Review
Reviewed Work(s): Sprawl, Justice, and Citizenship: The Civic Costs of the American Way of Life by Thad Williamson
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**Sprawl, Justice, and Citizenship: The Civic Costs of the American Way of Life** by Thad Williamson. New York, Oxford University Press, 2011. 416 pp. Paper, $24.95.

Suburban sprawl defined U.S. metropolitan development in the twentieth century. As Thad Williamson highlights, the question of whether it should continue to do so in the twenty-first century is a debate not just about land use but about the kind of society in which we wish to live.

In order to evaluate suburban sprawl in this context, Williamson considers its impact on four key values—efficiency, fairness, citizenship, and sustainability—through a focus on the concerns of three contemporary normative political theories: utilitarianism, liberal egalitarianism, and civic republicanism. In this way, the book serves as much as a primer on contemporary political theory as a primer on sprawl. Williamson is, on the one hand, explicating the key questions that each theory would pose about the worth of sprawl, as a way "to clarify the moral choices facing the U.S. public as it charts a metropolitan development path for the twenty-first century" (p. 22). Ultimately, he is also making an argument in favor of utilizing a particular framework, green civic republicanism, to justify public policies that would significantly alter the current metropolitan landscape.

Williams combines a rich comparative discussion of these three strands of normative political theory with empirical data, analyzing survey data primarily drawn from the 2000 Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey. The survey data cover a wide range of metropolitan areas with detailed geographic information for each respondent. By combining this data with 2000 Census data, Williamson is able to look at the relationship between living in particular kinds of neighborhoods (neighborhoods that vary by density, age, transit mode, and racial and income composition) and a range of attitudes and behaviors. This combination of theory and data alone makes the book an important contribution to current political science literature. Williamson provides an exciting model for empirical work that is grounded in critical contemporary debates about the quality of democracy and the nature of the "good life."

In contrast to the rich theoretical debates, the empirical data analysis can seem a bit thin, especially as a proxy for the nature of our civic life in more or less sprawling environments. As Williamson acknowledges, cross-sectional data analysis is inherently limited in its ability to answer some of the most interesting questions about how urban form shapes our civic life. However, in the absence of natural experiments whereby we could observe how the attitudes and behaviors of residents change in the face of "active policy innovation aimed at limiting sprawl" (p. 282), the survey data are at least suggestive of some of the ways in which we may think and behave differently

based on the nature of the built environment. Williamson's careful and wide-ranging analysis uncovers many interesting relationships that are at times positive for sprawl (for example, those living in less-dense neighborhoods are happier with their location and more trusting of their neighbors) and at times negative (for example, those living in newer, more care-dependent neighborhoods are less likely to engage in "high-intensity" political activity).

Lurking in the background of these discussions of theory and survey data is the actual politics of land use at the local, state, and federal level. Williamson ends with a discussion of policy proposals that might find common ground across these three normative political theories. However, as he admits, few of them seem very likely to be implemented in the current political era: common ground across philosophical views is not the same thing as common political ground. Williamson has given us an important and thorough assessment of the "core values at stake in the debate" (p. 10) about sprawl and urban form. In an era of narrowcasting and sound bites, the challenge of how to have a public policy debate that truly engages with these core values remains.

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**The Al Qaeda Factor: Plots Against the West** by Mitchell D. Silber. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011. 368 pp. $39.95.

Virtually all members of the enormous community of post-September 11 terrorism experts seem to agree on one point: The influence of al Qaeda's core leadership has been steadily waning over the course of the last decade. This is a conclusion confirmed yet again by Mitchell D. Silber in his new book, *The Al Qaeda Factor*, which examines 16 prominent modern cases of terrorism—or attempted terrorism—directed against the West.

The terrorism-expert community splits into two broad groups over the interpretation of the shrinking importance of "al Qaeda central," however. The first group believes that a lack of coordination does not imply a diminution of the danger posed by Islamic fundamentalist terrorism. Indeed a decentralized, "lone wolf" threat might prove to be more difficult to deal with than one tightly directed by Osama bin Laden's successors. The other group of terrorism analysts argues that al Qaeda and its affiliated groups are significantly stronger in Western imaginations than they ever were in reality, and that uncoordinated copy-cat groups