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Viewpoint

Typologies of national urban policy: A theoretical analysis

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ABSTRACT

Much of the literature that covers the foundation of policy design does not reflect a discussion of the impact of *where* programs or initiatives are implemented. By contrast, the contribution of institutional analysis, used to assess how national urban policy is designed, might yield possible answers to this "where" question. The components of a national urban policy can be characterized by three different policy continua: people versus place, economic versus social, and publicly-led versus privately-led. Drawing from the key criteria that characterize the strategies behind urban policy development – placed within the American context – the eight identified typologies can then illustrate the range of options available to decision makers in the policy process. The approach identified here complements traditional evaluation methods as the typologies yield results about which programs are worth pursuing and which programs should no longer are viable choices for decision makers to support in their execution.

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1. Introduction

Harold Lasswell famously defined politics as "who gets what, when and how" (1936). Though his work can be characterized as the forerunner of using political behavior analysis to assess the distribution and administration of power, his aphoristic interpretation might also be applied in articulating the conceptual framework behind the execution and implementation of public policies. But Lasswell pays virtually no attention to the spatial dimension of politics and this element remains unanswered in his analysis. Yet Lasswell is not alone as much of the literature that covers the foundation of policy design does not reflect a discussion of the impact of *where* programs or initiatives are implemented. By contrast, the contribution of institutional analysis, when used to assess how national urban policy is designed, might yield possible answers to this "where" question.

Urban policy analysis ties two concepts together: the concept of state and society and the concept of space, place and geography. At risk of being drastically reductionist, the interface between these two worlds results in what might be simplified to six paradigms of inquiry: pluralism (Dahl, 1961), elite theory (Domhoff, 1978; Peterson, 1981), growth machines (Logan & Molotch, 1987; Molotch, 1976), regime theory (Stone, 1989), neo-Marxist (Castells, 1983; Harvey, 1976; Tabb & Sawyers, 1978), and urban managerialism (Pahl, 1975; Saunders, 1986).[1] Each of these theories models the governance and distribution of power and how the rules of the game are to be played. But, at a far more abstract level, each of these six approaches reflect more on the administration of policy rather than the normative criteria by which these urban policies are initially designed. Stated differently, these paradigms are likely not to provide a more robust urban policy process that asks a question like, "if groups balance each other's power out under a pluralistic model of policy implementation, what rules of the game do the groups agree upon, once they decide to work together?" Alternatively, another variant of the critique might be phrased as "if the power elites come together to create a set of policy systems that codifies a center of gravity among a select few stakeholders, what are the parameters that serve as the basis for the normative judgment that these elites make from a limited set of options available in their policy making?"

Illustration of the criteria used to set by policy, however the power structure is aligned to and with whom, is not an abstract thinking exercise. Rather, by articulating the criteria upfront, I would suggest this dialogue has relevance in a deliberative policy process, effectively enabling decision makers the means by which they communicate their vision of how policy might be shaped. In turn, this vision enables the decision maker to advocate for their position in the public square and secure public support for a set of policies where the common interest might ultimately reside.

[1] An exhaustive literature review of each of the schools is far too overwhelming and inconsequential to the aims of this brief paper. The references cited represent some, but certainly not all, seminal works that delineate the different approaches. One might also consider (Judge, Stoker, & Wolman 1995) for a better, more comprehensive identification of varying theories.

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Urban policy represents many different strands of policy, so identification of urban policy's core criteria might shift the current political momentum away from a disengaged or limited role at national government in local affairs to a more activist position; a categorization by which urban centers and metropolitan governance might merit a broader constituency of interest. In this vein, then, we need to step back and ask what the components of a model national urban policy are, *before* there is a construction of how an urban policy is to be created among stakeholders and decision makers. With these value judgments in place, then, policy makers will be able to better assess allocate resources more in alignment with these pre-conceived (now more explicit) set of assumptions.

2. The approach

With this gap in the decision making process in mind, this brief paper intends to stake out the policy typologies in the design of urban-based programs at a national level. Sabatier (2007) suggests that the simplification behind creating typologies serves two "critical and mediating functions." As he notes in his framing document about the need for better theories:

> First, they tell the observer what to look for, that is, what factors are likely to be critically important versus those that can be safely ignored. Second, they define the categories in which phenomena are to be grouped. (Sabatier, 2007, 4).

