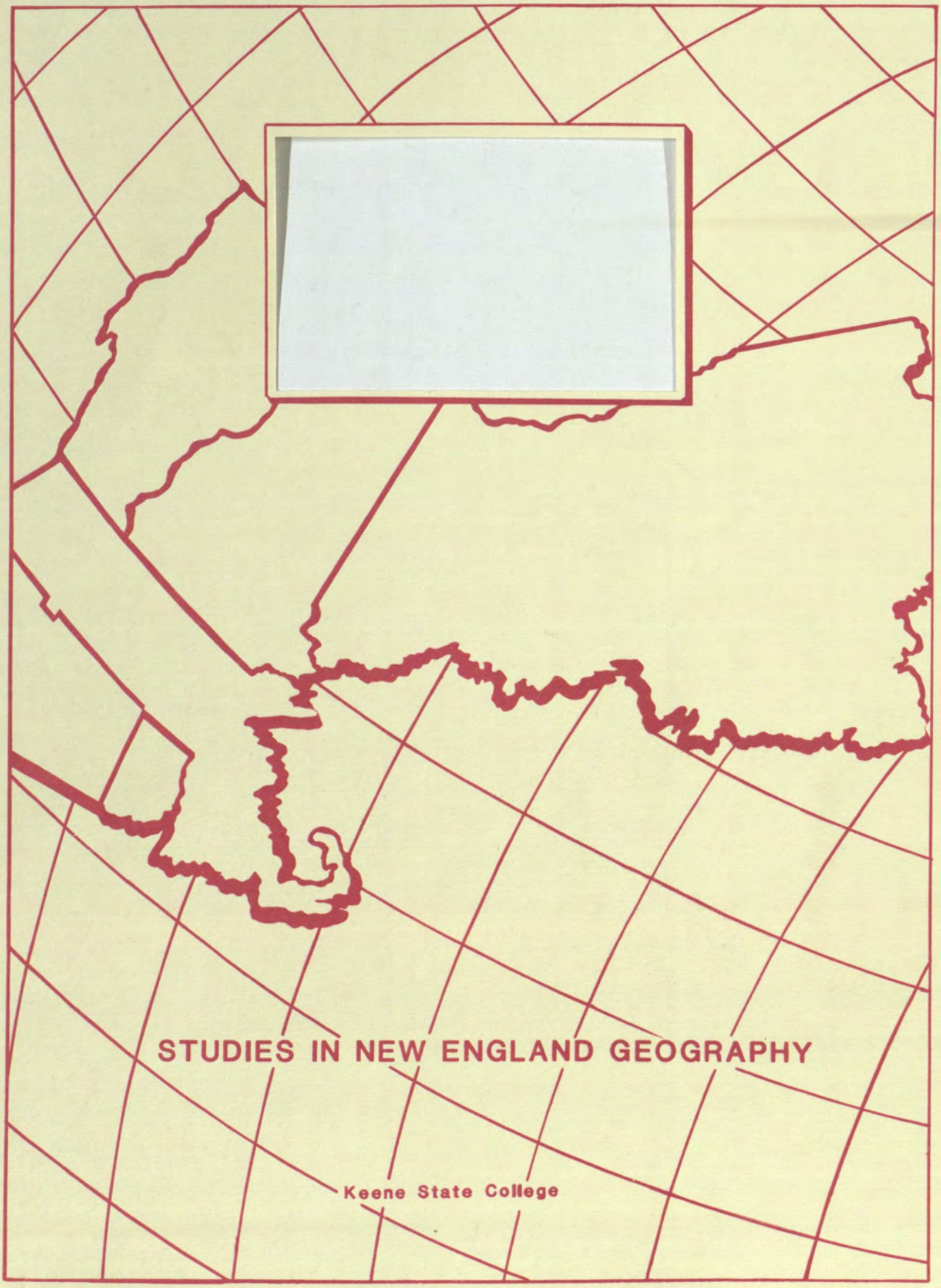

STUDIES IN NEW ENGLAND GEOGRAPHY

Keene State College

THE DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

OF SOME SMALLER SETTLEMENTS

AS MARGINALIZED PLACES

Pat Burnett
President
Burnett International, Inc.
75 St. Paul Street
Brookline, MA 02446
Phone: (617) - 975-0477
Fax: (617)-975-215
Email: Shirl12pat@aol.com

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Dr. A.L. Rydant, Editor, STUDIES IN NEW ENGLAND GEOGRAPHY, Department of Geography, Keene State College, Keene, NH 03435-2001. (603) 358-2508; arydant@keene.edu

The Downtown Revitalization of Some Smaller Settlements As Marginalized Places

Abstract: This research begins by challenging the notion that a rural renaissance has reversed the economic disadvantage of many smaller settlements in the late capitalist world. At the outset, it is shown that not only are these settlements marginalized through disadvantage, they are further marginalized through exclusion in the literature. Downtown revitalization is one consequent redevelopment effort, among others, including housing renewal and industrial development. By focusing on downtown revitalization, this paper investigates various global land use practices that tie even marginalized places into the regional, national and international world. These practices are then contrasted with localized variations in them. A case study based on questionnaire and photographic evidence for twelve smaller settlements in Massachusetts next demonstrates global-local examples of the revitalization processes. By focusing on the downtown revitalization of smaller marginalized settlements in this way, we add to geographic knowledge of them.

