The Evolution of National Urban Policy
Congressional Agendas, Presidential Power, and Public Opinion

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Abstract

Whither federal urban policy? In this paper, I analyze a unique dataset consisting of over 6,600 congressional hearings, presidential addresses, and opinion polls to address fundamental aspects of the urban policy process over the last half-Century. I demonstrate empirically that urban policy has been transformed over the years from the comprehensive and "place-oriented" efforts of the Great Society to, more recently, a mix of isolated policies and programs that target acute city-level concerns. As the political and administrative foundations of the Great Society came under attack, federal policymakers and urban interest groups reshaped the urban agenda to focus attention on discrete urban problems such as crime detection and energy use. Further legislative gains have recently been made by successfully linking urban problems to issues of significant public concern such as homeland security and the recession. The ways in which this new reality of urban policy has been reinforced and institutionalized makes it difficult to fashion an overarching policy approach. This has important implications for diagnosing the political and institutional feasibility of the Obama Administration's urban policy aspirations.

Introduction

In a June 2008 speech to the annual meeting of the U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM), Democratic Presidential candidate Barack Obama galvanized a beleaguered group of city executives by pledging his dedication to federal urban policy reform. The speech, titled "Investing in America's Cities," called for the creation of a new White House office to facilitate and coordinate a multifaceted spate of fresh initiatives to address urban problems such as flagging public housing, infrastructure degeneration, traffic congestion, rising energy costs, and fiscal insolvency. The candidate insisted that a new day for a comprehensive federal urban policy was dawning as he exhorted that his administration would "stop seeing our cities as the problem and start seeing them as the solution. Because strong cities are the building blocks of strong regions, and strong regions are essential for a strong America" (Broder 2008).

Just over one year into Obama's first term, and a mere 20 months since the USCM speech, how might one evaluate the Administration's progress on these lofty campaign promises? On the one hand, some initial progress has been made. On February 19, 2009, the President signed Executive Order 13503 to establish the White House Office of Urban Affairs (WHOUA), a signal to urban interests that the Administration at least recognizes the symbolic weight of interagency cooperation. Despite a jam-packed federal agenda, WHOUA Director, Adolfo Carrion, has taken some preliminary measures to increase the Office's visibility, including the arrangement of a series of local "conversations" to solicit bottom-up strategies for achieving national policy goals. Yet, with the ostensible aim of developing and ultimately coordinating the implementation of a comprehensive strategy, the fresh and bold urban initiative of the campaign has not yet come into view.

However, something strange transpired while urban analysts were waiting around for a coherent *N*ational *U*rban *P*olicy: a robust, diverse, yet less conspicuous, agenda seems to have emerged. Consider the programs that comprise the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Over $3.2 billion has been earmarked for Energy Efficiency Community Block Grants (EECBG); $1.5 is set to be distributed in Homeless Prevention Funds; $13 billion has been allocated as direct aid for disadvantaged school systems; over $26 billion was allocated to the development of high-speed rail and surface transit; over $3 billion in discretionary and formula grants has been set aside for local police departments; not to mention the $1 billion in increased funding for Community Development Block Grants.

To place these legislative gains in historical context, the 111th Congress has quietly unleashed the largest influx of federal dollars to cities since the Great Society (Davey 2009). Though most of the programs are administered outside the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), historically is the lead federal agency for urban policymaking. Moreover, the multipronged agenda has seemingly been formulated outside the political purview of WHOUA. Federal lawmakers, through the utilization of both existing channels of intergovernmental aid, and by establishing new channels within federal institutions with a less explicit metropolitan mission, have addressed nearly every feature of candidate Obama's campaign promises; and they have done with very little fanfare, and with only tacit discussion of the spatial interconnectedness of these policies.

What can lessons might be drawn from this experience? I contend that federal urban policy, Obama style, provides an optic through which to examine the full history of the urban policy apparatus. Perhaps due to long-standing difficulty in defining and identifying "urban" policies, very little empirical research covers what Harold Wolman has referred to as "the peculiar nature of urban policy processes at the national level" (1999, 43). Urban affairs is a nebulous concept that includes both a spatial dimension (i.e., city versus suburban boundaries), as well as a diverse mix of functional dimensions (e.g., urban development, municipal air and water pollution, city trash collection and waste disposal, mass transit, pockets of concentrated poverty) (Wolman 1999; Cleaveland et. al. 1969). Unlike more typical policy areas, such as education or transportation, separate executive agencies and congressional committees tackle these functional aspects of urban problems. However, macropolitical players, such as presidents and party leaders, get involved in the politics of urban policymaking from time to time (Baumgartner and

Jones 1993, 127), particularly when the "plight of America's cities" garners a great deal of public attention and urban ills are tied up in partisan and ideological conflict.

In the pages that follow, I address fundamental aspects of the politics of the urban policy process. Through the analysis of a unique dataset of over 6,600 congressional hearings, presidential addresses, and public opinion polls over the period 1946 to 2004, this research provides a fresh understanding of how urban issues get on the national policy agenda, why they fall off the agenda, and how and where policies and programs that target urban problems are formulated in the presence, as well as in the absence, of public scrutiny. I show that during the Great Society era, the interplay of partisan support, presidential initiative, public interest, and congressional resources led to the formulation and implementation of a more cohesive set of "place-based" programs designed to address physical deterioration and social unrest.

However, as urban ills fell from the public consciousness in the subsequent period, the urban policy apparatus, rather than dissolving, was disaggregated into a mix of policies and programs that tackle functionally isolated urban problems. In some instances, federal policymakers and urban interest groups have won significant legislative victories by reshaping "urban-related" policies to target discrete urban problems such as crime detection, drug use, pollution, and energy inefficiency. Other gains have recently been made by successfully linking urban problems to issues of significant public concern such as homeland security and the recession. One outcome is that urban-related policymaking has become more embedded in a variety of federal institutions with less explicit urban policy missions. As I discuss in the concluding section, this has important implications for diagnosing the political and institutional feasibility of the Obama Administration's urban policy aspirations.

Reconceiving National Urban Policy

Since the late 1960s, public policy theory has developed tremendously. Yet if one was to take a look at the bookshelf of any given policy scholar, he or she might find just a smattering of works on the process of federal urban policymaking. In Harold Wolman's (1999) quick and dirty survey of the contents of nearly a dozen public policy textbooks, he found nary a chapter devoted to national urban policy processes. Calling attention to this informal survey is not to suggest that political scientists have ignored federal urban policy outright. It is to suggest that the majority of scholarship on the subject relies too heavily on electoral and partisan explanations to the detriment of a more nuanced understanding of changes to the urban policy process. I briefly outline this prevailing narrative of the rapid rise and decline of urban affairs on the federal policy agenda. I then make the case for a more encompassing conceptualization of urban policies to help explain historical ebbs and flows in federal policymaking that targets urban problems.

How Do Political Scientists Talk About National Urban Policy?

Urban problems were not always thought to be so peripheral to domestic politics. For much of the 20th Century, the core of the New Deal coalition—working class, minorities, ethnic groups, and labor unions—were located in America's central cities. Big-city pluralities put Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, and later, Johnson in the White House, giving urban communities a strong voice in domestic politics. Indeed the early-to-mid 1960's saw the culmination of the New Deal coalition as the New Frontier/Great Society domestic agenda facilitated a great expansion of urban development programs. Strikingly, between 1960 and 1968, the number of federal grant programs tripled; federal aid over the same period more than tripled; and nearly 400 targeted grants-in-aid programs were enacted.[1]

[1] Whether the Johnson Administration's urban development initiative was a policy response to widespread urban unrest (Iris 1983), a powerful political tool to maintain Democratic control over city electorates (Mollenkopf 1983),

However, the seeds of white middle-class discontent were also interwoven into the expansive domestic agenda of the 1960s as Democratic attention to civil rights and the provision of vast resources for social welfare programs accorded Republican lawmakers the ability to chip away at a flagging New Deal coalition. As race realigned the national electorate, large-scale demographic and macroeconomic shifts continued to weaken the political influence of cities (Caraley 1992; Weir 1996). On average, central city voters accounted for less than 15 percent of the national electorate from 1980 forward, down from 27 percent during the high watermark year of 1944. No victorious presidential candidate from 1980 to 2004 has received substantial electoral support from urban voters (Sauerzopf and Swanstrom 1999). Congress has also become considerably less urban. The 32-year period between 1963 and 1994 saw the number of congressional districts with a majority of the population coming from central cities drop from 94 to 84, while, suburban-majority districts more than doubled from 94 to 214 (Wolman and Marckini 1998).

As the US galloped toward a "suburban century" (Schneider 1992), it was argued that federal officials could ignore cities without fear of electoral rebuke. Not surprisingly, this confluence of forces severely impacted domestic spending for archetypical urban development programs. The Reagan Administration in particular was very successful in reducing discretionary programs targeting under-served constituencies. Place-based payments and spending that provided infrastructural investments, fiscal assistance, and social services were gutted or transferred into less expensive programs. Community training was all but disbanded. Federal standards, which tilted funds to the nation's most distressed urban areas, were removed. In all, intergovernmental aid to cities was reduced from almost $14 billion in 1980 to just over $7 billion in 1988. As Dennis Judd and Todd Swanstrom (2004) suggest, the cuts in the 1980's were so devastating that, "it [was] hard to imagine that urban policies would ever again occupy a significant place on the national policy agenda" (2004, 195).

What Makes a Policy an "Urban" Policy?

Whereas the facts presented in this account are compelling, the argument provides an incomplete depiction of federal urban policy processes. One chief problem in studying "national urban policy" is determining what policies actually qualify as "urban".[2] As Frederic Cleaveland and his associates suggested over forty years ago (1969, 8), the "issue context" of urban policymaking is a vital aspect of its politics since policy outputs are likely to differ substantially across functional, "urban-related" problems. So, when scholars and popular commentators analyze federal urban policy, do they mean an overarching initiative, a la President Carter's "New Partnership", that explicitly targets the underlying spatial antecedents of urban poverty or physical deterioration? Conversely, is urban policy the aggregation of archetypical urban development programs, such as Urban Development Action Grants (UDAG) or CDBG, which target physical growth? Or is it the sum of all the policies that have some impact, either explicit or not, on cities and (even more broadly) "urban" populations?

