Introduction

This volume uses the special vantage point of New York City to explore the economic, political, and cultural facets of urban development in the United States. While focusing on these themes within the city, it also asks how developments in the nation's largest and most important city have helped shape broader patterns throughout this country and the world. The contributors do not attempt to resolve long-standing debates about the relative importance of economic, political, and cultural factors in explaining social development, but they do try to frame the crucial issues concerning the interaction of these factors during the mercantile, industrial, and postindustrial transformations of New York City and the larger society.

A number of methodological and substantive assumptions underlie this effort. First, we believe that the emergence of modern, urban, postindustrial society can be successfully understood only through a conscious analysis of the interplay among power, culture, and economic structure; each dimension must be given its analytic due; and their intersections must be explored. By contrast, the social science disciplines have at best tended to abstract the realms of polity, economy, and culture from one another, and, at worst, have dismissed or assumed away important interactions among them.

Admittedly, it is easier to assert the need for truly interdisciplinary research than to bring to life a genuine dialogue among the disciplines. The essays in this volume do not always transcend their disciplinary origins. Nevertheless, this volume and the Social Science Research Council's Committee on New York City are committed to bringing eco-

nomic, political, and cultural perspectives into fuller engagement with each other.

Our second point of departure is the belief that understanding society requires a sense of place. The pursuit of generalizable results has sometimes led scholars to downplay the variations arising from the particularities of place. Indeed, disciplinary specialization practically requires the homogenization of space and place. But economics, politics, and culture exist not in abstraction but in places, and socially constructed places affect the interaction of social forces over time. To borrow a metaphor from Herman Melville, places constitute the "loom of time" upon which choice, constraint, and chance weave history.[1] Places certainly result from past choices and conflicts, but they also constrain and encourage future choices and conflicts, thus imparting a distinct pattern to historical development.

A third, closely related assumption is that large cities have driven nineteenth and twentieth century development and will probably continue to do so in the twenty-first century. The close link between urbanization and industrial capitalism makes the first part of this claim almost self-evident. For the current period, this claim is more controversial. In recent decades, the outward migration of jobs and population and the rise of new urban centers have created the multinucleated metropolitan realm to replace earlier, more self-contained central cities. We believe, however, that large cities, understood in this new metropolitan context, will continue to dominate human settlement patterns and that large central cities will continue to produce system-changing trends.

Finally, we believe that New York is an ideal laboratory in which to substantiate the validity and usefulness of our methodological assumptions. Its population and its annual budget exceed those of many nations. Three-fourths of those who work in its economy live within its political boundaries. For a century and a half, it has been North America's largest city, home to the largest concentration of corporate headquarters, a global financial center, and the focus of an international nexus of culture and communication. As the continent's largest port, New York was a leading point of connection with the outside world, particularly Europe. Today, four-fifths of all transborder data-flows and half of all international air cargo shipments pass through New York City.

This nodal position in the national and global network of cities has opened New York to a worldwide range of influences, whether Asian and Caribbean emigration, foreign direct investment in the United States, or avant-garde ideas in the arts. It is thus a study in cultural, economic, and political contrasts. New York's connections to the world

have facilitated its role as a source of innovations—from mortgage-backed securities to break dancing—that, in turn, strongly influence the rest of the world. Perhaps more than other world cities, New York intensifies and combines social forces, ranging in scale from local to global, that elsewhere may be hidden, latent, or segregated from one another.

In short, this volume argues that urban studies should be revived as a fruitful and suggestive basis for the social sciences. The city gave birth to the social sciences and motivated many classic studies, ranging from Friedrich Engels on Manchester and Charles Booth on London to Robert A. Dahl on New Haven. We believe a renewed urban focus can enlighten and enliven many of the most important issues currently engaging social scientists.