Introduction: Marginalized Places In Late Capitalist Economies

Recently, there has been considerable interest in marginalized populations and discourses. However, there are also marginalized places in late capitalist economies. Though not immune to regional, national and international influences, they tend to be excluded by virtue of being an "other" pole to a large center, because of a more remote location or by economic disadvantage. They may also be overlooked by virtue of neglect in the literature. This combination of circumstances makes them marginalized.

This paper has the following objectives:

1. To demonstrate that many villages, towns, and smaller cities tend to be marginalized, through the use of data on disadvantage and by showing how work since the 1970s has excluded them;

2. To look at downtown revitalization as one consequent redevelopment effort in such places (among gentrification, industrial development, and so on); and
3. To take a case study of twelve Massachusetts towns and smaller cities and to study the global and locally variant features of their downtown revitalization efforts which will contribute to our geographic knowledge.

The three objectives will be accomplished in turn.

We now turn to objective one, and first to a definition of the size range of settlements considered throughout the paper, before a demonstration of their disadvantage using data. According to Richard Francaviglia, "There are several thousand small towns in the United States with populations of more than about 750 and fewer than 30,000 people" (1996: xix-xx, and 112-113). Paumier further reports that the United States contains "more than 400 cities [with] from 50,000 to 350,000 people" (1988: 3).[2] Galston and Baehler (1995) cite the increasing disadvantages for the smaller centers in employment, unemployment, income, wages, earnings, poverty and population in comparison with metropolitan areas. Eberts' findings in 1994 and 2003 for New York State also cited lower incomes and lessening incomes in counties outside large metro areas, with the same for education and employment. Marsden, Lowe and Whatmore, in a reconsideration of local labor markets, have noted: "The (current) shift in labor demand toward more highly educated workers has been concentrated almost entirely in (large) metropolitan areas, leading to a widening urban-rural income differential and outmigration of the best educated rural youth" (1992: 7-8). The centers of smaller cities and towns are now in a downward spiral (Thomas and Bromley 2003). Thus, it may be premature to speak of a rural renaissance based on a population deconcentration perhaps limited to the 1970s (though see Johnson and Beale 1994); and based on new amenity,

residential, tourist and recreation functions for some areas (Mormont 1990; Rudzitis 1993; Paradis 2000). Clearly, there is variability in the fortunes of different places. However, many villages, towns and smaller cities may comprise marginalized settlements in the late capitalist world.

Turning to the literature, work on villages, towns, and smaller cities has been dwarfed by studies of the metropolis. Firstly, since the popularity of central place theory in the early 1970s, research has increasingly focused on the metropolitan pole of the hierarchy, leaving non-metropolitan areas neglected. "Regardless of region, our focus has been on the urban portion of the hierarchy, yet considering the importance of the (smaller) town in American life, more research is needed" (Rudzitis 1991: 85-86).[3]

Secondly, given the increased scrutiny and weaknesses of central place theory perspectives, there has been a phenomenal growth in the study of the metropolis and global cities. Perhaps this is an outcome too of the development of the global economy, where metropolises are seen as engines for growth. The literary development was first demonstrated, for example, in Volume 18 of *Urban Geography*, in a special issue commemorating Chauncy Harris' and Edward Ullman's work on "The Nature of Cities," and in the special 1996 issue of *Economic Geography* edited by Barney Warf and Rodney Erickson dealing with "Globalization and the U.S. City System." Other publications of this date which indicate the focus of this work include but are not limited to: studies of sustainability and the postmodern city (for example Newman 1995); of the metropolis "as symbol of our times" (for example Kasinitz 1995); of planning in postfordist metropolises (for example Filion 1996); of income within the metropolis (for example Bourne 1993; Perskey and Tam 1994); of plazas, festival marketing and malling in metropolitan downtowns (Zacharias 1993; Neill 1995); of postwar metropolitan decline

(Beauregard 1993a); of commuting and traffic in metropolitan areas (Taylor and Ong 1995); of metropolitan downtown revitalization (Fainstain 1994; Wagner, Joder and Mumphrey 1995); and of "cities in a world economy" (for example Sassen 1994; Knox and Taylor 1995). The more recent work, such as the metropolitan caricature in Dear and Flusty's "Postmodern Urbanism" (1998), Hannigan's *Fantasy City* (1998), Scott's "The City" (1999), and "Global City Regions" (2001), Bingaman, Sanders, and Zarach's "Embodied Utopias" (2002), and Sitton and Deverell's *Metropolis in the Making*, 2001, is of the same metropolitan genre.

There has obviously been some work conducted in the last two decades on villages, towns, and smaller cities in geography. There were, for example, cultural studies by Lewis (1972) of small towns in Pennsylvania, and by Marsh (1987) of anthracite towns. More recently there is the work on citizenship of Staeheli (1994) in Pueblo, Colorado, of Clarke and Gaile (1998) on the economic base of cities of many different sizes and of Thomas and Bromley (2003) on smaller towns' decline. Some smaller cities have been studied repeatedly, such as Syracuse (e.g., growth machine politics by Roberts and Schein 1993). The "new rural geography" has contributed to studies of villages as a locus for the reorganization of the countryside (Marsden, Lowe and Whatmore 1992) and as a cultural figure (Cloke et al 1994). The most recent other work includes a study of community pride in American small towns (Schul 2002), Virginia town formation (Davenport 2001), an examination of the rural community in the information age (Kotgen and Siegel 2000), a study of 'white flight' to nonmetropolitan areas (Frey and Liaw 1998), the location strategy of Walmart in smaller communities (Graff 1998), and settlement in Upstate New York in Peter Hugill's *Upstate Arcadia*

(1995). Thus there has been some interest in geography in smaller settlements. However, the work has been eclipsed by the work on the metropolis.[4]

Disadvantaged economically and eclipsed in the literature, many smaller settlements are thus marginalized. The remainder of the paper looks firstly, in the next section, at downtown revitalization as one possibly important urban redevelopment effort. Global and local elements in revitalization in smaller settlements are addressed as an organizing theme. Then a case study follows of twelve settlements in Massachusetts representing the town and smaller city size range. Common strategies and variability in details in revitalization result. Three of the case study settlements are examined in depth to extract further information. Global and local revitalization elements contribute to our increased understanding of marginalized settlements and their development processes. The paper concludes with directions for further research.