Defining national urban policy is difficult because the concept of "urbanism" – the use of metropolitan space to achieve goals that "stress access to valued objects" (Jones 1983, 7; See also Williams 1971, 12) – encompasses two often conflicting constituent parts. The first is *valued objects* (e.g., functionally distinct benefits such as mass transit, municipal waste management, and public housing); the second is *physical space* (spatial borders that delineate political jurisdictions). This research is sensitive to the conceptual thorniness that results from reconciling these two components. As such, I follow Cleaveland and his associates by considering a policy's "urban-relatedness" (1969, 3-9), which the

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or, more critically, coercive action to pacify urban "insurgents" (Piven and Cloward 1979; 1993), the federal commitment was sizable.

[2] See Wolman (1999, 27-29, 36-42) for a fantastic discussion of the dilemmas related to defining urban policy and its implications for the study of the politics of federal urban policymaking.

authors consider as a measurable urban dimension, but a dimension that does not require a policy to be exclusively urban in nature.

Conceptually, this suggests that one may consider urban policymaking on more of a scale that captures the degree to which functionally distinct policy costs and benefits are distributed by the manner in which metropolitan physical space is used.[3] This is appealing because it provides an empirical basis for studying the multitude of programs and initiatives that distribute policy costs and benefits to urban populations, rather than the blend of programs that are either merely *perceived* at a given point in time to be urban (Wolman 1999), or those exclusively promoting physical development (such as housing, urban renewal, and physical planning). To be sure, the latter two sets of programs have real policy implications for urban populations. But in providing insights about federal urban policy, writ large, scholars choosing to study these exclusively are precluded from considering a whole range of functionally discrete problems (such as urban education, air and water pollution, energy inefficiency, and pockets of crime) to which federal resources are also targeted precisely because they are more acute in high-density urban areas.

The entire range of policies and programs that comprise what I term the *federal urban agenda* exhibit a shared element of urban-relatedness (See Cleaveland 1969, 5; Wolman 1999, 27-28; Baumgartner and Jones 1993, 134-140). These can be categorized as follows: (1) policies that are distinctively associated with the encouragement of urban growth (housing, development, infrastructure); (2) policies that target problems that are deemed to be severe in urban areas with higher population density (crime, pollution); and (3) policies that attempt to address an expansive range of urban problems through an overarching, place-based approach (Carter's "New Partnership", Obama's "Investment"). In toto, this agenda may be comprised of many issues, or a few issues; of traditional issues, such as community development or housing, or somewhat less traditional conceptions of urban affairs, such as domestic preparedness. The agenda might contain redistributive issues, such as War on Poverty-style social programs, or distributive issues, such as water resource policy. Whatever the breakdown of the federal urban agenda, either by policy type or by issue foci, social scientists have little conception of how this agenda has evolved over time and the interplay of forces that have driven its evolution.

The Complexity of the Urban Policymaking Apparatus

The smattering of scholarly works on urban policy processes are of some help in considering how the structure of the urban policy apparatus has affected the formation and implementation of policies that target urban problems. Indeed two questions are particularly relevant to this exploration. The first is whether an urban policy "subsystem" currently exists, or has existed at some point in time. Policy subsystems, which are generally though to be composed of a lead administrative agency, a congressional committee or subcommittee, and a supportive set of interest groups, more or less codify patterns of interaction between these relevant actors (See Redford 1969, 83-131). These patterns of interaction provide institutional stability for policy equilibrium.

Though the issue of whether a particular policy system structures urban policymaking seems like a straightforward inquiry (See Wolman 1999), due mainly to data limitations and conceptual imprecision, it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions from the literature. In one analysis, Susan Farkas (1971) suggests that the 1960's saw a proliferation of "a reasonably identifiable urban policy-making subsystem … in rough contour" with participants ranging from presidents, vice presidents and other macropolitical

[3] For instance, policies that position citizens closer to bus stops allocate benefits based upon spatial proximity; policies that position citizens closer to waste management facilities confer policy costs upon citizens that are worse off based on spatial location. But if, for instance, the same costs and benefits are assumed anyplace, then the issue, while potentially relevant to populations that might reside in urban areas, should not be considered an explicitly urban issue (See Mills 1987). Federal assistance programs to individuals whose income levels qualify them regardless of spatial location should fall under this classification.

actors, to congressional actors from a bevy of congressional committees and subcommittees (97). However, in another account, Baumgartner and Jones (1993) find a much more fragmented urban policy apparatus during the 1960's.[4] In a third account, Cleaveland and his associates (1969) considered the notion of urban policy as more of a "spectrum" in which functionally distinct policy areas were more or less in play, depending on their degree of engagement in the particular aspect of the issue. They write:

> "Members of Congress typically have not yet developed stable frames of reference through which to approach the analysis of urban problems. Not infrequently, important urban dimensions are shunted aside as a congressional committee pursues some other aspect of the policy proposal before it. Definitional and conceptual confusion surround the idea of urban problems as a policy sector. In comparison to established policy fields … urban policy appears vague and hopelessly diffuse" (1969, 375).

A second issue also arises when examining the inchoate literature on urban policy processes. Whereas data are somewhat mixed regarding the high watermark era of the 1960's, it is even more difficult to get a strong sense of how these processes have played out over time. This is because very little research has been conducted along these lines. A few works stand out. Mark Gelfand (1975) offers a wonderfully thorough account of the historical patterns that led to the institutionalization of policymaking that targets urban problems. Yet his analysis ends in the mid-1960s. In their exploration, Baumgartner and Jones (1993) analyze historical determinants of urban policymaking to show that the "partial system" established in the 1960's was devastated by changing patterns in domestic politics in the latter part of the 20th Century. However, their data are centered on the dimensions of urban concerns over time versus the institutional complexity of the urban policy area. Moreover, the data end in 1989, which precludes scrutiny of more recent developments that have the potential to change the system. With all this in mind, I rely on the adept analysis of Wolman (1999, 32) to sum up the context of contemporary urban policy:

> [T]he fragmentation of decision making along functional lines in both the Executive Branch and Congress [make it] unlikely that a single urban policy system exists, or indeed, that policy is even frequently viewed in those terms (although this is the subject for empirical research).

Wolman is correct on two accounts. First, it appears that no "urban subsystem" exists to organize urban policymaking. Second, given the institutional complexity outlined above, the nature of the urban policymaking apparatus requires more empirical scrutiny.

Studying Federal Urban Policy

I employ several data sources to examine the evolving contours of the urban policy agenda over the last half-Century. I begin by demarcating and explaining what I term the macropolitics of urban policymaking. I present data to illustrate patterns of interest by the mass public, media outlets, and presidential administrations. As was pointed out above, one particular point of interest is the involvement of presidential administration in the urban policy process and the unique ability of top-level political players to overcome the inertia embedded within relevant institutions to coordinate policymaking.

I track macropolitics by presenting data from three sources. First, I trace the scope and nature of mass media coverage by identifying urban affairs content by using a key word search of the *New York*

[4] In support of this notion, Wolman (1971) suggests that a distinct "decision-making elite" exercised a great deal of power over the direction of federal housing policy during the era and that these power arrangements spilled over to shape urban policymaking. However the study provides no systematic analysis of the interplay of these dynamics across the relevant policy areas that organize policymaking for functionally distinct problems.

Times Index over the period 1946 through 2004.[5] Second, I trace public interest in urban affairs by examining opinion poll responses from Gallup's Most Important Problem survey.[6] Beyond systemic attention, I analyze the content of State of Union addresses as an indicator of presidential policy priorities.[7]

The interplay of congressional and administrative institutions within distinct policy systems – functional issue areas that include a lead or a few lead federal agencies or bureaus, prevailing congressional committees, a set of more or less stable interest groups, and a history of legislative action – provides the general frame for considering the institutional complexity of the federal urban policy apparatus. The subsystem concept, while not useful in considering the entirety of the federal urban apparatus, proves extremely useful in considering how policymaking is organized around certain functional dimension of the issue of urban affairs (See Cleaveland et. al. 1969, 350-375).

The primary data source is the issue content of congressional hearings that take place within 13 relevant policy subsystems.[8] Table 1 summarizes the key dimensions of these subsystems. Each has a distinct agenda focus that is institutionalized through regular consideration by actors within congressional committees or subcommittees and one or two key federal agencies. Moreover, subsystem agendas evidence some level of substantive commitment to functionally discrete urban concerns. In all 6,560 congressional hearings were coded over the period 1946 to 2004. The content of congressional hearings provides a sturdy and time-tested measure of congressional concern (Baumgartner and Jones 1993, 39-55; Jones 1983, 352). When congressional leaders schedule a hearing, they are devoting time, their most precious resource, to a particular topic (Manna 2006, 47-50, 181-182). With this in mind, policy scholars have long used data from congressional hearings to characterize the issue dynamics of individual subsystems (see Aberbach 1990, 83-93). The hearings provide institutionalized venues through which interest alignments are structured, and common problem definitions are fashioned.

The frame for identifying hearings relevant to my research is a congressional hearings dataset. The dataset is a comprehensive archive of hearings, which is coded by substantive topic. It is available for electronic access at the Policy Agendas Project.[9] I reviewed each of the 226 subtopics by which the Policy Agendas Project hearings are coded in order to identify those hearings that fall within subtopics

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[5] The *New York Times* is frequently referred to as the "newspaper of record" in the United States (Golan 2006). Whereas trends across new outlets may vary, issues materialize and recede at very similar rates (Chang et. al. 1987; Rogers, Dearing, and Change 1991).

[6] The survey provides a robust measure of the scope and intensity of public policy preferences (Jones and Baumgartner 2005, 251-253). Using data provided at the Policy Agendas Project that are coded and aggregated by policy content, I am able to trace public preferences toward a certain issue across time.