Among these are such methodological and epistemological issues as whether to rely upon individualist explanations, as opposed to more holistic or systemic explanations, or whether to stress meaning and interpretation, as in the work of Clifford Geertz, or whether to emphasize causal explanation. By concentrating large numbers of different kinds of people and social strata in close physical proximity, urban areas provide fertile soil for contrasting and comparing these approaches. Large cities also highlight a number of issues central to the theoretical growth of the social sciences, including class formation, the development of state capacities, and the mediation of economic trends by politics and culture.

How, for example, do rapid changes in economic structure influence broad patterns of social and political stratification? The essays in this volume delineate the enormous social, political, and cultural divisions and revisions arising in what might be called the first, second, and third industrial revolutions, or the mercantile, industrial, and postindustrial eras. In each era, the creation of new social forms and the simultaneous decay of old forms created an uneven and complicated impact across the class structure.

How, given these complicated effects, have groups entering or being created in the rapidly changing urban setting become incorporated into the economy, polity, and culture? How can a common polity, a shared civic culture, be created from so many distinct and conflicting streams? Is the process characterized by upward mobility, a closed opportunity structure, or both? What explains the fate of various groups? Is an underclass a permanent feature of rapid periods of structural change? New York City has constantly generated new inequalities, with new groups clustered seemingly permanently at the bottom. Yet many of these groups have improved their economic position over time through

a complex political struggle. Intense political struggles have also taken place between decaying economic forms, whether artisan production in 1810 or garment loft factories in the 1980s, and rising forms, such as the nineteenth century factory system or the present-day growth of advanced corporate services.

The current theoretical interest in analyzing the evolution of state capacity and autonomy can also be advanced through studies of New York City. State intervention has fostered and shaped the city's physical and economic growth. This has been most obvious in large public capital investments like the Erie Canal, the subway system, and Kennedy Airport, but it has also been true in more subtle ways. New York's defeat of Philadelphia's Second Bank of the United States in 1836 provides an example of how political advantage helped shaped financial markets not only in New York but throughout the nation. Reciprocally, the concentration of wealth and poverty in New York inevitably turns economic trends into political issues. Class differences in New York have been enormous for a century and a half, yet outbreaks of class violence or class politics have been episodic at most. The essays in each section of this volume show how political order and civic culture have mediated economic tensions.

This mediation certainly took place outside the strictly political realm as well. A common culture was forged out of disparate and competing voices, in part because this culture expressed some cleavages among groups while dampening others. Certain city spaces were delineated as the turf of class and ethnic subcultures, while others developed a much more public, heterogeneous character. This volume speculates on the implicit rules governing the evolution of such spatial differentiation, and on how these rules related to the political and economic dimensions of power. From the debate over the creation of Central Park to conflict over access to park space on the city's rim 140 years later, New York City offers much material for reflection on these issues.

A final, crucial theoretical question concerns the degree of and limits to local autonomy. Anthony Giddens has written that the city was central to social theory until the advent of the nation-state, which usurped the city's rights and powers. Much neoclassical and neo-Marxist thinking has reinforced this position. Leading economists, sociologists, and political scientists have concluded that competition for investment prevents cities from exercising political power over economic arrangements, at least in terms of redistribution. Some neo-Marxists have portrayed cities as the product of the mode of production and its discontents, with local politics following the functional imperative of promoting the former and suppressing the latter.

Other scholars, drawing on what is an older tradition in the United States, resist writing off local autonomy. The community-studies literature took for granted the importance of the urban realm. The Chicago School of sociology saw the city as society writ small. While recognizing that things change as the scale of analysis shifts from the nation to the city, Robert Dahl's classic study of New Haven and Browning, Marshall, and Tabb's recent prize-winning study of California cities recognize that cities are places where larger forces can be affected as well as observed and understood.[2] According to this view, despite the loss of authority to higher jurisdictions and the vulnerability to global market and demographic trends, actions in urban polities can have real, systemic consequences because they exercise real, if constrained, authority over core economic and cultural activities.

