



Viewpoint

Typologies of national urban policy: A theoretical analysis



Brian Holland

National Workforce Development Agency, Cayman Islands & Independent Consultant/Scholar, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 6 May 2015

Accepted 22 June 2015

Keywords:

National urban policy

Policy process

Decision making

Program and policy design

Urban political economy

ABSTRACT

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

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

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

Urban policy analysis ties two concepts together: the concept of state and society and the concept of space, place and geography. At risk of being drastically reductionist, the interface between these two worlds results in what might be simplified to six paradigms of inquiry: pluralism (Dahl, 1961), elite theory (Domhoff, 1978; Peterson, 1981), growth machines (Logan & Molotch, 1987; Molotch, 1976), regime theory (Stone, 1989), neo-Marxist (Castells, 1983; Harvey, 1976; Tabb & Sawyers, 1978), and urban

managerialism (Pahl, 1975; Saunders, 1986).¹ Each of these theories models the governance and distribution of power and how the rules of the game are to be played. But, at a far more abstract level, each of these six approaches reflect more on the administration of policy rather than the normative criteria by which these urban policies are initially designed. Stated differently, these paradigms are likely not to provide a more robust urban policy process that asks a question like, “if groups balance each other’s power out under a pluralistic model of policy implementation, what rules of the game do the groups agree upon, once they decide to work together?” Alternatively, another variant of the critique might be phrased as “if the power elites come together to create a set of policy systems that codifies a center of gravity among a select few stakeholders, what are the parameters that serve as the basis for the normative judgment that these elites make from a limited set of options available in their policy making?”

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

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

E-mail address: BHoll74364@aol.com

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

2. The approach

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

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

This article seeks to specify the key criteria that characterize the strategies behind national urban policy development – drawn from American context² – and then to depict the typologies visually to illustrate the range of options available to decision makers in the urban policy process.

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

While difficult to precisely pinpoint the nuance and unintended consequences in measuring the typology quantifiably, the policy continuum is best represented here as a straight line rather than the bounded curve of the economist's production-possibility frontier.

3. The policy continua

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

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

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

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

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

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

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7418440>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7418440>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)