Downtown Revitalization

Downtown revitalization is chosen for two reasons. Firstly, late capitalism has its own well-known kind of consumer logic of which the spatial expression, even in smaller urban areas, is the declining CBD and the auto-accessible shopping mall (Crawford 1992; Goss 1993a; Thomas and Bromley 2003). Secondly, downtowns are one locus of retailing and retailed products that have "become a major focus in extracting surplus value from the increasingly complex production—consumption chain" (Marsden and Wrigley 1996: 1901). Thus, the downtowns in smaller places are important loci for attention.

It is expected that the discussion of towns, villages and smaller cities in the downtown revitalization literature would mirror their treatment in the general literature

discussed above. This is, in fact, the case. Robertson's 1999 study of the viability of U.S. small-city downtowns reviews the strength of general and thematic contributions to metropolitan planning studies and the paucity of smaller-city, small town contributions. In geography, Paradis' (2000) paper places small city/town redevelopment in the most highly articulated theoretical framework. He studies the changes in Galena, Illinois as the result of changes in the prevailing power relations. Otherwise "the remainder of the literature on small-city downtowns tends to be nonanalytical and descriptive and presents development efforts in one downtown" (Robertson 1999: 27).

It is not the intention of this paper to fill a void in the literature by comparing the revitalization efforts of marginalized smaller city downtowns with those of metropolises. The question of whether size matters has already been answered in the affirmative by Robertson (1999) and Paradis (2000). Nor is there any focus on the usual topic of the success of endeavors. Here, there is a geographic theme of what not only may be true of revitalization in smaller places in general, but what may be distinctive in the case of each smaller place, a focus on common aspects and important individual settlement variation. A fresh look is taken at "shifting research focus away from dominant accounts of global homogeneity (to) the complexity and differentiation of retail spaces...on the ground" (Crewe and Lowe 1995: 1877).

One global process concerning downtown revitalization is the operation of a class of planning professionals in advanced economies to rationalize late capitalist processes by using common land-use techniques (Harvey 1985: 174-175; Dear 1996: 377-379). Neo-Marxist writers, for example, "regarded urban revitalization policies as manifestations of the inevitable contradictions underlying twentieth century capitalism" (Teaford 1990, cited in Paradis 2000). However, owing to context, history, the degree of

marginalization and place-specific agents, smaller city and town redevelopment will both show global, common, land-use features and vary from one place to the next. It is this combination "on the ground" in a case study that we explore here.

The Case Study

Local studies are now often practiced—and advocated (Warf 1991)—to enhance national research. This study, therefore, focuses on smaller marginalized settlements in one state, Massachusetts. In order to identify such small cities and towns with revitalization programs outside the built-up limits of Boston, a list of smaller settlements was obtained from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Communities and Development (EOCD). This office oversees the HUD Local Economic Development program (budget: $92 million in 1993 for Massachusetts). Each year, local cities and towns compete in the small cities program for revitalization funds, and may be funded for up to three years. The thirteen cities listed in Table 1 were those of 19 funded for 1990-93, which agreed to participate in this study of revitalization 1990-2000. The gamut of sizes is represented, from 6012 (Nantucket), a town, to 169,759 (Worcester), a small city.

This selection was chosen to cover the size range of smaller cities and towns defined at the outset of the paper—that is, to be "representative" of them—so that statements on global and local revitalization features in the case study would have implications for U.S. marginalized settlements. Three settlements of different sizes (Peabody, Northbridge, and Worcester) were chosen to contribute further to this by a study in depth.

All the respondent settlements' locations outside the built-up continuous area of Boston are depicted on Map 1. Population figures are presented in Table 1 for 1980,

