

per capita expenditures between the consolidated and the unconsolidated groups. The authors conclude that consolidated governments might be able to produce better public services, but consolidation does not make those services any cheaper.

- **Hendrick, Rebecca, Benedict Jimenez, and Kamna Lal.** "Does Local Government Fragmentation Reduce Local Spending?" *Urban Affairs Review* 47 (2011): 467–510.

This makes for an interesting companion piece to the study just reviewed. The research team looks at local government spending in 126 metropolitan regions covering 538 counties. The key research question is whether greater fragmentation in these regions leads to higher spending. The answer is yes . . . and no. One of the key findings is that geographical areas with more single-purpose governments have higher levels of local government spending. This seems to support the argument for consolidation; the obvious implication is that merging the responsibilities of those single governments into fewer general-purpose governments will reduce spending. Yet another key finding of this study is that areas with more centralized governments also have higher spending. The takeaway story here is that the costs and benefits of fragmentation versus centralization are not clear-cut. Neither the many governments along the lines of the Tiebout model nor the fewer governments recommended by metro advocates are one-size-fits-all solutions. The pros and cons of more versus fewer governments depend on what sorts of governments (e.g., single-purpose vs. general-purpose) are involved, as well as on the political, economic, and social context.

- **Leland, Suzanne, and Kurt Thurmaier.** "Political and Functional Local Government Consolidation: The Challenges for Core Public Administration Values and Regional Reform." *American Review of Public Administration* 44, no. 4 (2014): 29S–46S.

A big contribution of this research article is a study of studies. It provides an in-depth review of research on the adoption, implementation, and results of local government consolidations. What emerges from this review is a clear signal that consolidations are rarely approved when they are proposed and results are mixed in the rare instances when consolidation actually takes place. The key stumbling

block in both instances is politics; consolidation, to citizens and public officials, typically creates fears not just of a loss of political power but of an erosion of local identity. Rather than fighting these often unwinnable political battles, the authors push for an alternate approach that emphasizes acceptance of shared sovereignty and multilevel governance. What this means is that rather than local governments' disappearing, they would cede some of their authority to intergovernmental bodies that could operate on a regional scale. So, for example, to bring regional coherence to zoning, local governments would relinquish their zoning powers to a regional zoning board or commission. The local governments would remain intact and would have representation on that board, but the board itself would exercise sovereign power over zoning across jurisdictions in the region.

- **Bowman, Ann O'M., and Richard Kearney.** "Are U.S. Cities Losing Power and Authority? Perceptions of Local Government Actors." *Urban Affairs Review* 48 (2012): 528–546.

This is not a study of the pros and cons of consolidation versus fragmentation but, rather, a study of the distribution of power. As we learned from the discussion of Dillon's Rule in Chapter 11, local governments are not sovereign—they wield only those powers that states allow them to have. This raises an interesting question given the focus and theme of this chapter. If there really is no functioning level of regional government between states and localities, will states take on the job themselves? Especially given the social, economic, and political stakes (all discussed above), will states leave local governments to keep going their own way, or will they start to exercise their sovereign authority and start to lessen the power of local authorities? Bowman and Kearney get at this question by surveying state and local government officials to get their perspectives on the evolution of state–local relationships. Their findings show that state officials generally see a reasonable distribution of power, with local officials given a more or less appropriate balance of authority and discretion. The authors report that the view from local officials is decidedly different: "From the perspective of city managers . . . the past decade has been one of loss of power and discretionary authority accompanied by encumbering (state) mandates in numerous policy areas." Lacking meaningful regional government structures, perhaps states are taking on that job themselves.