This article seeks to specify the key criteria that characterize the strategies behind national urban policy development – drawn from American context[2] – and then to depict the typologies visually to illustrate the range of options available to decision makers in the urban policy process.

Before turning to the lens behind urban analysis, it is important to articulate two critical assumptions about the identification methods of the policy typologies proposed here: First, the policy typologies in this article are not drawn from a psychometric test or empirical assessment. Rather, the typologies are drawn from the intended outcomes and historical results from implementing an urban policy component. (For example, if slum clearance is an urban policy option, the analyst ideally should learn from the past lessons of urban renewal that this program had a physical outcome that led to the demolition of tenements as well as a negative historical, isolating effect on the persons living in the bulldozed communities). Second, urban policy making dynamics are not the result of a distinctive binary set of absolute choices. That is to say, while decision makers may frame things in black and white terms, the macroeconomist, for example, is not choosing between creating jobs and reducing inflation representing two different sides of fiscal and/or monetary intervention. Another example might be that the defense analyst is not suggesting a stark choice between fighting terrorism and protecting homeland borders as two separate and distinct strategies. In essence, then, policy options will reflect the priority or preference of decision makers, but the implementation of policy is actually a hybrid of both choices as there can be unintended consequences and the management of programs is more nuanced. Accordingly, policy criteria in design are not polar extremes but instead fall along a finite, but graduated continuum.[3] While difficult to precisely pinpoint the nuance and unintended consequences in measuring the typology quantifiably, the policy continuum is best represented here as a straight line rather than the bounded curve of the economist's production-possibility frontier.

3. The policy continua

The components of a national urban policy can be characterized by three different policy continua: people versus place, economic versus social, and publicly-led versus privately-led.

Targeting places or people is likely the oldest source of contention in the design of urban policy (Dreier, Mollenkopf, & Swanstrom, 2001 and 2014; Edel, 1980; Lawrence, Stoker, & Wolman, 2010). As simplistic as this reference might suggest, people-oriented policies are represented by those initiatives that (1) seek to develop human capital, whether undertaking investments in training or education, (2) increase household resources, such as an expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit, or (3) support entrepreneurial activities and self-employment. In contrast, place-based strategies include those programs which have a fixed or location-centric focus that, (1) improve the level and quality of public infrastructure so business investment can occur, for example, brownfields remediation or create new transportation options, (2) enlarge the supply and availability of affordable housing or (3) build new community facilities. But as suggested earlier, the "people versus place" criterion in urban policy design is a false dichotomy as the outcomes of programs affect both people and places in the policy's programmatic implementation.

Two separate examples are presented here to illustrate how the spatial and communal strands of urban policy are integrated concurrently along this first policy continuum axis. First, the federal Empowerment Zone (EZ) new hire tax credit could have been characterized as a people-based approach, as it rewarded the recruitment and employment of long-term job seekers who reside in distressed communities. Yet the tax credit, while aiming for EZ residents, stipulated that the residents had to not only live, but work for a business located within the same lower-income geography and, thus, the portability of the incentive did not carry over into a regional economic jurisdiction. This *place-based* factor effectively limited the potential of addressing joblessness in the inner city (Ferguson & Dickens, 1999; Hanson, 2009; Keating & Krumholz, 1999). Second, the Gautreaux experiment in Chicago enabled *persons* to live in housing options beyond public housing projects or tenements – a positive challenge to the place-based orientation of where people reside – but the exodus of residents from low-income neighborhoods also resulted in the destruction of the community fabric where social networks of church, local Mom and Pop stores, and other stakeholders lost congregants, customers and interpersonal relationships (Rubinowitz & Rosenbaum, 2000).

The next strand in the urban policy continua is a putative public versus private sector divide. Again, the criteria can be generally defined as to whether the government sector initiates a proposed set of program using public resources to catalyze and leverage private investment OR is it the private sector who makes the first move to intervene in the inner city because the proposed action can be a profit-maximizing proposition (Savas, 1983). Because the United States is a mixed economy, there is no "pure" free market or government-only action in this type of investment. Yet as this public–private criteria overlaps with the continuum of a place-based/people-based approach for urban policy, this confluence is represented by a set of intersecting axes. To concretize this overlap of policy continua, the point of urban policy typologies is to provide clarity in the goal setting process to address a normative question, such as: if the federal government supports the funding of community development financial institutions (CDFIs) in a

[2] The references cited here reflect debates in the context of national urban policy development in the United States. However, the controversies identified here might be generalized in comparative analysis with sufficient research support.