New York City offers a test case for the relative theoretical sturdiness of these two views. What city has been more subject to global forces of economic and demographic change? Yet what city has attempted more government intervention, whether through an elaborate local welfare state, the regulation of housing markets, or the promotion of its own economic expansion? The evidence in these essays can help us determine the extent to which cities use larger forces to chart their own course or are merely subject to them.

Skeptics may challenge both the assumption that place-centered, interdisciplinary, historical research is badly needed and the belief that New York offers an excellent starting point for such work. New York City's distinctiveness may cause particular doubt about the latter point. After all, New York City is an outlying case on many of the dimensions often used to compare cities. It is older, larger, denser, and more heterogeneous than other American cities. It is more Roman Catholic than most and more Jewish than any. It houses disproportionate numbers of rich and poor alike. It has a larger public labor force, more kinds of public services, and greater governmental regulation of housing markets than other cities. And while New York City might be the nation's most cosmopolitan city, it also has parochial worlds like the Satmar Chassidim in Williamsburg or the Italian-Americans of Bensonhurst. How, then, can New York City be taken as representative of anything?

We believe that New York City is more archetypical than atypical. By concentrating extremes, it reveals forces, trends, and conflicts that are latent elsewhere. As a world city, it is among the first to feel trends arising elsewhere. As a center of influential economic, political, and cultural institutions, it creates and propagates widely felt innovations. Despite decentralization and new sources of competition, it has been economically dominant for more than a century. New York's dispropor-

tionate influence on national political development continues today, despite the city's dwindling fraction of the national vote. From the political machine (and its Progressive opponents) to the New Deal, the liberal reforms of the 1960s, and the fiscal crisis of the 1970s, New York has provided a template for national patterns. A third of all foundation dollars, three national news operations, most of the leading magazine and book publishers, two newspapers with a claim to national standing, the main fine arts market, and many nationally significant cultural institutions are all located in New York City.

It is surprising, then, that New York has received so little comprehensive scholarly attention. Numerous monographs have appeared on particular aspects of the city's history, but they are fragmented and lack a common theoretical focus. Scholars have produced more synthetic work on Boston or Chicago, or even on New Haven, than on New York. A quarter century has passed since the last comprehensive research program on New York City's political system or its economy. Even if the skeptic rejects the claim that New York provides a basis for theoretical development in the social sciences, the need for greater comprehensive scholarly attention can hardly be denied.

E. B. White once wrote that "by rights New York should have destroyed itself long ago, from panic or fire or rioting or failure of some vital supply line in its circulatory system or from some deep labyrinthine short circuit."[3] The essays in this volume do not achieve an analytic synthesis of economics, politics, and culture in New York, but they do suggest reasons why, for now, such a fate has been avoided.

In the essays opening the discussion of each period, Diane Lindstrom, Emanuel Tobier, and Norman and Susan Fainstein provide ample evidence that mercantile, industrial, and postindustrial economic transformations posed major social challenges. Lindstrom shows that overall economic growth was accompanied by increasing class inequality in the antebellum period. Tobier shows how the tremendous economic drive at the turn of the century produced new tensions over land use in the central business district and the expanding outer borough housing markets. The Fainsteins in turn examine how state intervention to reshape the city to promote corporate functions and metropolitan decentralization generated new kinds of conflict. These essays give ample evidence that economic development consistently produced sharp conflict but never a fatal crisis.

One source of order may emerge from learning to live with disorder. For the mercantile and industrial eras, cultural historians Peter G. Buckley and William R. Taylor examine the cross-class use of public spaces,

the forging of street life, and how the popular culture industry selected aspects of that street culture and introduced them into national discourse. Sociologists William Kornblum and James Beshers follow this theme into the contemporary period by examining the reconstituted white ethnic enclaves along Jamaica Bay and their conflicts with emerging black and Hispanic communities over access to public spaces like the Gateway National Recreation Area.

