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METHODOLOGIES AND RESEARCH PARADIGMS IN URBAN POLITICAL SCIENCE

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Abstract: This paper explores what is special about the methodology of urban politics. It argues there are two characteristics of urban politics that lead to innovation: numerosity and propinquity. Numerosity derives from the large numbers of local governments, which allows for the possibility of comparison and for generalisation from within countries and across them. This permits large-N statistical analysis where institutions are the units, a rare opportunity, and also leads to interesting focused smaller n comparisons where countries and local cases may be selected to test particular hypotheses. Propinquity derives from the close interaction of actors within the urban space and the immediate links between public decisions and policy outcomes, which leads to intensive qualitative analysis based on micro-decision-making in one cases, and research approaches that can embrace values as well as seek to make generalisations. Through a review of the methodologies used in prominent studies, the paper concludes that the large n and multilevel opportunities of the urban political space have been too rarely seized upon; instead more energy has been applied to the other side, such as stand-alone case studies or ethnographic work. The paper reflects on the possibilities of developing larger n or focused comparative studies, and how in depth case studies may be integrated with larger n research.

Local political systems have much in common with those at other levels of governance, particularly the national level. In most countries, political parties run candidates to seek office in local government; local decisions emanate from a well-defined executive structure; there is usually a deliberative chamber of elected representatives; policies are administered by a permanent bureaucracy; interest groups seek to influence public decisions; and the citizens participate, to a greater or lesser extent, in local politics, and consume the policy outputs that local governments produce. With such a common set of political features, it is no surprise that the methodologies and research methods that have been used by political scientists to study these aspects of politics at the national level have been applied to local government and to its political cultures.

Such a common set of understandings and tools should be no surprise. To the extent that political science has a universal claim to knowledge, it is reasonable to expect urban political scientists to apply general theories and models. For example, urbanists have tested hypotheses that follow from sociological models of politics to find out who participates in the policy process (e.g. Clark 1968a), and they have investigated the extent of bureaucratic autonomy as formulated by the principal-agent-model (Stein 1990). It is also consistent with this line of argument that theories may be developed or adapted for the urban context, and then taken up and applied in other parts of political science, though this direction of theory travel is not so common as the other way round. The main examples of this route are usually quite old, with the main one being methods and techniques used to study the exercise of power in urban political systems, as applied in the community power literature (cf. Dahl 1961, Polsby 1963), which were taken up in other jurisdictions during the subsequent 40 years (see the review by Dowding 1996). Latterly, the regime concept, which has been used to analyse informal coalitions of public and private policy-makers (Stone 1989), finds its echo in studies of national and international regimes, though it is very difficult to find cross-citations. Social capital, on the other hand, did make its first outing at the sub-national level, with Putnam's (1995) research that correlated levels of voluntary action and policy-performance of Italy's elected regional governments. Even with the massive boom across many policy fields and disciplines, social capital research depends on levels of networks, trust and volunteering to be different across space, so

that local government, with its in-built control of institutional design and room for autonomy for policy-makers, creates a natural research opportunity for researchers to test the impact of social capital as well as find out about its origins (e.g. see Smith et al 2000).

Moving to the means of carrying out research, it is likely that the typical urban politics research project deploys the same instruments as the rest of political science, and seeks to meet the highest standards of inference, validity, and replicability in using them (cf. King et al 1994). Studies of local electoral behaviour, for example, apply common techniques for evaluating and testing public opinion, using data from surveys and/or real events and/or population characteristics, and testing models using descriptive statistics and multivariate techniques, such as Miller's (1988) study of the local influences on voting behaviour and Kaufmann's (2004) analysis of group conflict in urban elections. Political scientist frequently employ surveys to examine the various types of decision-makers in local political systems, such as bureaucrats (e.g. Mouritzen and Svava 2002) and councillors (e.g. Welch and Bledsoe 1988). Then there are the voluminous numbers of case studies that use the standard methods of interviewing, collecting secondary sources and interpreting data. Indeed, a textbook on methods in urban research, *Doing Urban Research*, is really a compendium of established practices in social science rather than practices particular to the urban context (Andranovitch and Riposa 1993). The solid advice to students of urban politics must be that they take general methods courses, such as on survey analysis, time series techniques or research design. Nobody can argue with the claim that good political science methods are good urban ones too.