[3] To borrow an analogy from social psychology, the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) does not reflect absolute assessments about an individual's personality type. Thus, a person who is an INFP is not all (introversion, intuition, feeling, perception) on their assessment test, but these characteristics reflect a set of *dominant* personality preferences, even as other *auxiliary* personality preferences could be reflected in other answers on this person's individual psychometric test.

low-income neighborhood because it leverages another source of capital to increase a private investor's liquidity, does this mean that no other private equity exists to achieve an optimal asset ratio or that no private lending would have occurred in the absence of federal support in the local CDFI to support an entrepreneur who lives in this poor neighborhood ?

Clearly, but not precisely measurable, there is some extent of public resources that is inefficiently being expended, when we predicate that the private investment would have occurred even in the absence of government support. Alternatively, a private sector strategy that capitalizes on the competitive advantage of inner city's market share, as Porter (1995) initially suggested over 20 years ago, might also use government resources as a catalyst to guarantee Small Business Administration (SBA) loans for those retail entrepreneurs. This might be an important consideration for those businesses, like the sellers of 'healthy' food or ethnic neighborhood restaurants, where private lenders might be risk averse. Thus, neither public nor private investments in the urban core are absolute values.

The last criterion in the design of national urban policy is whether the programs are economic-driven or if they are social-driven. By definition here, "economic-driven" means that the program/policy initiative is one that generates or reduces income, while "social-driven" means the program/policy initiative reflects the creation or destruction of community institutions. So, for example to illustrate the hybrid nature of this parameter, a national urban policy that calls for the expansion of child care for working parents is one that creates a new community institution, wherever the day care center is housed, but it also generates income for the parent(s) as a barrier to entry in the labor market is potentially removed and the adult might take on a morning-shift job. As tautological as it may sound, this debate may be moot as all activities have an economic component, just as all activities result in social consequences as urban policy reflects interdependence of a broad range of ecosystems, so the continua is the best descriptive fit.

This last parameter of social versus economic and its applicability to all urban policy making decisions, is best then represented as a straight line that transcends the first and fourth quadrants with a midpoint that intersects with the other two perpendicular axes – people versus place and publicly-led versus privately-led policy continua.

4. The typologies of national urban policy

With these three components concurrently in play, the analysis of the policy continua suggests urban policies, then, fall into eight different typologies:

1. Public-led, place-based, social.
2. Public-led, people-based, social.
3. Public-led, place-based, economic.
4. Public-led, people-based, economic.
5. Private-led, place-based, social.
6. Private-led, people-based, social.
7. Private-led, place-based, economic.
8. Private-led, people-based, economic.

Accordingly, with this appreciation of the policy continua now understood, we can place each of the three criteria out in geometric form, depicted in Fig. 1 below.

The geometric depiction under Fig. 1 illustrates an important finding about a neo-classical interpretation of the national government's role in urban political economy: Private-led, person-based programs are typically income-generating, whereas government

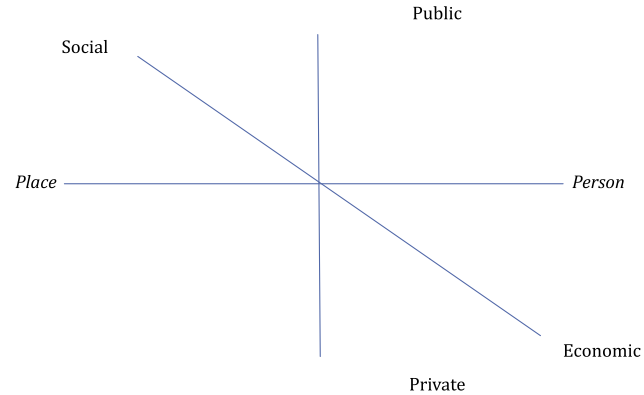

Fig. 1. The map of national urban policy continua – neo-classical model (NC).