Table 1

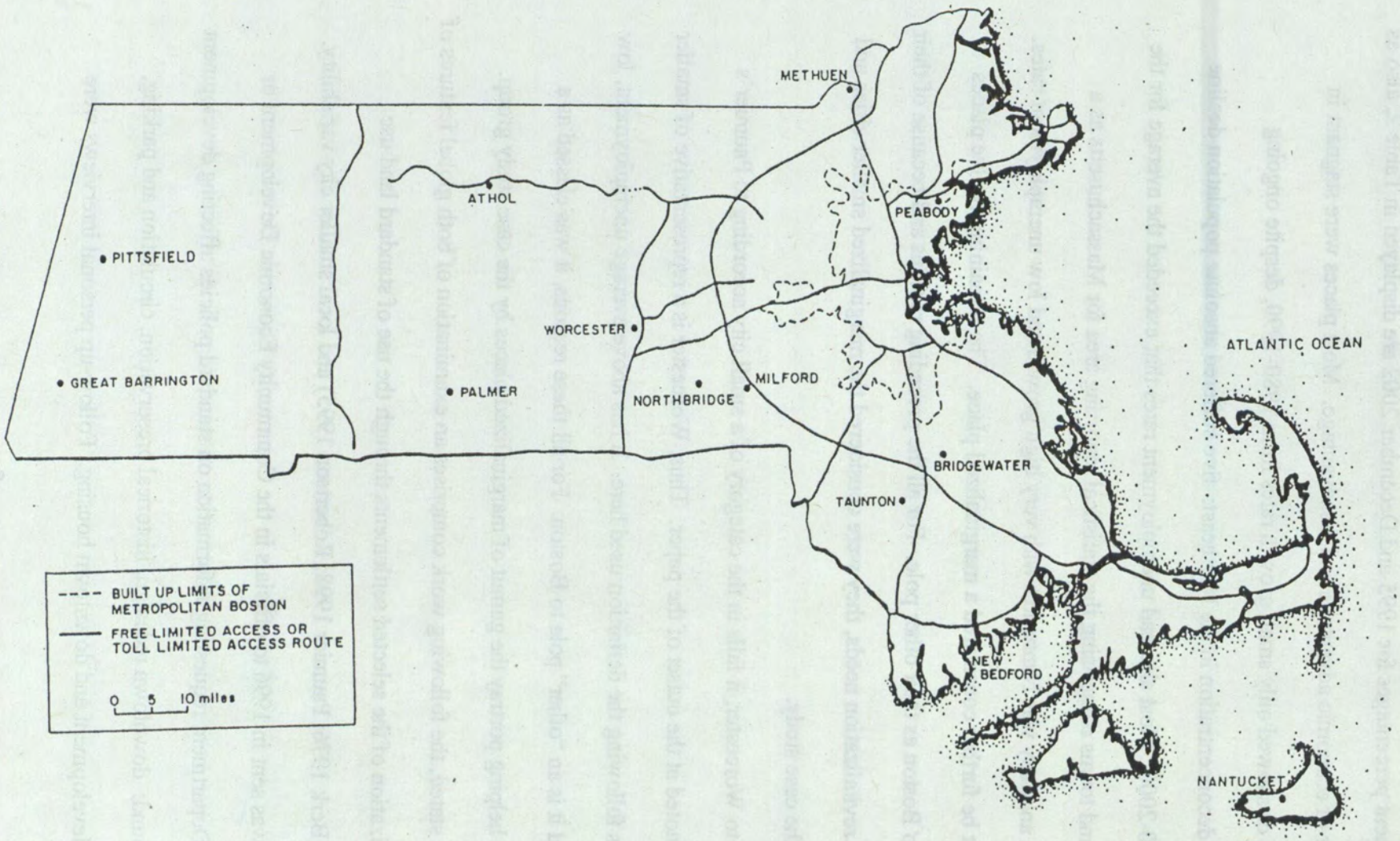
POPULATIONS OF RESPONDENT CITIES, 1980, 1990 AND 2000

City	1980	1990	increase	% increase	2000	increase	% increase
ATHOL	10,634	11,451	817	7.68	11,299	-152	-1.32
BRIDGEWATER*	17,202	21,249	4,047	23.52	25,185	3,936	18.5
GREAT BARRINGTON	7,405	7,725	320	4.30	7,527	-198	-2.56
METHUEN	36,701	39,990	3,289	8.96	43,789	3,799	9.50
MILFORD	23,390	25,355	1,965	8.40	26,799	1,444	5.70
NANTUCKET+	5,087	6,012	925	18.18	9,520	3,508	58.34
NEW BEDFORD	98,478	99,922	1,444	1.46	93,768	-6,154	-6.20
NORTHBRIDGE	12,246	13,371	1,125	9.19	13,182	-189	-1.41
PALMER	11,389	12,054	665	5.84	12,497	443	3.68
PEABODY	45,976	47,039	1,063	2.31	48,129	1,090	2.32
PITTSFIELD	48,622	51,974	3,352	6.89	45,793	-6,181	-11.89
TAUNTON	45,001	48,932	3,931	8.73	55,976	7,044	14.40
WORCESTER	161,799	169,759	7,960	4.92	172,648	2,889	1.70

SOURCE: State House Librarian: Compilation of Census Statistics for Massachusetts Cities and Towns, The State House, Boston, 2002.

*Bridgewater has been growing in these two decades as a bedroom community for Boston, leading to an above normal growth and employment rate compared with the other cities and towns considered here. However, its requirements for revitalization funds and its position as an 'other' pole to Boston contributed to its continued classification as a marginal community.

+Nantucket is an abnormal community supplied with State revitalization funds. Its growth rate is exceptionally high and unemployment rate exceptionally low. Consequently it was deleted from the sample of marginalized communities.



Map 1. Sample Smaller Cities and Towns in Massachusetts

1990, and 2000 as an index of economic growth and advantage or disadvantage. Annual unemployment percentages for 1995 and December 2002 are displayed in Table 2, also as an indicator of economic advantage and disadvantage. Most places were stagnant in population, or showed only small growth rates from 1980-1990, despite ongoing population deconcentration in the Northeast: five suffered absolute population decline during 1990-2000. Most also had unemployment rates that exceeded the average for the 113 cities and towns comprising the statistical reporting area for Massachusetts as a whole. An anomaly was Nantucket with very high growth and low unemployment rates. It could not be further considered a marginalized place. The remaining twelve places also look to Boston as their other pole. For all the preceding reasons and because of their downtown revitalization needs, they were considered the marginalized smaller cities and towns for the case study.

