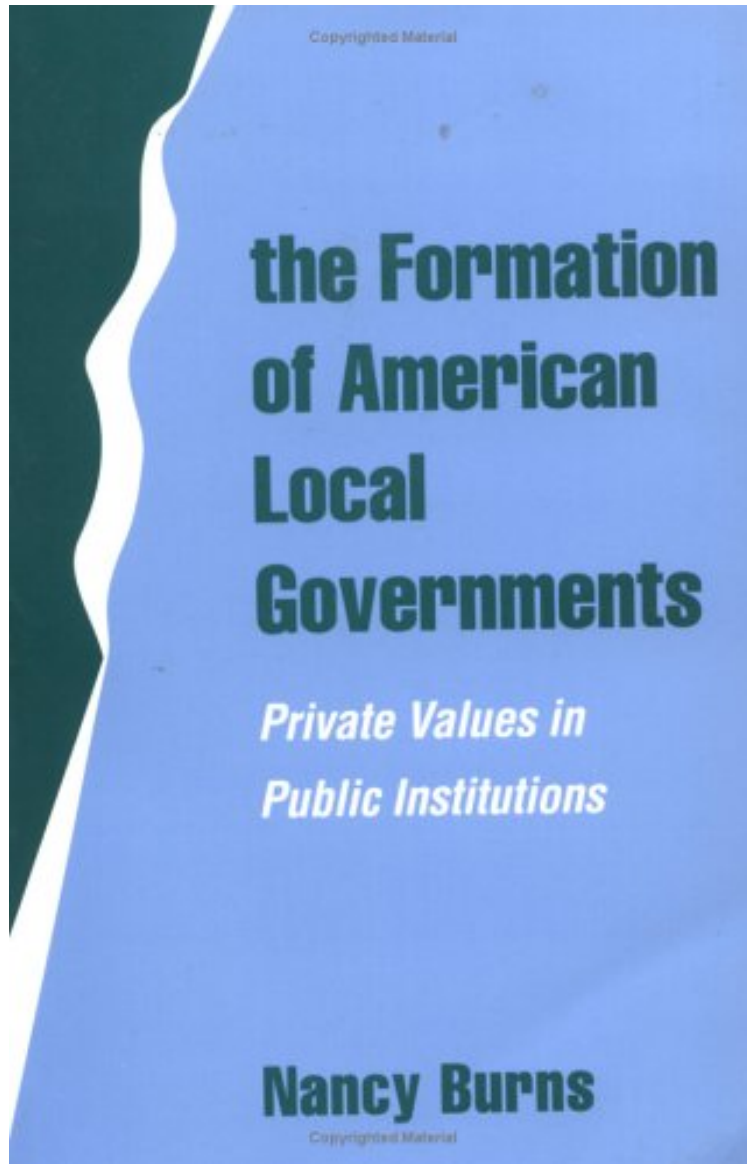


The Formation of American Local Governments: Private Values in Public Institutions

Nancy Burns

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the basics to local government. I would say ideal for people interested in getting more involved in local governments like town halls or chamber of commerce.

Why have Americans created thousands of new local governments in recent years, a rate much higher than population increases demand? Conflicts over local power--the power to tax, to issue bonds, and to provide services--have produced solutions that are often as ruthless as they are resourceful. The first text to illustrate the impact of creating new local governments, this compelling study provides an illuminating examination of the nature of local politics today. Skillfully combining case studies, institutional history, and quantitative analyses, Nancy Burns argues that economic interests, states, the federal government, and inventive individuals have changed the parameters of local institutions, thereby changing local politics. Rather than working for change within the existing system, countless groups have created new municipalities and "special districts," local governments that serve private interests more than the public good. Businesses and developers, who tend to initiate and dominate the process, often serve as organizational bases to help allied groups--such as wealthy homeowners--achieve their goals. Because of the autonomy that local governments enjoy in the U.S., the formation of these new governments has had an impact on the quality of life for many Americans. New boundaries, created mostly along race and class lines, determine access to education, housing, and basic services, allowing the privilege of exclusion to accompany the privilege of municipal management. Revealing the place of local institutions in the larger political spectrum, this landmark work offers students of urban politics and political science a unique look at the structural features of American local politics.

"I wish I had known about this text before using my current one. It's excellent. Kudos to Nancy Burns--well done."--Donald Crumbley, Sr, Columbia College "[A] useful contribution to the urban politics literature...The presentation of the historical materials is novel and there is an interesting discussion of the effects of the 1965 Voting Rights Act on municipal incorporations. The book would be a useful text for an introductory course on local government..."--Journal of Regional Science "An outstanding piece of research!"--Eric Hozik, University of Nevada "Prof. Burns has obviously done her research--the bibliography is most impressive."--David Robinson, University of Houston "I've already used the book in manuscript form for the last two years in my graduate seminar on urban politics. It draws on a broad range of empirical evidence to make a significant theoretical contribution to our understanding of local government formation."--Gerald Gamm, University of Rochester "A very important study. Provides original insight about a major aspect of American urban politics that has been largely neglected by modern scholarship. The findings are interesting, the methodologies are appropriate and the theoretical implications are most stimulating. Will draw widespread attention from professionals, scholars, and students of local politics."--Paul Kantor, Fordham University "Burns's comprehensive review of the literature, creative use of case studies, and quantitative analysis combine to make a significant contribution to the field. Her work is important to the study of local government, political economy, and urban politics....Throughout, her scholarship is impressive. She has read widely and carefully, covering an awesome range of historical studies, case materials, and most of the relevant general and theoretical literature. Her use of these materials is often imaginative, particularly in the weaving together of the findings of a substantial number of case studies."--Michael N. Danielson, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University Listed in Abstracts of Public Administration, Development and Environment About the Author Nancy Burns is at University of Michigan.