Whilst the main assumption of this chapter is that general methodologies and methods apply to the study of urban politics, there are two features of urban politics that allow researchers to develop techniques or at least forms of analysis that are not so common - or at least not so developed - in the rest of the discipline: *numerosity* and *propinquity*. The claim of this chapter is that, in general, urban political scientists do not proclaim methods that use these aspects of local political systems, but just do them or hint at them in their research, for which a reference to M. Jourdain's prose-speaking abilities would be apposite if it were not so hackneyed a phrase. The message here is that urban political scientists could trumpet more what they do, and they should be less dependent on other methods in political science.

Numerosity

Numerosity is the multiple occurrences of local governments within nation states, which can come to many hundreds for some European countries and thousands for the United States of America. The abundance of cases is of course small when compared to the individuals who participate or not in politics, so the size does not usually reach those in surveys measuring conventional public opinion. But when compared to other units of political analysis that political scientists wish to generalise about, in particular the institutions of the nation state, where there is often only one case, there are usually a reasonable number of sub-national cases. Large numbers confer advantages because, when a time series of data points is not available, they permit conventional statistical analysis to take place on institutional forms and behaviour, and also on policy occurrences and outcomes. Even with a cross-sectional design, data using sub-national governments as the cases usually has numbers that are sufficiently large to justify standard parametric tests (statistical tests that draw on the random properties of large numbers) rather than techniques that need to deal with the properties of smaller numbers, such as bootstrapping, common in situations where there are relatively few cases as, for example, the politics of the US states (Mooney 1997). The impact of leadership forms, performance of institutions, and effects of institutional design can be tested in ways that not usually possible or easy at the national level. One example is the Welch and Bledsoe study (1988) cited earlier; another is Gains et al's (2005) appraisal of the differential and path-dependent impact of the institutional reforms in England in 2000, where the research performs statistical tests on different institutional forms using a sample of all English local governments.

There are many studies using the classical techniques of statistical analysis, which have sub-national units as the cases, and these routinely appear in urban journals. In contrast to surveys of individuals where the dependent variable is often nominal, such as the party the individual wishes to vote for, local government data often has intervals as the gradation, because the dependent variable can easily turn into a percentage or score within the local government unit, which make the use of the traditional multivariate research technique, ordinary least squares (OLS), a routine occurrence, for example to find out the relationship between population size of local government and democratic performance as measured in per cents for each jurisdiction (e.g. Gaardsted. 2002). Another study use surveys of mayors to test out

hypotheses about responses to fiscal austerity (Clark and Furguson 1983). Such analysis is very difficult with national or cross national-level data, where the number of organisations or countries can be very small or hard to generalise across, such between different federal agencies.

Political scientists are keen to reward innovations rather than applications of ‘bog-standard’ techniques, but if innovation means falling foul from a lack of numbers, perhaps it does not pay off? What is not often remarked on is how few articles in the mainstream political science units use such a naturally occurring set of units of political organisation, whereas typically the small number of countries available for analysis, such as the 21 OECD ones, are deployed extensively. But with such small numbers, researchers are unable to know if the assumptions of OLS regression have been breached or not. How is it possible to test for normal or random distribution of the dependent term with so few cases, as for example in Castles and Merrill’s (1989) use of complex causal regression techniques on OECD country cases? The alternative is to pool the data over time and space and use new techniques for analysis of variation in both these dimensions. But the statistical properties of pooled cross-sectional case design are not yet fully understood. For example, comparative political economy specialists have used these panels to test the idea that left-leading governments with particular forms of political support can maintain welfare spending (Alvarez et al 1991). But the estimation technique was criticised by Beck and Katz (1995); and even these experts’ conclusions have in turn been questioned on statistical grounds (Plumper 2004, Kittell and Winner 2005). However, the equivalent and numerous local output studies, testing for the effects of parties and other variables on budget outcomes, face no such problems (e.g. Sharpe and Newton 1984, and the many studies reviewed by Boyne 1996). After all, one of the big advantages of OLS is that, with sufficient cases, its properties and assumptions are very well understood. Most users know when the underlying assumptions have been breached, and what to do if they are. How often do analysts using, for example, multinomial probit, report checks for breaches of the assumptions of their models? In contrast, checks for the standard problems of multicollinearity and heteroscedasticity are routine for publications using OLS.