[7] Citizens are more likely to hear State of the Union addresses than any other presidential correspondences (See Edwards 2003). As such, Heather Larson (2006) shows that State of the Union addresses provide presidents with an ideal tool for signaling policy preferences to the public. I consider State of the Union addresses as policy documents that demonstrate presidential interest in urban affairs. Identification of urban policy content was based on key word searches.

[8] A much more detailed description of data and research design are provided in Sapotichne (2009).

[9] The data used here were originally collected by Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones, with the support of National Science Foundation grant number SBR 9320922, and are distributed through the Center for American Politics and Public Policy at the University of Washington, and the Department of Political Science at Penn State University. Neither NSF, nor the original collectors of the data, bear any responsibility for the analysis reported here.

which pertain to the thirteen policy subsystems I have studied.[10] The set of hearings held across these subsystems provides the basis for identifying congressional interest in urban affairs.

Table 1. Policy Subsystems Addressing Urban Affairs

Subsystems	Agenda Foci [a]	Federal Agencies [b]	Urban-relatedness [c]
Air Quality	Air pollution; greenhouse gas emissions	Office of Air and Radiation (EPA)	Municipal pollution; ambient air quality
Crime Detection	Law enforcement; crime prevention	Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (DOJ); Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (DOJ)	City crime; unrest; civil disturbances
Domestic Preparedness	Civil defense; domestic terrorism	Department of Homeland Security	High-impact events in densely-populated areas
Drinking Water Safety	Water pollution abatement	Office of Water (EPA)	Environmental runoff; water supply safety
Drug Trafficking	Drug interdiction / control	Drug Enforcement Agency (DOJ)	Urban drug trafficking and drug-related crime
Economic Development	Commercial and industrial growth	Economic Development Agency (Commerce); Bureaus within HUD	High-density development (e.g., enterprise zones)
Elementary and Secondary Education	Elementary / secondary education	Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (DOE)	Educating underprivileged; city school districts
Highway Construction	Highway construction / maintenance / safety	Federal Highway Administration (DOT)	Highway construction / maintenance in cities
Housing & Community Development	Community development; housing	Department of Housing and Urban Development	Neighborhood revitalization; urban low-income housing
Mass Transportation	Public transportation construction / maintenance / safety	Federal Transit Administration (DOT)	Urban mass transit systems
Public Health	Disease prevention; controlled / illegal substance abuse	Center For Disease Control and Prevention (HHS); Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (HHS)	City outbreaks; urban-level substance abuse
Social Welfare	Poverty / low-income assistance	Bureaus in HEW; OEO; HHS; USDA	Concentrated poverty assistance
Waste Management	Waste treatment / disposal	Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response (EPA)	Municipal waste; trash collection

Notes:
[a] Key agenda concerns that traditionally occupy the attention of subsystem actors
[b] Agencies with lead role in administering subsystem programs
[c] Urban issue emphasis that occupies the attention of subsystem actors

The Macropolitics of Federal Urban Policy

Scholars of American political institutions and the dynamics of the policy process have reached a stable and relatively long-standing conclusion regarding the relationship between the "systemic agenda" (Cobb and Elder 1983)—i.e., the prevailing political climate that encapsulates what the mass public is thinking about, and how it is thinking about it—and the presidential policy agenda. Simply put, their interaction is characterized both by reinforcing, as well as serially shifting, patterns of policy attention. In

[10] The potentially relevant topics for each subsystem were identified in advance from my investigation of the history of each subsystem.

the following section, I address how these dynamics play out when considering the macropolitics of urban affairs.

Patterns of "Systemic" Interest in Urban Problems

Figure 1 displays public and media interest in urban affairs over the period 1946 through 2004. Annualized counts of *New York Times Index* articles are plotted on the left-hand Y-axis (using the solid line). Annualized proportions of Gallup poll responses that listed topics with the strongest urban-relatedness as one of the most important problems facing the nation are plotted on the right-hand Y-axis (using the jagged line). Figure 3.1 illustrates a fairly robust interaction between media coverage and mass opinion, evidenced further by a Pearson's correlation coefficient of 0.49 ($p < 0.01$) over the entire series. Systemic interest peaks twice over the 59-year period. The first peak begins with a simultaneous rise in public and media attention in the mid-1960s that carries over into substantial interest, particularly in *New York Times Index* coverage, through the early 1970's.

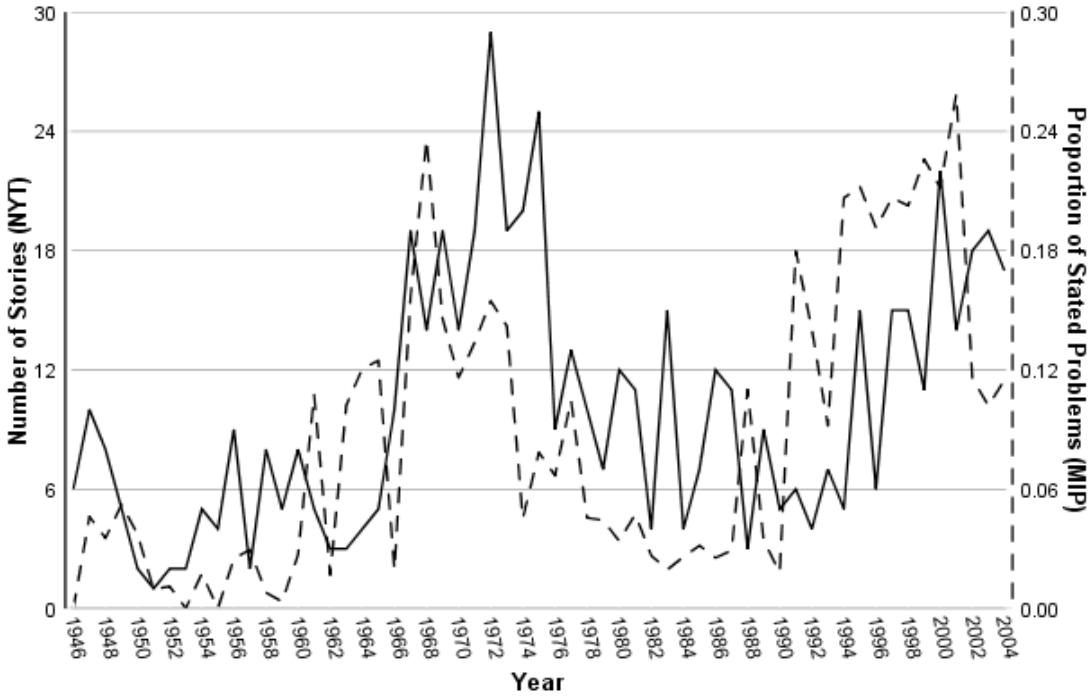

Figure 1. Media Coverage and Public Interest in Urban Affairs, 1946-2004

Not surprisingly, riot coverage propelled urban issues onto the systemic agenda. What we now know as the "race riots of the 1960's" began relatively discretely in Philadelphia and New York City in 1964. Yet racial unrest exploded onto the public consciousness in 1965 with rioting in Watts, Los Angeles that killed 34 people and resulted in tens of millions of dollars in property damage. In subsequent years, unrest spilled over into a number of other cities.[11] One study by Bryan Downes (1970) concludes that the period between 1964 and 1968 saw, in all, 329 "significant" riots involving tens of thousands of rioters in over 140 cities (also See Bent 1982).

[11] Four people were killed in racially charged riots in the Hough neighborhood in Cleveland in the summer of 1966; a bloody and destructive two-week period of rioting overwhelmed the cities of Newark and Detroit in the summer of 1967; after the assassination of Martin Luther Jing Jr. in April, 1968, African-Americans rioted in Chicago, Baltimore, and Washington DC.

Urban rioting was highly publicized and fundamentally unsettling to the nation's social fabric (Olzak, Shanahan, and McEneaney 1996). Examination of the content of media accounts during this period brings this to bear. The dominant media frame was with respect to the notion of "urban crisis", which captures both expansive and debilitating social ills, as well as physical deterioration. During the 1960's, crisis coverage etched the spatial relationship of urban problems – such as poverty, crime, failing buildings, and racial troubles – into the public consciousness. The *New York Times Index* doubled its coverage over the five-year period between 1964 and 1968. Evolving mass opinion reflected these concerns, undergoing a six-fold increase over the same period and capturing just under one-quarter of the public agenda space in 1968.

Public interest in urban affairs peaked in 1968 then continued its descent through to the late 1980's. Systemic interest plummeted from the mid-1970s through early 1990s. Urban-related *New York Times Index* stories, despite some volatility, decreased from an annual average of 21 stories in the first half of the 1970s to a series low of just over five articles annually from 1988 through 1992—a full nine articles below the series' annual mean. Public attention also saw a precipitous decline: from an annual average of just over 12 percent of the agenda space allocated to urban affairs from 1960 through 1975, to an annual average of fewer than 5 percent from 1976 through 1992.

A second peak began to take shape in the early 1990s. In 1992, four Los Angeles Police Department officers accused of exercising excessive force in the arrest of a black motorist named Rodney King were acquitted. The subsequent rioting in South-Central Los Angeles, much of which was captured in graphic images by the televised media, lead to the deaths of 50 people, injuries to 2,400 others, and resulted in $800 million in property damage. The riots were the worst in any American city during the 20th century. Not surprisingly, the systemic agenda, particularly mass public attention, reflected this new bout of racial unrest.

However, attention would continue to rise as a result of a second round of exogenous shocks. Three separate terrorist attacks on U.S. cities took place from 1993 through 2001: the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993, the attacks on the Murrah Building in Oklahoma City in 1995, and the destruction of the World Trade Center towers in 2001. The early 1990's attacks conspired to sustain media and public interest in urban affairs that had already climbed in response to the Los Angeles riots, culminating in 2001 in which over one-quarter (26 percent) of the public agenda was devoted to urban affairs—a series high and 18 percent above the annual average. Media coverage also rose from a series low of three stories in 1988 to an annual average of 18 stories from 2000 through 2004.