As to Worcester, it falls in the category of a small city according to Paumier's definition noted at the outset of the paper. Thus, Worcester is a representative of smaller settlements following the definition used here. It has above average unemployment, low growth and it is an "other" pole to Boston. For all these reasons, it was classed as a settlement helping portray the gamut of marginalized places by the case study group.

As stated, the following work comprises an examination of both global features of the revitalization of the selected settlements through the use of standard land use practices (Berk 1976; Paumier 1998; Robertson 1995) and local smaller city variability. A survey was sent in 1996 to officials in the Community Economic Development or Planning Department requesting information on standard policies affecting development on the ground: downtown redesign, historical preservation, circulation and parking, business development and downtown housing. Follow-up personal interviews were

Table 2

1995 and 2002 UNEMPLOYMENT OF RESPONDENT CITIES

City	1995 Unemployment %	Dec. 2002 Unemployment %
Athol	7.8	8.2
Bridgewater	5.0	3.7
Great Barrington	4.9	4.3
Methuen	7.1	7.5
Milford	6.1	5.8
Nantucket	2.6	2.1
New Bedford	12.0	8.8
Northbridge	5.1	5.8
Palmer	6.2	4.4
Peabody	4.8	4.0
Pittsfield	7.0	4.7
Taunton	6.6	5.1
Worcester	5.2	5.8
PSMA (Mass.)	5.0	4.4

SOURCE: Statehouse Librarian: Compilation of Census Statistics for Massachusetts Cities and Towns, The Statehouse, Boston, 2003.

conducted in 1997 confirming 1990-2000 developmental work. Field trips were also undertaken in 2000 to the in-depth case study settlements of Worcester, Peabody, and Northbridge to confirm the work reported. The 12 selected cities discussed here of the 19 contacted places also returned photographs of their downtown areas, to display visual land use facets not available through the questionnaire. These were employed as an inventive qualitative data resource. Other data relating to the smaller settlements are very difficult to access.

Common Strategies and Local Interpretations: The Questionnaire

This section reports on the questionnaire returns. Each policy—downtown redesign, historical preservation, circulation and parking, business development and downtown housing—is carried out by at least 7 of the 12 marginalized places. As mentioned earlier, this shows the globalizing influence of planning practice in revitalization as a rationalization of capitalist economic processes. However, there is considerable local variability in how these global policies are interpreted. Even in marginalized places, local agency has influence.

The case study settlements endorsing each global land use policy and their local variations are now described. Following that, Peabody, Worcester, and Northbridge are examined to add more detailed information about individual variations.

Downtown Redesign. The 12 smaller cities and towns all focused on the out-of-date older downtown areas or those of more recent commercial development. Their primary concern is for successfully updated and unified facades. However, Bridgewater unifies "in appearance and function the historical central common area with the area north along Broad Street, where recent commercial development has occurred"—a program assisting commercial facade improvements. In Athol, "the idea was to beautify

the main street downtown area to make it a pleasant place to shop." Peabody "assisted in the removal and replacement of 46 non-conforming signs on Main Street. New more attractive signing was installed." In Northbridge, an old mill town, "the town picked up the full cost of facade and design work. We had an excellent enthused architect contagious to the merchants." Worcester recently embarked on a $15 million streetscape improvement project to replace all Main Street sidewalks, streetlights, benches, trees and bus kiosks. The tenor of the respondents was that this was all absolutely necessary regrading for downtown to attract and retain shoppers and investors in lean times. Eleven of the twelve self-reported successes with these efforts.

Historical Preservation. Seven of the 12 smaller cities and towns were engaged in historical preservation to further improve their appearance for shoppers and investors alike. But some, such as New Bedford, have historical district status; others, like Methuen, have established a historic district commission, with jurisdiction over the downtown commercial area. Bridgewater, Palmer and Worcester are other examples of the latter. One other town engaged in an historical building renovation—Palmer with the Pequoit Hotel. All respondents in the group regard historical preservation as one key to success in downtown revitalization.

Circulation and Parking. All but two of the smaller settlements are actively involved in improving downtown circulation and parking as another method of successful revitalization. Most attention is paid to parking (Palmer, Athol, Great Barrington, Milford, and Pittsfield). Peabody, however, as well as constructing off-street parking facilities, reconstructed 22 downtown streets, including sidewalks, curbs and tree plantings, and installed new water service in nine downtown streets. Worcester, as part of the overall Gateway Enhancement Program, is spending $5 million on new entrances to

the downtown and has completed a 200-space parking addition. Thus, a functional as well as attractive appearing downtown is the goal for local economic development, with varying policies.

Business Redevelopment. For all the attention to facades and downtown circulation and parking, the results in business redevelopment are highly variable. Generally, cities that acquired specific funds through EOCD or from their own budgets fared the best, as might be expected. For example, Pittsfield attempted to increase awareness of opportunities through telemarketing efforts in Albany and New York City and made appropriate downtown space available through maintenance of property inventory. Some state EOCD money was used but "there was no success in this program." On the other hand, Milford had small cities grant monies, that enabled the hiring of a manager for business redevelopment. Part of the responsibility of the downtown manager is business recruitment, expansion and retention. From June 1992 to June 1993, when this program started, 26 new businesses moved into downtown, with a net gain of 130 new employments. This resulted in fewer vacancies and more foot-traffic coming from more employees downtown as a result of the new business. Although Northbridge spent funds improving facades, no business redevelopment resulted. New Bedford obtained community development funds to finance a director position, to assist existing businesses and to recruit quality retail and other tenants: "At best we have not allowed downtown to go into further decline."