That said there are some examples of the use of innovative statistics with sub-national governments as the units. One of the best one available is Clarke and Gaile (1998). They seek to find out how autonomous cities are in the face of environmental

constraints, and they have at their disposal a dataset that allows analysis that is impossible to carry out at the nation state level, which tends to keep to descriptive statistics (see Hirst and Thompson 1999) or uses the pooling procedure discussed above. Clarke and Gaile deploy trend surface analysis, which is a statistical technique that has been developed by geographers to sort out the causal connections in the data and to allow for spatial effects, which can breach the assumption of independence of the observations, and thus has particular application to many situations in urban politics. But this example is something of an exception in the literature, so it is possible that urbanists could use more innovative techniques, such as ecological inference, which is the analysis of aggregate data, usually collected at the subnational or lower jurisdictional level. With the use of GIS software and a greater understanding of spatial autocorrelations, there is now a sub-field on spatial models in urban politics, though appearing more in geography-focused publications (e.g. Gimpel et al 2004) rather than political science ones. Ecological inference and spatial regression, in spite of its uses, is hardly applied in standard urban research projects. Breach of independence through the contiguous properties of the cases may not just be a feature of urban politics, but could occur in any analysis where non-randomly selected spatial units are the cases, such as countries in the same region of the world or electoral districts within a nation state. Spatial correlation is rarely discussed within mainstream political science, which would make a methodological contribution from the problems of the urban field of general interest, and add to the wider use of ecological inference techniques.

One of the most powerful features of sub-national analysis is the ability to compare both countries and local governments in the same design (see Denters and Mossberger 2004 for a review of this argument). This procedure overcomes the main disadvantage of studies in traditional comparative politics - that of small numbers, and also adds variation within the nation state, which increases the ability to generalise. In this manner, sub-national observations can be very useful in comparative country research because it increases leverage and stops researchers over-generalising from one country case (Snyder 2001). Snyder argues that sub-national units allow the researcher to observe the spatially varied dimensions to global and other processes. This reasoning is close, though not quite at the core of urban political science, for an urban political scientist would resist solely being an underlabourer for comparative scholars, producing cases to improve the main aim of explaining country variation.

Instead the urbanist would see the city or locality as the primary focus, and then examine other levels of government as further elaborations of the explanation. It is the city, in its critical role as in the interface of political, social and economic interactions that is in the vanguard of global economic processes, which are also mediated through national structures and power bases. What the comparative method allows for is some clustering of observations within the nation states to observe differences between localities and then compare causes and effects across nation states.

Perhaps one of the reasons there is not much high-N sub-national comparative research is that there are relatively few studies using this kind of design to draw upon. One exception is the Fiscal Austerity and Urban Innovation (FAUI) project, where Clark extended his surveys of US political elites to a common model across most countries in the world, which allowed for the testing of hypotheses of the emergence of new forms of politics, relating to political parties, post-modernisation and populism, but where the incidence differs massively according to country context (e.g. Clark et al 1985, Mouritzen 1992, Clarke 1989, Clark 1994, Saiz and Geser 1999, Clark and Hoffman-Martinot 1998). Another is the use of surveys of elites in a smaller number of countries, such as the Jacob (1971) team's study of the impact of local factors on leadership across four countries. However, this kind of analysis is too often rarely achieved or carried out, partly because of the costs of collecting data systematically across countries, also because it is hard to measure the variables in a consistent manner, particularly where there are different sizes of jurisdiction and different institutional rules and structures.

Propinquity

The second characteristic of urban politics is propinquity, which denotes the closeness of urban political and social actors to each other and to the social process that affect localities, which occurs because of the relatively small size of the urban space when compared to other decision-making units. Here is the familiar assumption that many of the key actors will know each other in a local elite network of key bureaucrats, party people, and media personnel, and where local political institutions are not as differentiated as they would be at the national level. This integration of key actors and institutions can generate much flexibility in urban decision-making, which comes from micro-level personal interactions that shows the political game operates, a closed form of politics that often attracts radical critiques. The propinquitous character of local politics partly explains why social network approaches have been popular (Hunter 1953, Galaskiewicz 1979, John 1998), and then the regime idea. Through these relationships can be drawn using sociometric or network data techniques, often the best way of analysing them is through the single case study, based on a series of semi-structured interviews with key participants, essentially qualitative pieces of research, sometimes using some quantitative data to enhance the analysis. For this reason, there are numerous case studies of local decision-making, most of them are based on one case, and often exploring a particular theoretical framework through the interviews. Some of these studies have already been mentioned, such as the elite studies like Hunter's (1953) study of Chicago, then the pluralist studies of the 1960s and 1970s (Dahl 1961, Banfield 1961), and the UK single city studies, for example of Birmingham (Newton 1975). In spite of some valiant attempts to develop systematic large-N analysis to test for community power structures (Clarke 1968b), the 1970s and 1980s saw more one place studies in the Marxist tradition (e.g. Saunders 1980) and then in the influential regime theory analysis, applied in Atlanta again (Stone 1988) and in Dallas (Elkin 1987), and then across the US and in Europe (see John 2001 for a review). The attraction is that, given the importance of networks, case studies allow the researcher to 'soak and poke' their research subjects (cf. Fenno 1978, p. xiv) to see if what is observed fits within the theoretical paradigm. Repeated interviews are feasible, particularly as