Regarding the context of coverage, the emergence of safety and anti-terrorism issues were solidified after the September 11, 2001 attacks. Of the 53 total *New York Times Index* stories referencing urban keywords from 9/11/2001 through 2004, thirty-four (64 percent) addresses anti-terrorism or homeland security issues. The coverage converged on two primary dimensions: cities as potential targets, and cities as potential terrorist alcoves. On the one hand, this sustained attention reflected the "game-changing" effects of 9/11 (Savitch 2003). Yet cities, at least ostensibly, were central to the nation's homeland security. Metropolitan landmarks, transit, and other critical infrastructure were recurrent targets in the FBI's publication of uncovered terrorist plots. At least in the short term, opinion polls showed signs that the selection of tourist destinations was influenced by the threat of more attacks (Schlenger et. al. 2002, 586).

Patterns of Presidential Interest in Urban Problems

How do systemic agenda patterns relate to the issue agendas of presidential administrations? Figure 2 displays annualized counts of State of the Union Addresses that exhibit urban content over the period 1946 through 2004. The pattern of presidential attention over time is strikingly punctuated. A sharp rise in presidential attention began during the first years of the Kennedy Administration and

continued to peak throughout the Johnson Administration. After President Johnson left office, presidential attention to urban affairs declined as rapidly as it had risen, leveling off at around two sentences per address during the Nixon/Ford years and continuing on this flat trajectory through 2004.

On one level, Figure 2 provides empirical verification for a very conventional account of the history of federal urban policy. A closer examination, however, draws out a number of intriguing patterns. The first is that presidential interest preceded media attention and the explosion of the Watts riots. The pre-riot spike sustained throughout the 1960's as Johnson's Congressional allies delivered on a mass of programs that built on early legislative victories. One chief reason: as Johnson's 1964 landslide election captured the White House for the Democrats, his coattails also transported more northern, urban Democrats into the halls of Congress than any time before, or anytime since, providing the political support that was needed to carry out the president's aggressive approach.[12]

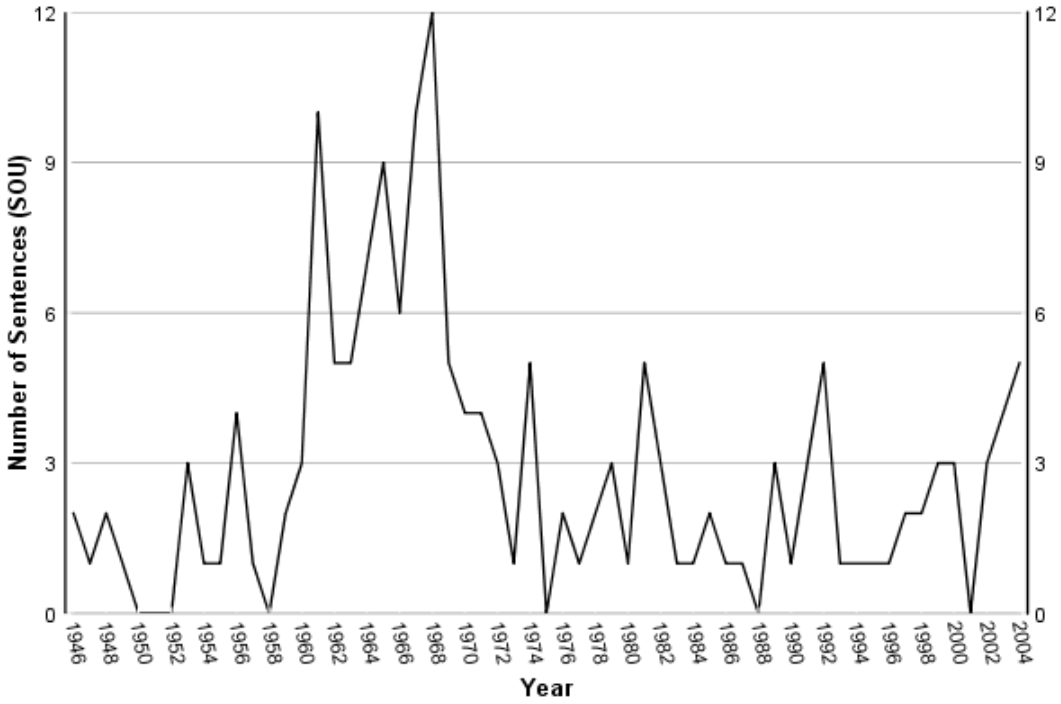

Figure 2. Presidential Interest in Urban Affairs, 1946-2004

As the racial unrest continued to boil over and the rhetoric of "crisis" gained prominence on the systemic agenda (culminating in the violent riots in Chicago, Baltimore, and Washington D.C. after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in April, 1968), the concentration of poverty and blight in high-density communities became fundamental to the president's domestic policy agenda. Architects of the Great Society, such as Sargent Shriver and Bill Moyers, were determined to target federal funds to cities to foster vigorous community involvement and counteract social and racial injustices. In a 1965 speech to Congress, Johnson argued that the multitude of federal programs that were just beginning to rise to the surface were "all part of an effort to build the great cities which are at the foundation of our hopes for a Great Society" (Johnson 1965).

[12] Indeed the northern liberal faction in the House of Representatives was so sizeable that Speaker of the House John McCormack needed the votes of only 15 northern Republicans and/or "TVA district" Democrats to reach a simple majority (Mollenkopf 1983, 85-87).

In all, the rioting did not set off Great Society-era urban policy as much as it emblematized widespread urban ills that were the targets of the administration's comprehensive response.[13] As the concept of crisis catapulted on the public agenda, it lent capacity and rhetorical ammunition to Democratic activists with an agenda for social change (Hirsch and Mohl 1993, 18). Indeed these actors would take advantage of the influx of liberals to foster support for aggressive governmental action, the broad goals of which were to ameliorate poverty. Yet the 1960's domestic agenda also displayed an explicit commitment to address the social and spatial causes of urban ills – namely by building up urban regions to improve the quality of life of their inhabitants. The commitment from the upper echelons of the federal government was expansive and broadly focused.

As depicted in Figure 2, President Richard Nixon and his successor, Gerald Ford, had very little sympathy for the social progressivism of the previous decade. Befitting the president's larger domestic policy goals, the debate at the Executive level over urban policy underwent a drastic and rapid sea change from "What do we do about the cities", to "How much leeway should we allow local officials" (Baumgartner and Jones 1993, 138)? This dual pattern of devolution and retrenchment would dominate the presidential agenda for the remainder of the series. Most notably, to the degree to which President Reagan expressed a commitment to cities, attention was focused either on overhauling and eliminating programs that served as strong symbols of 1960's social liberalism, or ameliorating urban crime and engaging the "urban front" of the national War on Drugs to eliminate coordinated drug trafficking and contain the crack epidemic. During this period, urban programs gave way to a new domestic priority: tax cuts. Hallmarks of fiscal federalism, such as UDAG and General Revenue Sharing (GRS) were eliminated while other programs were streamlined.

One exception to this trend during the 1970s and 1980s is the Carter Administration's articulation of a comprehensive urban strategy. Despite Carter's professed interest in policy integration, including the establishment of the President's Urban and Regional Policy Group (URPG) to launch a coherent urban development policy, data presented in Figure 2 belie his ostensible commitment. Indeed it is quite striking that the expression of a comprehensive strategy during the Carter Administration turned out to be filled with portent—ironically, not for federal coordination, but for continued macropolitical retrenchment.[14]

Systemic and presidential attention began to diverge for a third time beginning with the South-Central riots in 1992. Though President Clinton reacted to rising attention to urban problems by introducing an expansive federal spending package, Congressional Democrats eventually withdrew the legislation after Republican filibustering. In the 1993 State of the Union Address, the first of his presidency, a trivial increase from two sentences in 1992 to four sentences in 1993 was hardly the boost in attention to urban problems for which urban interests and big city mayors were hoping, particularly from the first Democratic president in twelve years. Indeed interest in cities stagnated over the entirety of the Clinton Presidency, with an annual average of two sentences per address.

Safety and security became a public priority after the terrorist attacks of 2001. During this period, more credence was given to domestic preparedness and anti-terrorism than at any other time in recent history. How central were cities to the broader preparedness initiative? As depicted in Figure 2, presidential attention to cities gradually amplified over the 2002-2004 period,[15] though the dimension of anti-terrorism dominated how President Bush talked about cities. In each of the twelve sentences

[13] Baumgartner and Jones (1993) refer to such phenomena as "consolidating" events—"dramatic symbols of problems that are already rising rapidly to national attention" (130).

[14] This is particularly telling as it supports the notion that Carter's urban policy approach was orthogonal to his domestic agenda and very much in line with the terms of urban policy debate set during the Nixon/Ford era (See Wolman and Merget 1980).

[15] The 2001 address was delivered seven months prior to the World Trade Center attacks.

referencing urban affairs in the post-9/11 period, aspects of homeland security or domestic anti-terror efforts were the focus of attention in each one. Yet city-related problems seemed to be peripheral to the domestic War on Terror. In 86 references to anti-terror and homeland security in 2003 and 2004, less than one percent was in the context of cities.

In all, as evidenced by similar yet not altogether equivalent trajectories over the last half-century, the three macropolitical elements exhibit patterns of positive feedback by which attention in one venue interacts with attention in others. The feedback process was particularly high in the 1960's. A confluence of forces catapulted urban affairs on to the macropolitical agenda, including strong Democratic majorities in Congress, an activist presidential administration, and widespread urban rioting, which spawned the language of "crisis" and symbolized the plight of urban populations. However, as President Johnson left office amidst the tumult of the Vietnam War, macropolitical interest evolved. This evolution was somewhat disjointed at first as media attention to the urban crisis sustained across the 1970's. Yet attention rapidly converged at very trivial levels in the mid 1970s, continuing throughout the early 1990's. As one president after another eschewed urban affairs, and as the rhetoric of "crisis" abated from the systemic agenda, urban policy devolved into a backwater of White House politics. Yet as urban concerns expanded on to the systemic agenda after the Rodney King riots and the subsequent terrorist attacks of 1993, 1995, and 2001, city problems once again gained some traction on the domestic agenda. Overall interest in urban affairs augmented. However, the Bush Administration averted top-down integration in a broader "subnational" homeland security strategy, which struggled to deliver in the face of goal uncertainty and functional decentralization.