Downtown Housing. Again, specific private sector or state/federal/local funds are necessary for housing projects and varying results occurred. New Bedford and Palmer were allocated none and consequently no housing work was undertaken. In Northbridge, a small amount of community development action grant monies were spent on housing

rehabilitation in a village district neighborhood. In Milford, housing work is still more innovative. Approximately $168,000 has been spent on housing rehabilitation on properties within close proximity to the downtown area within the last three years. The town planning office is currently investigating the possibility of utilizing vacant second floor office space for housing but it is anticipated that any changes to the existing zoning will meet with much opposition. Methuen's housing project was still more ambitious. The town rehabilitated 34-45 units per year and demolished 65 buildings on Arlington Street. Their strategy was to successfully stabilize stock in their Arlington District and to demolish fire-damaged, structurally unsound buildings.

In the heart of Taunton, yet another strategy emerged. Housing was converted in second and third floor space in historic buildings not used for many years. This strategy is contrary to the affordable housing most smaller cities and towns have adopted. For example, Bridgewater has offered housing rehabilitation assistance to low and moderate-income households. The target area is the downtown neighborhoods, and state funds were offered in the form of deferred payment loans for the correction of major code violations. The program improved the living conditions of many elderly persons living on fixed incomes as well as many working class families. It also secured the affordability of the units for at least five years. The program used some funds from the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency and was awarded a home grant. All in all, a variety of housing plans have been initiated, with emphasis on rehabilitation and affordable housing to help revitalize smaller city downtowns.

The smaller marginalized cities thus tend to be conforming in terms of the overall strategies used but there is considerable variability in their details and many outcomes. The extent to which communities are able to reconstitute their space is seen in the

contrasting revitalized downtowns of three places—Peabody, Worcester and Northbridge. While scale of settlement is important, individual community effects on revitalization again become apparent.

One story is found in the city of Peabody, which in the early 1980s set out to reverse the decline of downtown and to stimulate economic development. The Peabody Downtown Partnership, comprised of a full-time manager and a twelve-member board of directors, was the instrument for change. The downtown manager works closely with the business and property owners and strives to build a lasting positive image of the downtown. The partnership copies mall management techniques such as organizing promotional events and joint advertising among store owners, as well as recruiting new businesses to downtown Peabody. Realizing that a "quick fix" will not change the downtown, a downtown redevelopment strategy was instituted that included a wide range of initiatives. Financed out of the city's budget, one major step was a transportation and streetscape reconstruction project that included moving the city's major landmark, the Civil War Monument in Peabody Square. Completed in the Fall of 1990, the downtown area now boasts new streets, sidewalks, historic lighting and hanging flower baskets as new amenities which give the downtown a decidedly modern appearance. Although ten years from inception to completion, the city believed that a capital improvements project would be the starting place for a broader revitalization of downtown. This assessment turned out to be correct.

Other initiatives included signage and parking. The city passed a more stringent downtown signage ordinance, creating specific standards of sign location, style, design, message and illumination. To achieve this, and to be rid of the large quantity of oversized neon signs, the city offered to pay 50% of new signage. Three downtown

parking facilities and an extra 150 spaces in municipal lots were completed as well. Having treated traffic, parking and streetscape problems, the city initiated a more specific building analysis of downtown. A review of properties in the downtown was begun which analyzed each for their historic value, existing tenancy and owner's interest in rehabilitation. At the same time, the analysis of Peabody's market potential was completed, which helped inform decisions about revitalization opportunities for downtown properties. These were completed by 2000.

This very aggressive approach to revitalization has "paid off"... "[It] has transformed Peabody's central business district into a very attractive vibrant area which bustles with activity." (Quoted from returned questionnaire.)

Another burgeoning "success" story is Worcester. Approximately $780 million of investment is planned or underway in the CBD, including the $250 million Medical City project, $110 million for improvements to the Central Massachusetts Medical Center, $110 million for the state courthouse renovation, a $38 million convention center and a $43 million intermodal transportation center. In addition, the Worcester Common Fashion Outlet Mall opened in September 1994 and an exterior beautification project is now underway as well. The city continues to make heavy investment in its infrastructure system, especially in the Gateway Program ($17 million) and the downtown streetscape project ($10 million) of specialty sidewalks, lighting, benches and plantings. It is anticipated that all these public improvements will attract private investment. As well, in the area of historical preservation, $10,000 ($5,000 local match) was recently secured to develop design guidelines for a facade improvement project in the city's CBD. This program was developed through a community development block grant, which the city received for downtown circulation and parking. Also, there was an increase in downtown

housing stock to encourage a 24-hour activity center, the Franklin Square 192-unit housing tower. This involved a $4.6 million urban development action grant for the tower and a $1.5 million community development action grant for streetscape improvements adjacent to the site. Finally, to take advantage of all this, the city and business community launched a $300,000 marketing effort to attract business redevelopment. This was directed, with some success, at growth industries—biotechnology, insurance and legal ancillary uses.