These essays suggest that the social construction of public space has important consequences for economic, social, and political order. Groups expend great energy to carve out and protect niches in a shared spatial context. No group can completely dominate or control that shared space, yet the rules of the game favor and protect some competing elements while dampening the expression of others. Order and disorder are not polar conditions; order is built instead upon the particular way disorder takes place.

In the third essays for each period, political scientists Amy Bridges, Martin Shefter, and I argue that the framework of political participation also helps to harness conflict. For Bridges, the political interests of the urban immigrant working class were defined by America's (and New York's) great political invention—the professional political party or machine—because universal white male suffrage preceded the formation of that class. Shefter traces how the nineteenth century machine-reform dialectic was transposed into the relatively stable, and for a time uncontested, pluralism of the 1950s and early 1960s. My essay analyzes how the enormous economic, fiscal, and racial traumas of the late 1960s and 1970s affected the position of different groups in the political arena and speculates on why it remained stable nonetheless.

The three last, reflective essays take up and reformulate issues embedded in earlier sections. Thomas Bender argues for a renewed analytic focus on public, civic culture and the social and physical spaces in which it is generated as a way of overcoming weaknesses in the "new social history." I reflect on the paradox that political parties have decayed as a means of representation at the same time that state efforts to shape the physical environment have become more pervasive. Finally, Ira Katznelson takes a step back from empirical analysis to consider how major social theorists have understood what the city meant and how its growth in turn affected their thinking. In different ways, each essay provides a comment on the relationships among power, culture, and place.

These essays only begin to substantiate the assumptions that provide the starting point for this volume. While reading the essays, the reader

will want to think of them as open questions. Do culture, politics, and economics really have an equally significant influence on New York's development? How do they intersect? Do the essays bear out the contention that the particular shared spatial context helps shape how these domains are woven together? What distinct pattern, if any, has New York stamped on larger social trends? Has New York driven larger development patterns or has it progressively lost ground to external forces?

In the coming years, the Committee on New York City will pursue the general issues raised here by focusing on the built environment, metropolitan dominance, and the dual city. These topics have been chosen because they allow economic, political, and cultural perspectives to be brought to bear on central theoretical issues.

The working group on the built environment will examine how economic and political developments, market forces, individual designers and builders, city planners, and the diverse cultures of the city interacted to give the city its physical shape. This group will examine not only the making of the physical city but also its use and meaning. It will explore the physical dimensions of topics that the two other groups are analyzing, mindful of how such dimensions as class, gender, race, ethnicity, technology, and economic function are variously intermingled and geographically segregated.

The effort to understand metropolitan dominance will study New York's "foreign policy"—how New York has influenced the wider economy, political system, and culture despite frequent adverse changes in its competitive environment. If New York institutions have fostered important national economic, political, and cultural changes, then investigations of the activities of these institutions should reveal largely unexplored relations between economic, political, and cultural development. This working group will examine the impact of the current reorganization of the global economic system on the relative standing of New York and its elites.

The third research effort will analyze the economic, social, and political ramifications of the current "postindustrial revolution." Manufacturing decline, the rise of services, and internationalization of the city's businesses and population have been particularly rapid since the 1960s. Racial and ethnic succession, the rise of new social strata and the decline of old ones, and economic restructuring have posed severe challenges to the city's economy, polity, and civic culture. Trends toward polarization and a new middle class are both evident, undermining old patterns of inequality even as new ones are created. Though the main framework

for this research will be contemporary, an effort will be made to contrast findings with studies of earlier moments of economic transformation, particularly the industrial revolution of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

We anticipate that subsequent volumes will flow from each of these efforts and trust that they will build on this volume's strengths while avoiding its shortcomings.

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1. Herman Melville, *Moby Dick* (New York: Random House, [1851] 1950), 213.
2. Robert Dahl, *Who Governs* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961); Rufus Browning, Dale Marshall, and David Tabb, *Protest Is Not Enough* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).
3. E. B. White, *Here Is New York* (New York: Harper, 1949), 24–25.