The Scope and Nature of the Urban Policymaking Apparatus

Congressional hearings across the thirteen subsystems were coded to provide indicator variables of two distinct categories of urban policy. I classify the first as *comprehensive* (space-based) urban issue focus – defining the problems of cities with respect to spatial antecedents, such as the comprehensive goals inherent in instructing presidents to devise biannual urban policy reports. The second type of attention is *issue-specific* (problem-based). Hearings that fall under this classification address either the fostering of the physical development of urban regions (community action plans; mass transit grants), or problems that are deemed to be particularly severe in urban areas (pollution abatement programs; poverty assistance; waste treatment and disposal). Individually aggregating both categories of urban policy by year provides measures of subsystem-level attention to different aspects of urban affairs over time.

Comprehensive Policy Focus

Figure 3 plots the annual number of hearings that address urban affairs as spatial and wide-ranging policy problems.[16] Perhaps the most striking feature of Figure 3 is the leptokurtic, or peaked, nature of the data. The mean of the entire series is 1.69, with a standard deviation of 2.86. However the kurtosis score is a very high 13.6 (standard error = 0.61), indicating a distribution with a taller peak

[16] One illustrative example is a hearing entitled "The Federal Government and the Urban Crisis," held in 1968 by the Senate Committee on Banking and Currency. In the hearing's letter of transmittal, the committee chair stated that its purpose was to "Assess the role of the Government in providing the investment and credit needs of urban ghetto areas". Another hearing held in 1977 by the House Committee on Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs, was entitled "To Save a City". This hearing, which stretched out over a number of months, called expert witnesses from various academic and policy institutions to discuss national urban policy efforts in other developed nations, and the plethora of hindrances which exist for those attempting to mount such a coherent effort in the United States. These and other comparable hearings – 105 in all – comprise the segment of the urban agenda space that spans the issues relevant in considering a comprehensive *N*ational *U*rban *P*olicy.

around the mean and fatter tails – in other words, more extreme and abrupt yearly attention, mixed in with a lot of average levels of yearly attention. One the one hand, the rather nominal annual average indicates that very little subsystem-level attention has been devoted to considering the spatial interconnectedness of urban problems. The nature of the variable's distribution, however, indicates that when attention does come, it seems to come in waves.

Following negligible levels of attention spanning from 1946 to 1965, congressional interest skyrocketed in the year 1966, when a total of 17 hearings devoted to a more expansive vision for considering urban problems took place. As I discuss in Sapotichne (2009), Johnson's electoral mandate paved the way for an expansive domestic policy agenda that engaged with issues ranging from poverty to housing and civil rights. Urban poverty and physical deterioration were central to administration's agenda. In a short period of time, programs spanning various policy subsystems emerged to distribute resources to the nation's most impoverished communities. The 26 hearings dealing comprehensively with urban issues from 1966 through 1968 were held across four policy subsystems—the areas of housing and urban development (12), economic development (9), social welfare (3), and elementary and secondary education (2) were all involved.[17]

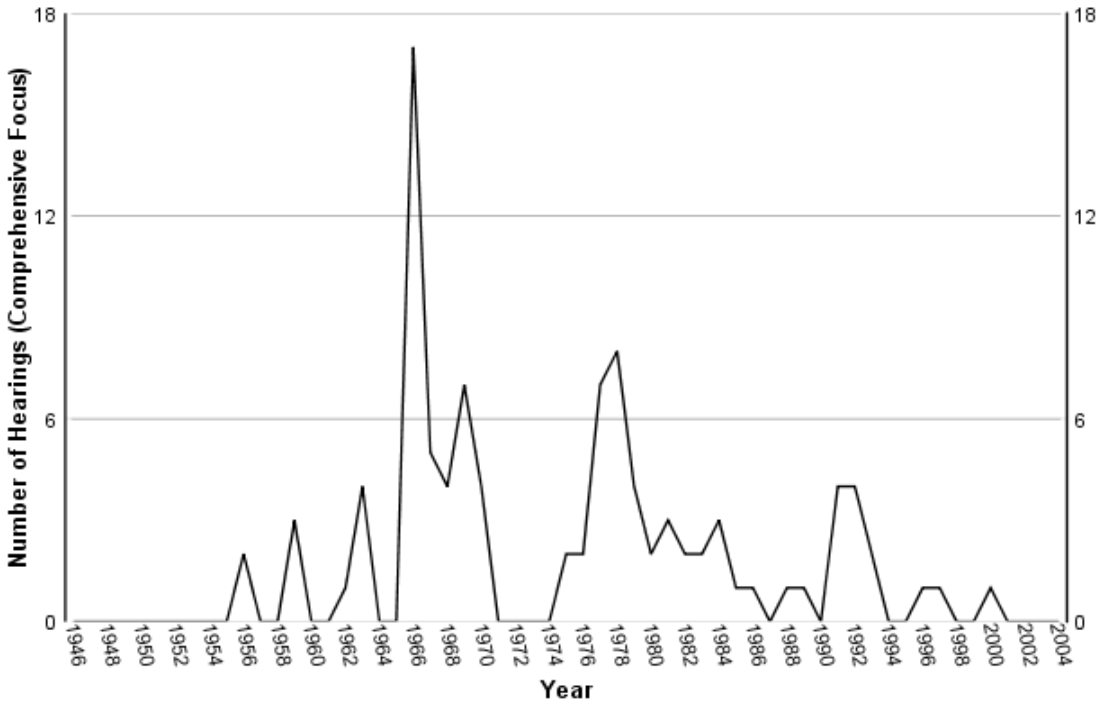

Figure 3. Comprehensive Urban Problem Focus, 1946-2004

As unrest and violence began to pervade societal debate in the mid-1960s, and rioting spread out across dozens of cities, the Johnson Administration constructed an expansive urban initiative by bridging subsystems that were adjacent to the Administration's spatially constructed definition of the problem. However, the ember that had sparked policymaking congruence across the macropolitical and subsystem

[17] Key bureaucratic players from adjacent subsystems were frequently called as expert witnesses. A series of hearings in 1966 and 1967 on the "Federal Role in Urban Affairs" included witnesses from OEO; HUD; and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW); as well as an overwhelming number of city level officials and urban interest groups. During the same period, Senators Robert F. Kennedy and Jacob Javits held high profile hearings on the nation's maturing urban crisis.

levels quickly extinguished. Attention dropped precipitously over the remainder of the 1960's to an annual average of five hearings, before falling completely to zero, until the year 1975.

A second, albeit less severe, uptick in attention emerges during the Carter Administration. Arguably, Carter's "New Partnership" initiative was the first and last attempt to establish a National Urban Policy, per se (See Kaplan 1990, 176; Waste 1998, 62-64). Beyond the establishment of a coordinative agency in the Office of the Executive, the effort never really got off the ground. As depicted in Figure 3.3, more space-based attention at the congressional level followed suit. Indeed the congressional byproduct was the formation of a new "Subcommittee on the City" (Committee on Banking, Finance and Urban Affairs), which was chaired by the Democratic Congressman Henry Reuss from Wisconsin. The subcommittee held a number of hearings during this period with ambitious titles such as "Toward a National Urban Policy", and "How Cities Can Grow Old Gracefully". This increase in congressional interest in a more place-oriented and unified urban policy is reflected in Figure 3. While the raw figures are not showy in and of themselves, the annual average over Carter's term is six hearings, which is over three times the series mean.

As Reaganomics began to wrest hold over the trajectory of domestic politics, more comprehensive and spatially-oriented attention to urban problems abated once again. A total of 27 hearings were held from 1981, the first year of the Reagan Administration, to the end of George W. Bush's second term in 1992, an average of just over one hearing per year. This set the stage for paltry levels of attention throughout the Clint on Administration and G.W. Bush Administration as well.

Problem-Specific Policy Focus

But what of congressional attention to functionally discrete urban problems? Two particular types of policymaking behavior are of interest: the first are hearings held on aspects of individual programs that specifically target urban growth – such as the distribution of grants for the extension of city transit lines or the retrenchment of urban development programs – without referencing a more overarching place-based approach; the second include hearings held to address problems deemed to be particularly severe in high-density urban areas – such as waste treatment and disposal, crime, or pollution abatement. For Figure 4, I aggregate these hearings by year. The dotted line is an exponentially smoothed trend line provided for presentation purposes to help the reader observe the size of the urban agenda space during different periods of time.

Two patterns are evident in Figure 4. The first pattern fits the conventional story of federal urban policymaking. Following fairly insignificant levels of attention in the pre-1960's period of the series, attention to urban affairs begins to spike during the early stages of the Kennedy/Johnson years. Indeed problem-based attention rises to a yearly mean of 44 hearings from 1965 through 1968. This parallels the level of attention paid to urban affairs at the systemic and presidential levels. It also seems to feedback to parallel the rapid spike in spatially-oriented targeting depicted in Figure 3. Simply put, congressional attention to urban problems exploded during the high watermark period of the 1960's.