Where city funds are lacking to provide an ambitious start, and where organization is partial or weak, much less successful downtown redevelopment is to be found. One such example is a smaller old mill town, Northbridge (13,371). While there is still some development, it is spotty. No special historical preservation was accomplished, although it was mentioned in the design process. No work was done on downtown circulation and parking or on business redevelopment. Some community development action grant monies were spent on housing rehabilitation in the village district neighborhood. The private organizations of the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce and Uptown Association have played an important role in giving downtown merchants a new attitude toward their responsibility, but clearly, downtown revitalization in Northbridge is rather limited.

Photographic Evidence

Photographs of the settlements were used as a qualitative data source to reveal other facets of the re-presentation of space. Some familiar features again show the global homogenization of space, others local identity. Sufficient of the photographs are used to visualize general trends; this is not the usual discussion with closely tied photographs as illustrations. One global feature is the postmodern pastiche of the renovated Victorian

and modern buildings comprising downtowns. Malling and themeing techniques are also evident. Most make an upscale auto-based appeal, suggesting how community may be used as "an essentializing concept eliding class, gender and race differences and conflict" (Goss 1993b: 183). (See the five towns in Figure 1).

Distinctive features are the intimacy of scale of the various specific places (Worcester). Smaller centers can also specialize in niche markets, for example, antiques in Taunton and New Bedford. Others retain New England regional architecture (Northbridge). Still others, by virtue of scale, have more ornate renovations (Methuen). (See these towns in Figure 2). Each of the main streets or downtowns shown retains its own distinctive character and busyness, "imagineering" (making them project images) or "Disneyfication" (Francavigilia 1996: 66-130) nonetheless.

Thus, the smaller city downtowns are Lefebre's space as an object commodified, but possessing a number of common and a number of distinct identities (cf. Keith and Rogers on inner city regeneration, 1991: 20-21). This corresponds to the global homogenized and locally variant space above. One of the common identities is as part of a network of gendered activities that the masculinist gaze so far does not reveal. Within-store photographs show the revitalized downtowns as a locus for women's shopping practices (following, for example, Jackson and Holbrook 1995) and the formation of women's identities in shopping (following, for example, Dowling 1993) (Figure 3). All in all, though, the downtowns exhibit a simpler physical image than that usually referred to, viz. "with conceptions in our minds about complex physical reality." But the images are still "formulated from that same nexus of imagination, personal experiences, creative ability, and creative skill that formulated our works of art" (Domosh 1992: 475). In this

instance, the individual works of art belong to a particular school--there are finer-grained local details and homogenized space.

Both the photographs and the survey results therefore show the extent to which global and local processes are at work in downtown revitalization in places that tend to be marginalized. Global practices "hook" even such places into the national and international culture and economy. The local preserves small center distinctiveness.

Conclusions

This paper has:

1. Demonstrated how many smaller settlements may be marginalized in the late capitalist world;
2. Discussed how downtown revitalization may be one consequent urban redevelopment effort within such places, with global and locally variant development practices; and
3. Carried out a case study of twelve Massachusetts settlements—three in depth—to look at global and locally differing practices, and to contribute to geographic knowledge of marginalized places.

Many more questions are raised than there are answered here. These comprise the subject for future research. For example, what are the details of the (re-) presentation of space in marginalized places? Can details of land-use and architectural histories be compiled in revitalization studies of them?

It may be noted that revitalization itself in this context may be a response to global mall and chain store competition (for example the North Shore Mall adjacent to Peabody in the case study area) (See also, Hallsworth 1999). The work for this paper accessed no store or community income or employment data. However, there are

Fig. 1 Uniform Global Features in Smaller Cities and Towns:
Peabody (top) and Taunton (bottom)

Fig. 1 (cont.) Milford (top) and Pittsfield (bottom)

