

Cities Large and Small Together: The Subregional Model of Economic Change in the Nineteenth Century

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Abstract: *This article presents a new paradigm of regional economic change, named the subregional model, which includes a hub, local economic centers, small villages and farms, and links of various qualities. The subregional model also contains an environmental character explaining economic change. Economic change in nineteenth-century United States materialized through settlement, transportation and commercial linkages, urban and rural development, and land use emphasizing connections whose number and quality greatly determined the pace and magnitude of economic change. Integration and strength of connections provided generative economic development with cities on a subregional level, extracting natural resources from hinterlands to stimulate urban expansion through new businesses and growing manufacturing establishments. Northwest Ohio provides an example of the growing network of cities, towns, and farms whose connections exhibited symbiotic growth. Additional case studies of Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Birmingham, Alabama; and Denver, Colorado, further elucidate important components of development and refine the interpretive power of the subregional model. These key factors of economic change explained through the model include population size, urban-rural interactions and symbiosis, geography and natural resources, transportation infrastructure, and political connections. Because most residents of the United States lived within systems of medium-sized economic centers surrounded by hinterlands, the study and interpretive analyses of places such as Toledo are fundamental to the understanding of the history of the United States.*