

Institutionalism and Cities:

Theory and Method in Urban Comparative Historical Analysis

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Develop a solid understanding of New Institutional (NI) theory and concepts
2. Critically engage with applications of NI in planning theory
3. Critically apply institutionalist theory and concepts to the analysis of urban governance and spatial planning institutions
4. Understand apply the theory and method of Comparative Historical Analysis

Seminar Description

This seminar focuses on the role of institutions (defined as shared norms and understandings, standard operating practices, and enforceable rules) in structuring processes of urban change, urban governance, and spatial planning. The premise of the course is that cities are extraordinarily densely institutionalized spaces, and that a careful study of institutions, and of processes of institutional continuity and change will be productive for urban scholars. The course reviews the New Institutional literature in Political Science, Sociology, and Planning Theory, with a focus on Historical Institutionalism (HI) and Comparative Historical Analysis (CHA), and develops a conceptual framework for the application of HI theory to urban space. The claim is that an understanding of institutions is revealing of power dynamics in urban capitalism, is valuable for understanding urban governance and spatial planning in international comparative perspective, and provides a valuable critical perspective on urban property institutions.

Urban governance and spatial planning present an exceptionally dense and consequential set of institutions that regulate processes of urban growth and capital investment in cities. Local states play a central role in structuring the production of new urban property rights during land development, and in defining and protecting those property rights over time. Indeed, to a greater degree than in perhaps any other market, the state, and governance and spatial planning institutions, are fundamental and indispensable to the existence and continued value of urban property, and to the working of property markets. Spatial planning, in HI perspective, is the set of institutions designed to manage and regulate urban spaces and property, many of which appear prone to path dependent processes and positive feedback effects. Fundamental is that in different jurisdictions, very different sets of institutions emerged in the transition to capitalist property systems in cities. An institutional approach facilitates rigorous comparative analysis of why particular institutions emerged in each jurisdiction, how they have evolved, and how they help shape different urban governance trajectories.

COURSE EVALUATION

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|--------------------------|-------|----------------------|
| 1. Seminar leadership | (20%) | Once during the week |
| 2. Seminar Participation | (20%) | Daily |
| 3. Final Paper Proposal | (10%) | November 11 |
| 4. Final Paper | (50%) | January 30 |

Seminar Leadership – 20%

Each class will be devoted to a seminar-style discussion of the required readings, facilitated by one or two participants in the class. Seminar leaders will be decided about one month before the seminar starts. Seminar leaders will be expected to lead the class in discussion of the readings, and in considering their application to research on cities and spatial planning. During the second half of each seminar I will discuss my interpretation of the way the required readings contribute to major current debates, and the challenges and opportunities in applying the week's concepts to cities.

Participation – 20%

Your substantive, constructive and respectful participation in weekly class discussions is crucial for the success of this seminar. It is expected that all participants will contribute to the discussion by posing questions, raising issues and comments using the readings to inform your comments and analysis, listen closely to others, and respectfully engage with their views. Excellent participation starts with perfect attendance.

Final Paper Proposal – 10%

Participants are strongly encouraged to start thinking and working on an idea for your major paper while doing the readings before the seminar starts. Having a good concept that fits both your own research interests and an institutionalist approach will make writing the paper much more manageable. Any topic is possible, as long as the paper draws on the New Institutional theories and conceptual frameworks introduced by this course. Please submit your proposal by **November 11** at the latest. Proposals should clearly identify the topic that you intend to research and briefly explain how you will use NI theory. I will provide detailed feedback and comments on your ideas during the week of the seminar. Proposals should include an introduction, a discussion of your approach to institutional analysis, and an outline of the paper, including reference to at least 5 texts that you will be working with, and should be in total not more than 3-5 pages.

Final Paper – 50%

Final papers should be between 20 to 25 pages double spaced (25 maximum), plus bibliography. Any topic is acceptable, as long as the paper draws on the literature and concepts of NI. All participants are encouraged to explicitly and critically consider the conceptual leverage offered by and the relevance of institutional analysis for your paper. Papers should include an abstract, should be clearly and concisely written and structured, and should support a clear thesis.

Discussion Topics and Readings

Day 1. Historical Institutionalism and Comparative Historical Analysis

Q: What are HI and CHA, and what insights do they provide in the study of governance processes and international comparisons?

Required readings:

Sorensen, A. (2015). 'Taking Path Dependence Seriously: An historical institutionalist research agenda in planning history.' *Planning Perspectives* **30**(1): 17-38.

Thelen, K. and J. Mahoney (2015). Comparative-historical analysis in contemporary political science. *Advances in Comparative-Historical Analysis*. J. Mahoney and K. Thelen. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 3-36.

Pierson, P. (2004). *Politics in time: history, institutions, and social analysis*. Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press. Introduction pp. 1-16 "**Placing Politics in Time**"

Day 2. January 14. New Institutionalism

Q: What distinguishes HI from other institutionalist projects, and why is HI valuable for studies of urban governance and urban planning?

Required readings:

- Hall, P. A. and R. C. R. Taylor (1996). 'Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms.' *Political Studies* 44(5): 936-957.
- Sorensen, A. (2017). New Institutionalism and Planning Theory. *Routledge Handbook of Planning Theory*. Eds. M. Gunder, A. Madanipour and V. Watson. London, New York, Routledge.
- Healey, P. (2006). 'Transforming Governance: Challenges of Institutional Adaptation and a New Politics of Space.' *European Planning Studies* 14(3): 299-320.

Day 3. Critical Junctures

Q: Is the concept of critical junctures still useful, or is the 'punctuated equilibrium' model of institutional change obsolete? What is the relationship between structure and agency in critical junctures? Why are 'events' important?

Required readings:

- Capoccia, G. (2015). Critical junctures and institutional change. *Advances in Comparative Historical Analysis*. J. Mahoney and K. Thelen. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 147-179.
- Sorensen, A. (2017). Global Suburbanization in Planning History *Routledge Handbook of Planning History*. C. Hein. Ed. London, New York, Routledge.
- Soifer, H. (2012). "The Causal Logic of Critical Junctures." *Comparative Political Studies* 45(12): 1572-1597.

4. Structured processes of incremental institutional change

Q: Why are incremental processes of institutional change important? How do the characteristics of existing institutions structure change processes and change agents? What roles are seen for veto players, discretion, and enforcement of compliance?

Required readings:

- Mahoney, J. and K. A. Thelen (2010). *Explaining institutional change: ambiguity, agency, and power*. Cambridge ; New York, Cambridge University Press. Ch. 1
- Hacker, J. S., P. Pierson and K. Thelen (2015). Drift and conversion: hidden faces of institutional change. *Advances in Comparative-Historical Analysis*. J. Mahoney and K. Thelen. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 180-208.
- Falleti, T. and J. Mahoney (2015). The comparative sequential method. *Advances in Comparative Historical Analysis*. J. Mahoney and K. Thelen. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 211-239.

5. Institutions, Cities, and Power

Q: What is the role of power in institutional analysis, and what insights about power and urban political institutions does an HI approach provide?

Required readings:

- Pierson, P. (2015). Power and Path Dependence. *Advances in Comparative-Historical Analysis*. J. Mahoney and K. Thelen. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 123-146.
- Sorensen, A. (2018). Institutions in urban space: Land, infrastructure and governance in the production of urban property. *Planning Theory and Practice*, 19(1), 21-38.
- Beland, D. (2010). The Idea of Power and the Role of Ideas. *Political Studies Review*, 8(2), 145-154.