urbanists often live and work next to their research site in their city or region, which puts them at a massive advantage compared to, for example, their colleagues who work on international relations issues, through of course they are many urbanists who study cities and localities in other countries from their own. But typically the urban researcher will get to know the local city, build up relationships with local elites, often encouraged by economic development-minded universities keen to promote their role in the local community. These relationships then become key human resources for research projects, where the urbanist can explore the local dimension of a particular theoretical orientation. Typically, local political institutions will commission research from universities, which can be used to inform case-orientated urban research, usually based on a limited selection of interviewees, using the comments made in semi-structured interviewees to inform that argument being made.

Many single case studies, such as by Dahl (1961) and Stone (1989) have become classics in a way that would not be predicted by standard social science methods. As Rogowski (1995) demonstrates, many path-breaking studies are often based on one case, such as the book that launched consociational studies, which was based on the observation of success in the Netherlands, a dramatic example of selection bias (Lijphart 1968). In turn, the classic urban studies have inspired other researchers to look at single cases, which partly explains the profusion of studies. Single case studies are compelling because the reader can probe the case alongside the researcher, making it more immediate and memorable than a statistical compendium. While few of these studies discuss the limitations of the single case design, implicitly through addressing general social science questions they make claims about the exercise of power or existence of regimes, which may apply elsewhere. There is also rarely an attempt to develop a common methodology, and in end, while researchers do valid things, such as examine variation within case studies, interview as wide a range of actors as possible, both in-group and out-group, and seek to observe change over time, the reader is reliant on the judgement and intuitions of the author about the validity of the research rather than methods that would meet the replication standard.

The second dimension of propinquity is that the impacts of decisions are more readily observable to those who govern localities, and also are more easily seen in the researchers' own eyes, than those coming from higher levels of governance. The conditions of cities or localities in terms of social and economic problems, race relations, unemployment and pollution, are part of both the elites and researchers'

immediate experiences, and one aspect of the research problem is about looking at the links between elite perceptions and policy problems in the same spatial scale. This aspect of local politics also encourages the use of certain sort of methods, in particular those that are attune to the intentions of policy-makers and help understand their experience of their contexts. Hence interviews, which probe the aims of policy-makers, and in depth studies that examine the implementation of policy decisions involving 'street-level' bureaucrats, are common in urban political analysis. Indeed, some urbanists would like to be or are anthropologists.

Partly because of these concerns, and from more general intellectual movements, researchers in fields such as social policy and the environment tend to adopt a critical stance toward the dominant scientific paradigms in social science, which assumes an objective reality that can be measured and quantified. Instead they are sympathetic to critical paradigms that seek to limit the oppressive gaze of the researcher, and embrace the perspectives, language and autonomy of those who are being researched. Thus qualitative techniques aim to record the voice of the human subject and to break down the potentially distorting and one-sided relationship between the researcher and the researched. Qualitative urban researchers sometimes believe there is a similarity between the scientific methods dominant in political science and the ways in which powerful actors, such as bureaucrats, elites and politicians, tend to govern localities through rational techniques, with a strong distinction between the rulers, who govern and use the rational techniques of government, and the ruled who are subject to objective interventions from the rulers. Urbanists, by being both critical of the techniques of government and the methods of so-called positivist social science, seek to break potentially oppressive relationships between governors and governed on the one hand and researcher and researched on the other. They are 'bottom up' in their assessment of methods and of urban political systems. For example, there is research on gender and the city that uses alternative perspectives on public problems and is critical of the way in which conventional and 'neutral' public policies hide more inclusive interests and perspectives (Booth et al 1996).