However, as Nixon took over as Commander-in-Chief, discrete, problem-based attention to urban affairs sustained, reaching an annual mean of 50 hearings over the course of the Nixon/Ford period – an average of 17 hearings more per year than during the Kennedy/Johnson years. As depicted by the trend line, this upward trajectory sustained for nearly two decades. Discrete targeting of urban problems reached an annual average of 67 hearings throughout the Carter Administration, and then peaked twice during the two subsequent Republican administrations. 1983 saw a total of 96 hearings; 1989 saw a series high of 100 hearings. Indeed, the annual level of attention from 1981 through 1992 was 71 hearings, about 40 hearings more on average than during the Great Society period. As President Clinton, entered the White House in 1993 as the first Democratic President since the 1970's, the urban agenda began to retract. The total number of hearings headed quickly and steadily downward, a trend which

lasted throughout the rest of the 1990's. From 2000 to 2004, during George W. Bush's first term, the number leveled out at to a little over 50 hearings per year.

Figure 4. Problem-Specific Urban Focus, 1946-2004

Mapping the Contours of the Urban Agenda

Here I examine the relationship between the scope of the agenda space and its issue composition. I determine the issue structure of these contours by using Policy Agendas Project subtopic codes along six core dimensions of urban policymaking: physical and community development; crime and preparedness; environment and energy; health and welfare; education; and transportation. Hearings that fell within one of these dimensions were aggregated by year to determine the annual issue composition of the agenda space.[18]

Let us first examine the total issue make-up of the urban agenda space. Figure 5 is a bar plot that displays the aggregate number of hearings coded under one of the six dimensions, from the year 1946 through 2004. The issue dimensions are arrayed in descending order. The percent of the total agenda space occupied by a given dimension is provided inside its respective bar. The dimensions that comprises the largest overall share of the urban agenda, physical and community development, garners 24 percent of all hearings. Crime and preparedness come second, occupying 21 percent of the agenda space. Environment and energy concerns are third, collecting 18 percent of all hearings. Health and welfare issues are fourth with 17 percent. Strikingly, hearings held on issues of education and transportation, two aspects of urban affairs that many would consider as central pieces of the policymaking puzzle, combine to comprise less than 25 percent of the total agenda space.

One evident pattern to emerge from Figure 5 is the fairly even distribution of attention across the top four dimensions. In all, a mere seven percentage points (only 181 hearings over 59 years) separate the top four dimensions of the agenda space. Eighty-one percent of the agenda space cross-cuts four issue

[18] Details on the aggregation of issue foci are provided in Sapotichne (2009).

dimensions at reasonably similar levels. This is a striking finding that points to the complexity of the agenda space, and the confluence of policymaking institutions that at different points in time play a significant role in federal urban policymaking.

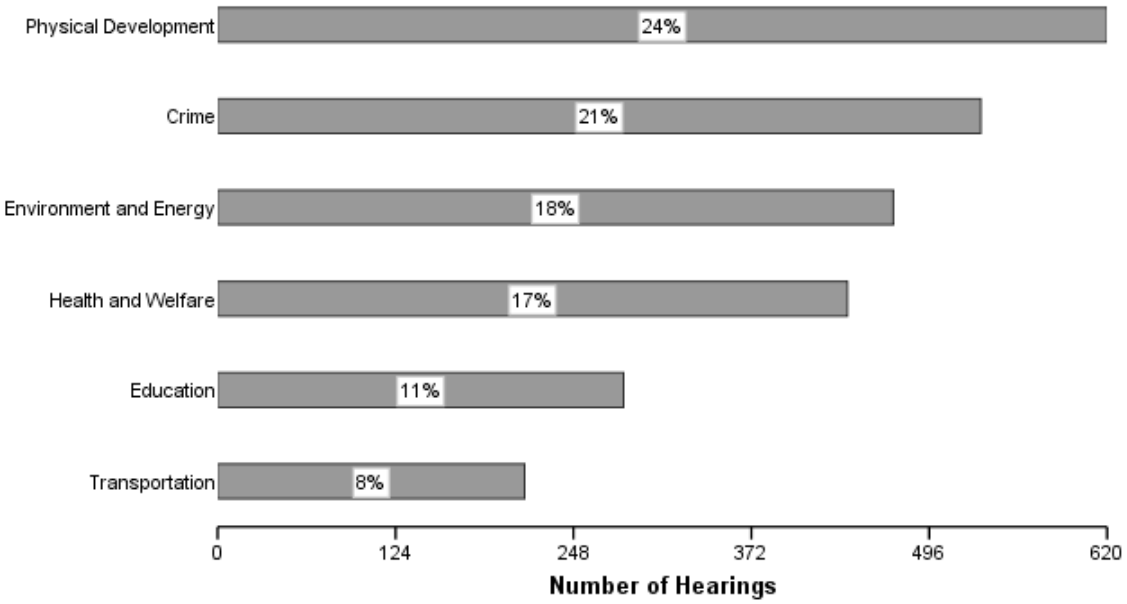

Figure 5. Issue Composition of the Urban Agenda Space

But how has this constellation of issue dimensions evolved over time? Figure 6 displays shifting patterns of issue composition as a percentage area graph over the period 1946 through 2004. Here, I hold the size of the agenda space constant in order to consider the percentage of the total that each dimension consumes. Two patterns are especially evident. The first is the relatively tight distribution of policy focus during the Great Society era. After fairly erratic fluctuations in policy attention during the first 15 years of the series, the agenda space more or less stabilized focus on two central and spatially interconnected aspects of urban policymaking – physical and community development, and social welfare. In short, the composition of the subsystem agenda space parallels the definition of urban problems at the macropolitical level.

Federal investment in urban growth and development was a primary aspect of the congressional agenda over the period 1961 through 1968, comprising 36 percent of the total urban agenda space over the eight year period. This reflects real policy output targeting urban growth. Categorical grants-in-aid for the revitalization and renewal of physical infrastructure proliferated. Federal spending on regional and community development more than tripled to $ 9.7 billion in 1968 (from $2.6 billion in 1961). Aside from traditional bricks-and-mortar development programs, market-based housing programs administered through HUD began to spring up as well. The most established of these programs was an interest-rate subsidies plan that led to the construction of 1.6 million low- and moderate-income housing units between 1968 and 1972 (Peterson 1995, 58-60). Comprising 12 percent of the agenda space, urban transportation infrastructure also received a boost. In 1964, Congress authorized funds for mass transit construction for the first time in the nation's history. Three years prior, a handful of transit "demonstration cities" received aid to help conceive and plan transit systems.

Social welfare, health, and education issues also ascended to prominence during the Kennedy and Johnson years, comprising a pooled 34 percent of the agenda space from 1961 to 1968. A bevy of redistributive programs were established to focus federal resources on assisting urban social and economic ills. The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, the War on Poverty's legislative centerpiece,

included substantial urban emphases. Some of the most enduing initiatives of the era targeted cities and urban populations. Job Corps provided vocational training to prepare disadvantaged teenage youths for the labor market. Upward Bound was established to offer counseling and other special programs to encourage impoverished teenagers to attend college. Community Health Centers, Neighborhood Youth Corps, and Adult Workshops Programs, at least in part, distributed direct aid to underserved and impoverished urban areas. In the mid-1960s, OEO's Community Action Program (CAP), the genesis of future urban aid programs, funneled over $2 billion in direct urban aid to community organizations in impoverished urban neighborhoods to foster bottom-up revitalization. In all, billions of dollars were annually distributed in the attempt to systematically address the social and spatial underpinning of fundamental urban problems.

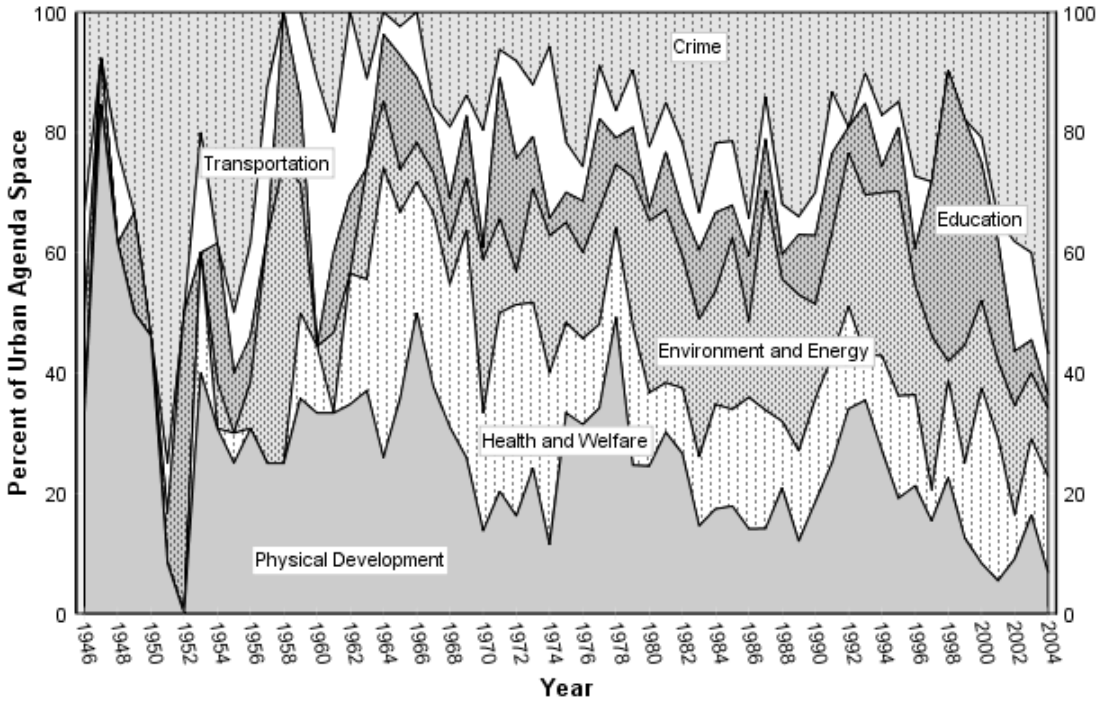

Figure 6. Evolving Issue Composition of the Urban Agenda Space, 1946-2004

Under the auspices of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, the nucleus of the contemporary federal urban education agenda was established. At its inception, the program targeted school districts with a concentration of poor and unemployed persons. During the 1960's, this was a serious program with an appended allocation of over $20 million annually for equipment, classroom support, library resources, and supplemental education centers. Urban education received further augmentation through the Economic Opportunity Act, which established school lunch programs as well as Head Start. The latter, which is still around today and widely held to be one of the more successful War on Poverty initiatives, prepares children living in poverty for kindergarten and early elementary education by providing social, health-based, and educational skills.