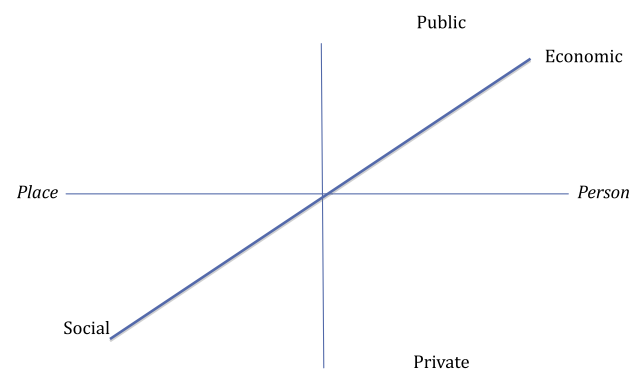

Fig. 2. The map of national urban policy continua – neo-progressive model (NP).

is the builder of institutions in low-income places (Hill, 1983; Peterson, 1981). This more traditional interpretation explains why few programs can be represented and why only two quadrants are utilized in this conceptual framework. A neo-progressive approach suggests that there is a role for government as a catalyst for the private sector to build social institutions (for example, the use of loan guarantees or incentives to sponsor the creation of affordable housing) and for government to support indirectly the growth of a household's income (for example, the use of micro-lending for low-income persons to become entrepreneurs) (Imbroscio, 2013; Kantor, 1991). This alternative perspective, therefore, calls for the third continua to be in a diagonal position in the opposite direction of the neo-classical model and found against the other two axes and is illustrated in Fig. 2.

While the laundry list of urban problems spans a vast literature, it is worth noting that urban policy development at the national level has ranged from minimalist to engaged partnership with the municipalities. Fiscally conservative ideology at a national government often brings a laissez-faire ideology to urban problems (Ahlbrandt, 1984), suggesting an alignment with the Tiebout model (1956) that residents and businesses can vote with their feet and relocate away from the urban core. Regeneration of commercial and residential activity might then best be catalyzed by tax incentives to induce locational behavioral change. In contrast, more progressive government ideological approaches to national urban policy might point to an active set of initiatives. Under the active government model, however, the question has long been whether the goals and objectives of revitalization are driven and supported by the communities themselves (a "bottoms-up" or grassroots approach) or does the national government offer a set of broader remedies that are applicable not only to cities, but point

Table 1
Policy areas, program options and typology for a comprehensive national urban policy.

Policy areas	Program options	Typology (by program option)
Community development	– Build community recreation centers	– Place/Public/Social
	– Initiate/expand community gardening programs	– Place/Public/Social
Crime	– Support community policing initiatives	– Person/Public/Economic
	– Provide alternatives to incarceration for minor offenses	– Person/Public/Economic
	– Address reintegration for ex-offenders	– People/Public/Economic
Economic development/finance	– Increase access to capital for homeownership and small business development	– Place/Private/Economic
	– Tax incentives to employers for recruitment and hiring of long-term unemployed	– People/Private/Economic
	– Provide venture capital	– People/Private/Economic
	– Reuse vacant commercial space for small business incubators	– Place/Private/Social
	– Support for entrepreneurs with guidance on business plan development	– People/Private/Economic
Education	– Increase funding for early childhood education	– People/Public/Economic
	– Expand the number of teachers	– Place/Public/Social
	– Equip schools with computers and learning technologies	– Place/Public/Social
	– Support after-school programs to mentor "at risk" youth	– People/Public/Economic
Environment	– Ameliorate brownfields and toxic waste on vacant lots	– Place/Private/Social
	– Encourage recycling programs	– Place/Private/Social
Health	– Increase efforts for preventive medicine to address chronic conditions (e.g., hypertension, obesity, diabetes, asthma)	– People/Public/Economic
	– Broaden the number of health care professionals	– People/Public/Economic
Housing	– Build/renovate housing stock	– Place/Private/Social
	– Initiate/increase number of vouchers to make housing more affordable	– Place/Private/Social
	– Support housing counseling	– Place/Private/Social
Supportive services	– Identify and expand access to child care	– People/Public/Economic
	– Develop mentoring and cooperative education programs for at risk youth	– People/Public/Economic
Transportation	– Support mass transit options to include bus, subway and/or light rail	– Person/Public/Economic
Workforce development	– Provide job training for unskilled and/or unemployed workers	– People/Public/Economic
	– Deliver employment services to address job readiness among disadvantaged persons	– People/Public/Economic
	– Address basic skills remediation	– People/Public/Economic