The comparative potential

Given the heterogeneity of urban issues and the variety of types of scholars, it is not surprising that a variety of methods appear in the journals, both qualitative and quantitative, which address a number of policy and academic issues. But the logic of the argument presented thus far is that urban political scientists need not just draw on conventional methods in the rest of political science, but can use the possibilities for comparative case design to increase leverage over the problems that are studied at the local level, which also have wider applicability in the rest of political science, drawing on both numerosity and propinquity as drivers of urban research methodologies and methods. Numerosity can generate theoretically-informed and valid comparative case designs; propinquity can create complementary qualitative features to statistical or comparative analysis. In some works, it is possible to select examples of interesting cases to observe; in others, the integration is caused by comparing in-depth cases studies to generate intellectual leverage both within and across the cases.

One example of comparative research design is about the extent of autonomy of decision-makers given the constraints of economic competition and socio-cultural processes; the other is the effect of institutional design, which has elements of similarity at the sub-national level. There are studies that use the full range of cases, such as the Clarke and Gaile book cited above, but there is much potential in the comparative case study, which uses the opportunity numerous cases generates to generate focused comparisons, where cases can be selected on the basis of extreme example, typical cases or cases where one variable is held constant. These can work within countries, using case design to improve inferences. Hence the project by Stone (1998) on regimes and education policy used nine locations to compare and contrast what works, using largely qualitative insights into the cases. Ferman (1996) compares Chicago and Pittsburgh in depth to explain difference processes and outcomes. Another regime example is Dowding et al's (1999) comparative qualitative analysis of six regimes at the borough level in London to test hypotheses about regime formation and performance. Similarly on regimes, Kilburn (2004) compares fourteen US cities. What distinguishes this piece of research is a careful attention to selection

of cases through the secondary literature with the aim of comparing different types of regime, and ascertaining the formation of coalitions through the careful description and comparison of cases. The author uses Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) method elaborated by Ragin, which is a technique somewhere between qualitative and quantitative analysis allowing the research to examine and count the particular configuration of features of a case that may lead to the outcome of interest. Finally, it is possible to combine in the same study a survey with large number of observations and complementary case studies of a small number of authorities, which can reap the advantages of careful case selection and large N. Thus Reese and Rosendfield (2002) use what they call a 'blended methodological approach', where they used quantitative methods in a survey of 305 Canadian cities and 682 US ones, which was used for analysis of the content of local economic development policies. The data was used to select nine cities with different leadership models and civic cultures to test the hypotheses about what affects policy outputs and outcomes.

However, within country variations will only offer a limited quasi-experimental range because many of the key variables of institutions and cultures differ within strict parameters, which may mean limited variation in key independent or dependent variables. When considered across countries these key variables vary, making the challenge to control for some urban features such as city size and industrial structure. In general, comparative local research is not fully developed, with the majority of US urbanists selecting cases within their county. In Europe, the main stress has not been methodological but descriptive of different trends, with the common format as the edited collection of country experts addressing a common theme (e.g. Sharpe 1993), a format that still dominates the field (e.g. Denters and Rose 2005), partly because it is relatively easy to produce. It is possible to get over the collective action problem of producing such volumes by providing low-cost selective incentives, such as an invitation to a seminar in a country with a pleasant climate and timed to coincide with writing deadlines. Because the cost is low, these volumes tend contribute little to knowledge, being mainly literature views and summaries of descriptive information. Indeed, one of the reasons for the lack of methods-driven cross-national comparative research is the sheer difficulty of carrying it out. For the lone researcher, it involves costly travel, the learning or refinement of languages to a level so local elites can be interviewed; which can restrict the number

of countries that can be covered; for the cross-national team there are the classic collective action or coordination problems as research teams expand, which means that projects can crash because of a team from one country does not deliver by attempting to free-ride or just being inefficient or misunderstanding the research design. Then there is the near impossibility of organising timely co-funding from different national funding streams, which again means that the successful comparative projects tend to focus on two or three countries, limiting the ability to test hypotheses. The larger projects tend to be run on a shoestring (e.g. FAUI), and thus depend on goodwill rather than the power of resources to successfully implement a common research design. There are a few other isolated examples, such as Aiken et al's (1987) comparison of metropolitan systems – 76 in France, 83 in Italy, 74 in Germany, and 63 in England and Wales – by correlating expenditure with population sizes, and then regressing number of headquarters, the population size of the hinterland, employment-residence ratio, the percentage of the Labour force in services and measures of left politics on the operating expenses of central cities. The comparative insights came from comparing the regression coefficients on identical equations for each country.