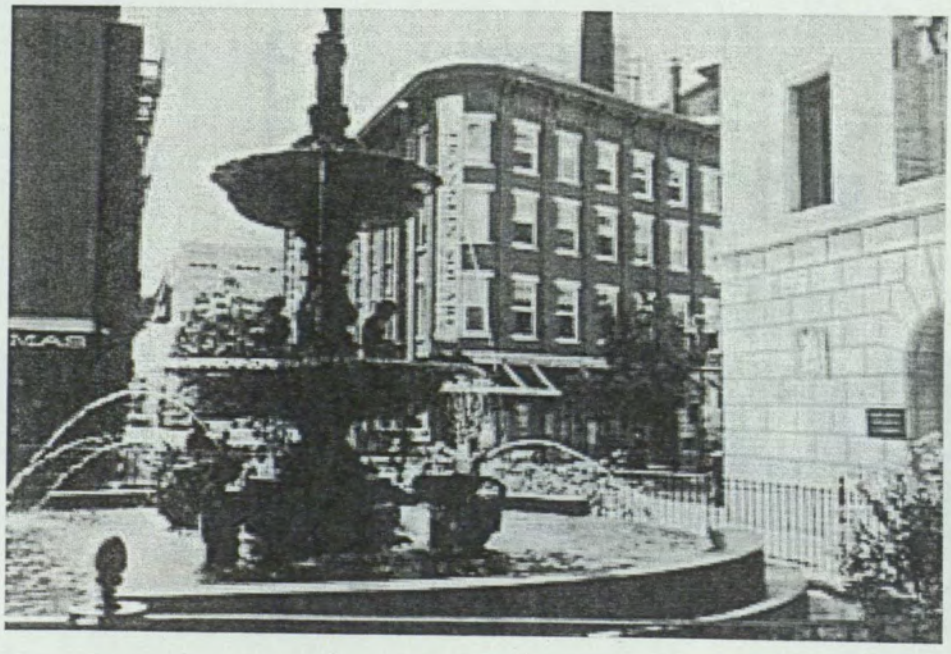
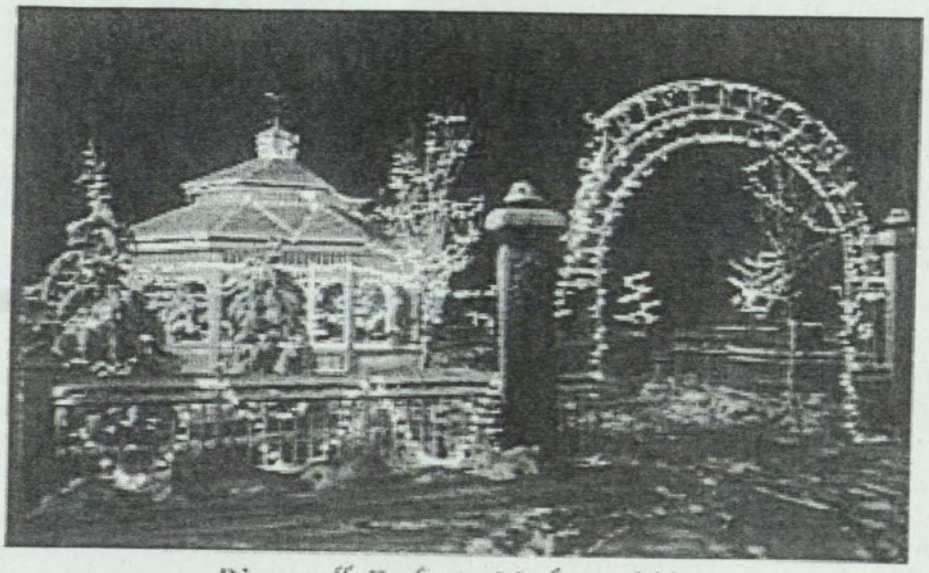


Fig. 1 (cont.) Athol (top)

Fig. 2 Locally Variable Features of Smaller Cities: Worcester (bottom)

Fig. 2 (cont.) New Bedford (top) and Northbridge (bottom)



Riverwalk Park – Methuen, MA

Fig. 2 (cont.) Methuen (top)

Fig. 3 Interior of a Renovated Premise in Northbridge (bottom)

findings that local "economic development efforts such as these, even where successful competitively, do nothing to alleviate the poverty or income inequality of marginalized places" (Rudzitis 1991: 82; Cox, 1995: 222). So the success of such efforts, for example in the case studies and in the well-known Main Street Program in general (Skelcher 1992; Murtagh 1993; Smith 1995), must be treated with caution. Future studies need to cover both the impact of revitalized uses on employment and on smaller community income distribution. If it is possible to obtain the data, the benefits for different groups from revitalization programs might be assessed—real estate groups (owners/renters), demographic groups (for example, working class and minority), business groups, government groups. Collaborative planning (Throgmorton 2000) provides one of the newest ways to obtain such information, though it has yet to be adapted to the smaller-settlement environment.

Revitalization and its global and local parameters have been taken as one focus for research on marginalized places. As has been noted, many towns, villages and smaller cities may fall in this category, and many more general questions of future research relate to the status of marginalized places than to revitalization alone. The most important question concerns comparative rural growth processes as related to metro areas. Comparative levels of disadvantage are important as geographers are starting to portray (Martin et al (2000) on deprivation; Cloke, Milbourne and Widdowfield (2000) on homelessness). Particular care needs to be taken with towns or smaller cities that have undergone a recent 'boom' perhaps owing to tourism (Paradis 2000) or other services. It is a major research question what the economic standing of the universe of smaller settlements besides these may be.

Much more work needs to be undertaken on the effects of revitalization in smaller settlements, on place-based strategies and on the role of sense of place (Robertson 1999) and community (Paradis 2000) in developmental processes. In addition, much more attention needs to be paid to the positioning and fortunes of many disadvantaged smaller cities, towns and villages within the late capitalist world. Both theory and practice require elaboration in the near future.

Notes

[1]I must acknowledge the Executive Office of Communities and Development for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for its support of this work.

[2]The U.S. Department of the Census definition of a metropolitan statistical area is one of 250,000 or more population. Thus, the upper range of Paumier's "cities" covers the lowest range of census metropolitan areas. For the purpose of this paper, Paumier's figures are used to indicate the level of settlement referred to as "smaller cities."

[3] This passage relates to central place studies in geography. In this literature, the earlier studies of small settlements by such as Brush (1953) and Bracey (1960) have given way to concentration on the metropolis. Outside geography, there is still a rich vein in rural sociology of studies of "community" and individual towns involving such diverse notions as social capital (Flora 1998) and in shopping (Pinkerton, Heisinger and O'Brien 1995). However, the issues are generally of sociological concern; there are only rare contributions by geographers, and there is little appeal to the geographic literature. Also, in a survey of Rural Sociology, Journal of the American Planning Association, Regional Studies and International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 1991-2001, no further wellspring of small town/rural settlement literature was uncovered.

[4]There are many studies of the margins or peripheries of territories summarized in Bourne (2000). Frontier or marginal settlements in this sense are examined in, for example, "Living on the Edge: Conditions of Marginality in the Canadian Urban System" (Bourne 2000). In this, a class of marginal settlements, independent of location, in the present economy, is also identified, though they are not further examined. Those are the settlements treated here.

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