and most of Asia, by contrast, a single local government has jurisdiction over all or most of a metropolitan area, or the central government carefully controls local government taxes and spending. This paper presents reasons to believe (and some evidence) that the U.S. pattern leads to urban sprawl (excess suburbanization) and conjectures that centralized control leads to excessive urban density and excessive restrictions on metropolitan size.