In recent years, more integrated research designs have grown common, partly in reaction to the internationalisation of research problems through economic competition and social changes, such as migration, that affect the urban space in comparable ways. Stronger research networks are playing their part, encouraging fruitful collaborations. Common here are comparisons of one cases from each country, often testing out ideas that cities respond differentially to the international economy. For example, the world cities literature examines the role of these centres in the world hierarchy of cities (e.g. Gordon et al 1992).

Of more methodological promise is the incorporation of variations between localities at the same time as places are being compared across countries. Savitch and Kantor, for example, take three cities in the US, one in Canada, two in France, two in the UK, and two in Italy. They allow the cases to vary by economic conditions, central-local relationships and politics to generate inferences. John and Cole (1998, 2001) use the most-similar-most-different method to generate inferences by selecting two pairs of cities that are similar across countries, which are very different institutionally, to examine whether networks are similar and different in two

contrasting policy sectors of education and economic development. Returning to regimes, which seems to have stimulated more comparative work than other subtopics, DiGaetano and Klemanski (1999) compare two cities in the US with two in England to compare governing regimes. The most methodologically developed qualitative piece, and one that also uses quantitative evidence, is Sellers' (2002) comparison of eleven medium cities in France, the US and Germany in response to globalisation of the economic context for policy-making. What distinguishes this volume is the minute attention to detail which builds to generate inferences of a powerful kind. Again, there is the good use of the numerous cases of local governments across jurisdictions and countries, with good attention to the contingent relationships within each case.

More quantitative in character is the use of surveys and/or other aggregate data from a representative sample of municipalities, such as the Mourizen and Svava (2002) surveys of chief executives in 14 European, North American and Australasian countries, and the Jacob survey of municipalities in four countries cited above. Similarly, the Elderveld et al's (1995) study of local elites' attitudes surveys mayors, council members, department heads and party leaders in 55 middle-sized cities in the USA, Sweden and the Netherlands. Likewise, Rose (2002) examines whether variations in the population size of municipalities has an effect on differences in the levels of local non-electoral participation taking survey evidence from Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway. Denters (2002) analyses levels of trust in local governments in Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom.

Many of these studies emerge from fortuitous collaborations and the availability of already existing and comparable survey data to test certain hypotheses. More ambitious studies would engage in more comprehensive data collection. The problem is the effort and care needed to gather comparative and comparable data. The best example to date is Sellers' (2004) unpublished paper, which uses aggregate data to test out hypotheses concerning the link between the infrastructure of local government and the type of welfare state. A number of scholars are converging in their interest in these kinds of local government issues, and new data sources and tests are likely to emerge as the twenty-first century progresses.

Conclusions

There is much to celebrate in the methodologies and research methods used in urban political science. There is a pleasing diversity, which reflects cross-currents of change processes in the urban space and the different kinds of academics that study it. Geographers, sociologists, social policy specialists as well as political scientists find the politics of the urban space fascinating. As a result there is a plurality of methods and perspectives used to understand these phenomena, which reflect different academic traditions. In general, however, urbanists tend to use the methods that come to hand within their disciplines and backgrounds, and reproduce standard kinds of analysis.

The central argument is that what makes urban politics unique within the discipline of political science is two characteristics of what is being studied: one is the relatively large numbers that exist, which gives rise to reliable and valid statistical analysis as well as interesting and focused case study designs; the other is close integration of urban systems, which can encourage in depth and sympathetic qualitative analysis. There is some analysis of the former in urban politics, both statistical work and comparative case studies; there is also much in depth qualitative work. The real potential for urban political analysis is to integrate the two, when at present there are few examples. The most productive avenue for such an approach is comparative urban political analysis, with variation within and across nation states, both using large numbers and with qualitative dimensions. So far there are few examples of such blending of research designs, but there are some signs that the promise of urban political analysis is about to be realised through the plan for a new section of the American Political Science Association on comparative urban politics. More comparative research may help urban political science contribute to methodological knowledge rather than just receive it.

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