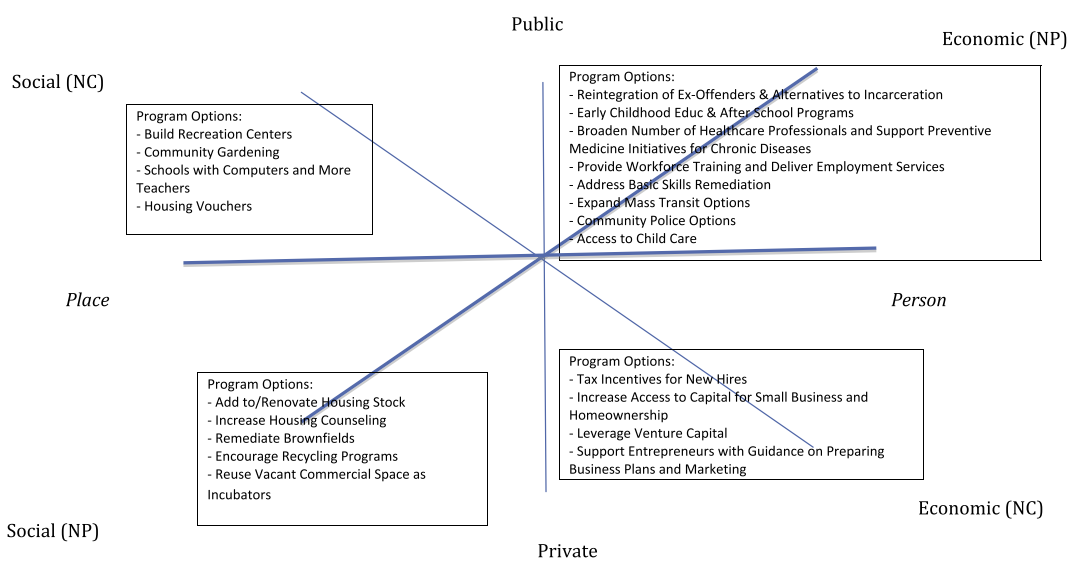

Fig. 3. The map of national urban policy continua – neo-classical (NC) & neo-progressive (NP) models integrated into program design.

to a set of domestic policy priorities at large (Clavel, Pitt, & Yin, 1997; Haar, 1975; Rich & Stoker, 2014; Silver, 2010).[4]

Yet neither "minimalist" nor "engaged" national urban policies have achieved a holistic approach to the broad range of ills facing cities (Biles, 2011; Euchner & McGovern, 2003; Ferguson & Dickens, 1999). Table 1 identifies a conceptual enumeration of the multiple areas that a comprehensive urban policy might potentially consider and the program options within these policy spheres. Further, though the analysis proposed in this paper argues that the criteria for urban policy development fall along a set of policy continua, this table also identifies the dominant typologies of the programs that have been identified as part of a comprehensive national urban policy.

Clearly, when placed under a comprehensive national urban policy lens, there are multiple typologies of programs that might be highlighted against the geometric map found in Fig. 3.

5. Conclusion

In sum, the theoretical approach offered in this analysis can be the foundation for a policy process that resolves the question of "where" and identifies how, with an agreed upon set of "rules of the game", urban policies might best be situated.

[4] These references are drawn solely from the American context of urban political economy. The author apologizes for the omission of research from other countries that may point to similar conclusions.

As a derivative of the initial plotting exercise, one might be able to determine where there may be contradictory programmatic goals or synergies among those programs that are undertaken to address the range of ills that face cities. Traditional evaluation methods might point to which programs within the umbrella of national urban policy that are worth pursuing (or continue to adopt) and which ones should no longer be choices for decision makers to consider (or no longer support in their execution) at a thematic level. Further, the criteria presented here can also be deployed to possibly avoid duplication of resources or redundancy of effort resultant from the mixed neo-classical and neo-progressive approaches that are compartmentalized in the design stage of national urban policy.

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