The centerpiece of the Johnson urban policy agenda, indeed the most controversial and polarizing program to emerge from the War on Poverty, was the 1966 Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act, known less formally as "Model Cities". This ambitious federal program encompassed both core dimensions of the Kennedy/Johnson urban agenda—physical revitalization and social welfare. The chief aim of Model Cities was to undertake a massive and comprehensive reinvestment in six designated cities. These "demonstration cities", a geographical designation that quickly expanded to appease powerful members of Congress, would serve as sites for the *complete* renewal of slum

neighborhoods by providing affordable and "socially meaningful" communities in large urban centers. To administer the federal funds appended to the program, Community Action Agencies (CAAs) were established to facilitate the "maximum feasible participation" of previously unrepresented and underserved populations in planning revitalization projects, and seeing-through the effective distribution of federal dollars (Moynihan 1970).

Initially, the program was offered up by it's chief proponents as a more holistic and community-based approach to removing the "shackles of urban poverty" by fostering participation in the revitalization of underserviced and blighted urban communities (Wilson 1987). But because substantial federal resources were at stake, local officials wrangled with African American community groups over how funds would be distributed, and federal officials, who wanted to dole out a piece of the pie to their districts, wrangled over the selection of demonstration cities.[19] Indeed federal policy analysts were irritated over the political transmogrification of a once innovative endeavor (Frieden and Kaplan 1975). In the end, the program served mainly as "an improved service delivery system for efficiently channeling existing federal programs to participating city agencies" (Kleinberg 1995, 180; Ripley 1972). In this respect, it was initially very successful. Model Cities disbursed nearly $2.3 billion in grant payments to 150 cities in the late 1960s.

In all, the period from 1961 to 1968 saw a whopping 82 percent of the agenda space devoted to aggressive distributive and redistributive intervention in the nation's cities. The number of federal grant programs addressing aspects of physical growth and social welfare nearly tripled between 1960 and 1968. Over the same period, the amount of federal grant payments to tackle physical or social ills more than tripled—from $7 billion to $24 billion. The urban agenda paralleled the administration's forceful approach to domestic policymaking. Social problems were solvable. Poverty could be ameliorated. The urban front of the national War on Poverty was fought through centralized planning, community participation, and a strong commitment to the social and physical revitalization of the central cities.

The second pattern to emerge from Figure 6 is the abruptness at which the spatial foci of the Kennedy/Johnson years gave way to different urban concerns. To be sure, the subsequent era of "New Federalism" carried with it a more disaggregated agenda space. The rapid shift from categorical to more discretionary block grants wrested away a great deal of power from federal community development and housing subsystem officials. Some programs were changed to meet the New Federalist approach. Others were disbanded altogether. One of only a few survivors of pre-Nixon urban development policy, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), according to the preamble of the reauthorization, was reformulated to both "increase private investment" and "streamline all levels of government programming". The game quickly changed from one centered on actively aiding the nation's cities to the decentralization of the distribution of resources.

The pattern most evident during the post-1960's period is a rise in two specific dimensions. As depicted in Figure 3.6, the agenda space exhibited a much more pronounced focus on crime and urban safety. Environmental and energy issues gained prominence during this era as well. As place-based problems fell from consideration, the agenda space became more evenly distributed. Indeed, attention was allocated simultaneously to four issue dimensions during the 1980s: development issues (19 percent), crime and safety (24 percent), environmental and energy concerns (24 percent), and health and welfare (15 percent). In and of itself, crime and safety concerns far surpassed the dual foci of the Great Society.

With respect to environmental and energy issues, as pointed out by Jones (1975), the modern environmental movement was born out of public concern about environmental quality at the local level. Urban environmental and energy issues rapidly gained agenda status in the 1970's – a decade that saw a striking outpouring of federal legislation that contained city-level targeting. Waste (1988) writes that

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[19] The figure more than tripled from 33 in the initial task force report to 150 to whom aid was eventually distributed.

"American cities owe the Nixon administration a real debt for placing the issues of clean air and clean drinking water on the front burner of national policymaking" (61), not least due to the outpouring of resources tied up in the Clean Air and Water Acts to address pollution, runoff and drinking water contamination, and municipal water and waste water treatment. These programs institutionalized channels of federal funds to target densely populated regions.

More targeted legislation with development and growth benefits was enacted in the 1980s and 1990s. Superfund (The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980) directed federal funds to the clean up and restoration of thousands of abandoned or uncontrollable hazardous waste sites, many of which were located in metropolitan areas. Brownfield cleanup programs, which subsidize the "recycling" of less severely contaminated industrial sites, began inauspiciously as an early 1990s pilot project in Cleveland, Ohio, but now boast a number of innovative cleanup projects in former industrial centers across the nation such as Seattle, Washington and Atlanta Georgia (Ringquist 1993). A vast majority of highly publicized cleanup sites are in urban areas. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania has revitalized much of its waterfront through the use of substantial federal cleanup funds. Steel mill sites were converted into up-scale residential villages and outdoor malls. Parks and other high-profile tourist attractions were developed under the auspices of Brownfield recycling programs.

In all, key legislation targeting acute environmental and energy problems was institutionalized within federal agencies and congressional committees that are generally considered peripheral to the federal urban policy mission. It can be argued that the EPA and DOE were key administrators of federal urban policy so-during the called "environmental decades" of the 1970s and 1980s. Indeed over 20 percent of all urban-related hearings held from 1977 to 2004 addressed environmental and energy issues.

Urban Crime Versus Urban Growth

As is illustrated in Figure 6, the most prominent evolutionary element of the federal urban policy agenda in the last half-century is with respect to the rise of crime and safety concerns. This is more clearly depicted in Figure 7, which displays 5-year moving averages of the percent of the total urban agenda space devoted to physical development and social welfare, and crime and safety (which encompasses drugs, crime detection, domestic preparedness, and aspects of public health that deal with outbreaks). The figure displays the interplay of these dimensions to show that crime and safety is on the rise at the exact period when development and social concerns begin to taper off. This dual trajectory carries over throughout the 1970s and 1980s until the two attributes diverge to more or less replace one another at the end of the series.

Much of the legislative attention to urban crime policy was institutionalized in 1968 under the auspices of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act, one of the last vestiges of the Great Society. The legislation established the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA), which provided the blueprint for Nixon/Ford era grants inducing local law enforcement to aggressively address organized crime and violent outbreaks. Urban crime and safety was the primary presidential and congressional concern during the 1980s, indeed, as depicted in Figure 7, surpassing social and developmental concerns for the first time since before the Great Society. A large share of the Reagan anti-crime agenda exhibited a direct urban emphasis.

From a legislative standpoint, the Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984 and the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 comprised the nucleus of the Reagan (and Bush) domestic crime agenda and indeed the War on Drugs. The crime "game" changed during this era. "Hard" drug use among the urban poor reached endemic proportions. The federal response was considerably more punitive. LEAA was phased out in favor of more penal crime initiatives, such as mandatory sentencing for crimes linked to drug trafficking and even drug use. Many antidrug programs contained substantial urban emphases. A great deal of intergovernmental aid aimed to motivate city law enforcement to aggressively pursue dug users.

Law enforcement block grants were established to motivate city police departments to create and train drug enforcement units. Yet as drug use has declined since the 1980's, incarceration rates have skyrocketed creating a localized problem by which city police forces continue to aggressively target inner-city drug users at the same time central city and county prisons are implementing early release programs to countervail overages (Scheingold 1995). In all, as crime and safety issues gained standing on the domestic policy agenda, federal actors specializing in drug interdiction and crime detection played prominent roles in the formulation and administration of much urban-related policy during the 1980s.

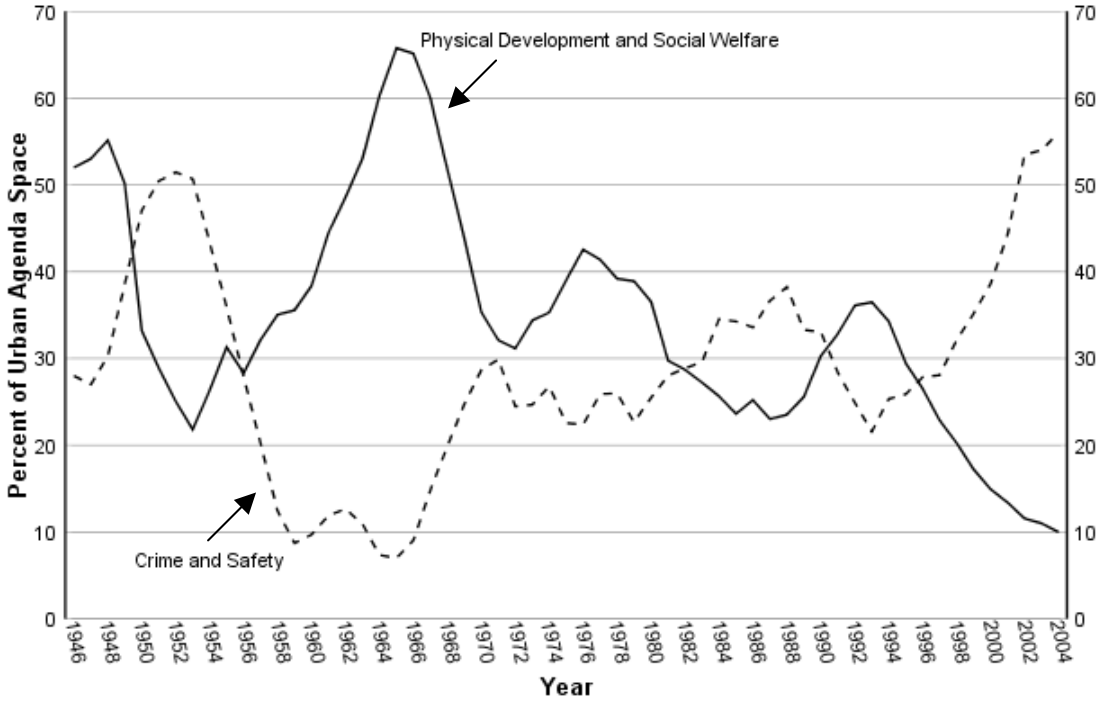

Figure 7. Evolving Urban Problems, 1946-2004

At first blush, the divergence in the two dimensions depicted in Figure 7 might seem to parallel that of presidential partisanship. In light of electoral incentives for the two national parties, it seems likely that Democratic Presidents would adopt a physical infrastructure and social welfare frame to address urban problems while Republicans control the agenda space to refocus attention on more punitive aspects of urban policy, such as criminal justice and drug interdiction. However the divergence in policy attention in the 1990's belies this partisan account.

