



The Risk of Regional Governance: Cultural Cognition and Interlocal Cooperation (Routledge Research in Urban Politics and Policy)

Thomas S. Skuzinski

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Many local governments in the United States continue to exist in a state of crisis, attempting to meet steady or growing demands with dwindling own-source and intergovernmental resources. Competition with other local governments for desirable firms and households is the prevailing way to confront this resource problem. However, cooperation is also possible, and formal and informal relationships with neighboring local governments are an increasingly common way to provide stability and manage risk. These relationships are at the heart of regional governance, a path to regionalism that reaches for some of the goals of metropolitan regional government reform while preserving local autonomy. While the path has been well-travelled for basic local services, it is rarely used to arrive at regionalism in land use planning and regulation, the policy domain through which interlocal inequities arise and persist.

The Risk of Regional Governance challenges this conventional wisdom. It probes the social psychology of local elected officials, the policy actors who would be responsible for adopting and nurturing interlocal land use cooperation. In place of the well-informed, rational decision-making at the heart of interlocal cooperation scholarship, Thomas S. Skuzinski advances a model of decision-making based on ideologically-driven, subjective risk assessment. Analysis of data from a survey of local elected officials in metropolitan Detroit and Grand Rapids, Michigan, yields compelling evidence that local elected officials draw on well-defined, measurable cultural worldviews to form consistent preferences about interlocal land use cooperation.

The Risk of Regional Governance marks the first empirical foray into how local elected officials *think* about regional governance, shedding light on decades-old theoretical debates about the optimal governance of metropolitan problems and charting novel policy recommendations designed to engage cultural rationality.

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