While traditional urban attributes ascended around the time of the South-Central Los Angeles riots in 1992, the biggest piece of urban policy legislation to emerge from the Clinton Administration was the much touted Crime Control Bill of 1994. Indeed the pattern exhibited in Figure 7 seems to suggest that the Clinton crime bill set the trajectory for urban policy throughout the rest of time series under study. A number of the bill's core provisions centered on city and local law enforcement. Yet diverging from the War on Drugs approach, the Clinton bill so aggressively targeted high-crime urban neighborhoods that conservative opponents accused the president and his congressional allies of "subsidizing the cities" through pork-barrel politics (Congressional Digest 1994, 169-170). Supporters of the crime purported that it addressed the social roots of crime. One of the bill's most infamous provisions, the subsidization of midnight basketball leagues, was heavily criticized. Yet a number of counseling and other similar programs were administered as well. In all, the scope of the Clinton crime agenda expanded to propel cities to a more central role in the distribution of federal resources.

The span of urban safety and security issues continued to evolve throughout the 1990s as three high-profile terrorist attacks occurred in two cities in the nine-year stretch from 1993 to 2001. Subnational funding for domestic preparedness skyrocketed after 9/11 as homeland security grant programs – such as First Responder and Law Enforcement Grants, Port Security Grants, and the Urban Areas Security Initiative, (which directly targets "high-threat" urban areas) – proliferated. Indeed, from 2001 to 2004, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and its predecessor agencies provided over $11 billion to address local and city-level terrorism and emergency preparedness, along with another $4.8 billion from the Departments of Justice and Health and Human Services. Subsystems dealing with such discrete issues as crime prevention and public health were charged with administering homeland security training grants. Funds were provided to develop and test city government evacuation and preparedness plans. In all, the urban policy agenda in the post-9/11 period reflected the heightened awareness of suicide terrorism and homeland security in domestic policymaking.

The Evolving Scope and Nature of Federal Urban Policy

Several patterns are especially evident from this analysis of subsystem-level interest in urban affairs. The first is the divergent temporal trajectories of more place-based and cohesive policies and narrower, more problem-specific policies. Congressional interest spiked in the early 1960's as a confluence of factors propelled cities and urban policy problems into the public spotlight. A more overarching policy approach followed a parallel course as systemic and presidential attention. While the presidential agenda was more expansive than cohesive, the consideration of a more comprehensive effort spilled over in the mid-1960s, gaining agenda status for the socially and spatially interconnected problems of education, development, transportation, and social welfare. Yet this attention was short-lived. Whereas the decline of comprehensive attention was as drastic as its rapid rise, the urban agenda sustained, but evolved.

The second pattern is the sustained degree of attention to urban problems over the course of the series. This is a striking and nuanced portrait of federal urban policy that heretofore has gone unaddressed in a systematic way. The data presented above are suggestive of a number of forces at play. The first is that macropolitical intervention seemed to serve as a unifying force in the 1960s. Comprehensive attention rose and indeed spilled over across a handful of adjacent subsystems. Moreover, a number of subsystems got in the game, so to speak, to actively participate in the formulation and administration of urban policy that aligned with the two connected and undergirding dimensions of the president's urban agenda – social welfare and physical deterioration.

As the macropolitical "issue attention cycle" for urban affairs subsided in the post-1960s period and the social and physical underpinnings of the Great Society came under attack, the federal urban agenda "space" indeed enlarged. This suggests that a number of forces drove this process. The first is the changing dynamics of the macropolitical system. As presidents lost interest in cities, the glue that held together the policy approach in the 1960s lost a great deal of its adhesive. How the problems of urban America were defined changed to reflect partisan and ideological predilections of macropolitical actors. However, urban policy did not simply wither away in the face of shifting patterns of presidential concern. Traditional aspects of the policy area, namely community revitalization, economic development, and housing maintained prominent dimensions of the urban agenda space over the subsequent decades of the series under study. To be sure, these programs have undergone important shifts in objectives, motivation, and instrumentation. Yet their essence is federal financing of land acquisition, redevelopment, temporary real estate and other tax abatements, and abatements of various regulatory provisions.

However the chief genesis of this process is the rise of fresh urban policy attributes, such as environmental and energy concerns, crime, preparedness, and safety. The constellation of policies and programs that occupied the urban agenda space evolved over time and the issue agenda expanded to accommodate this evolution. Indeed legislation with strong urban emphases reemerged in institutions

that were more "adjacent" to issues of greater public concern. Key environmental legislation from the 1970s and 1990s and crime and safety programs from the 1980s and 2000s included substantial provisions that targeted acute aspects of these problems in urban areas. These changes were not necessarily partisan or ideological, although the role of presidential administrations in defining urban problems and formulating domestic policy strategies is not a trivial part of this story.

More to the point: as policy targets and tools evolved to fit subsystem purviews, the agenda space continued to fragment. Urban policies were more or less "stovepiped" horizontally – narrow urban concerns such as waste water management, on the one hand, and drug interdiction, on the other, were embedded in different institutions, to be addressed by different actors, and more or less irrespective of their spatial interconnectivity. To put it plainly, urban policy devolved to new and to more policy subsystems. As urban attention was more or less codified through major legislative gauntlets such as the Clean Air Act and the Clinton Crime Bill, the patterns presented above suggest that the narrowness of problem-specific policymaking has precluded cohesion. Moreover, the motivation for spillover was tamped down as presidential initiatives were more focused on discrete urban problems. As such, federal environmental actors had little occasion to talk about cities with transportation or development interests. However, as attention patterns in the 1990s and 2000s indicate, the dual foci of safety and security reached prominent agenda status, potentially pointing to a more cohesive and focused agenda space than at any other time in the post-Great Society era.

Conclusion

In this paper, I analyzed the scope and nature of the urban policy agenda across macropolitical and subsystem-level processes. In sum, macropolitical interest in cities followed a very conventional pattern of federal urban policymaking. However, examining the institutional complexity of the policy area at the congressional and executive levels led me to paint a rather divergent portrait of the urban policy process.

What are the implications of these findings for the institutional and political feasibility of the Obama Administration's urban policy aspirations? On one hand, the disaggregated nature of the urban policy apparatus is reflective of a fragmented federal system. However, urban policies include an added level of complexity as they encompass both spatial and functional components of policymaking. Indeed the patterns presented above are suggestive that the urban policy apparatus and macropolitical institutions interact in a unique way. On the one hand, executives and other macropolitical players are likely to respond to heightened systemic attention by attempting to foster a more cohesive policy approach. The Johnson Administration established what some consider as the only actual "Urban Policies" in the nation's history under the auspices of the Community Action Program and Model Cities (See Mills 1987). Indeed these programs emblematized the Administration's focus on the social underpinnings of "the urban problem". A cabinet-level agency was established to provide urban problems a seat at the table. The concept of crisis pervaded public discussion as urban rioting multiplied across the nation's central cities.

A more spatially oriented approach to urban problems reached its peak at the congressional level during this period as well. During this period, the notion of "urban" was "valuable" in light of the proliferation of distributive and redistributive aid packages with very broadly conceived, spatial goals. As such, congressional actors were more likely to want "in the game" of urban policymaking. However, as urban policy lost value – indeed as the intergovernmental system established during the Great Society came under attack and more discrete problems of safety and security began to gain traction – the number of institutions with a hand in directing resources to cities grew substantially. One chief outcome of this process over time is that aspects of urban policymaking are embedded in more, and indeed in different, federal policymaking institutions.

Both the special nature of the urban policymaking apparatus, as well as the institutionalization of different dimensions of urban policy, create a dilemma for federal policymakers with an interest in lunching a cohesive approach. Since the "pie is already sliced", a more problem-oriented approach is seemingly more tractable. Moreover, Lawerence, et al. (2010) suggest in a recent piece that public opinion regarding federal "place-based" urban policies is still relatively unfavorable. When formulating an urban policy, labeling matters. As was pointed out in the example of President Clinton's crime legislation, framing urban problems along the lines of issues with higher degrees of public interest (in this instance, crime detection and prevention) presented a plausible option for federal lawmakers with an interest in directing resources to urban constituencies. Brownfields and homeland security, as was pointed out above, are also historical examples of successful repackaging strategies.

The Obama Administration's "green economy" initiative, of which EECBG is a central component, seems to derive directly from the partial success of the Clinton Administration's Crime Bill – at least with respect to the targeting of resources to discrete urban problems. One chief difference, however, is that the USCM and urban political officials were key in raising the profile of energy efficiency policies as a means to address *poverty* and *urban development* as well. The launching of the highly publicized Mayor's Climate Change Agreement, some have argued, was meant to send a direct signal to federal officials that a reformulation (or at least, repackaging) of urban growth is feasible with the help of federal resources. However, it remains to be seen whether the energy efficiency "frame" will achieve its desired ends. With a jam-packed list of concerns to address and an election on the horizon, it might be that the Administration missed its "window of opportunity" during the height of the recession to take urban policy coordination seriously.

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