

**FR10.30.17 The Politics of Potholes: Service Quality and Retrospective Voting in Local Elections**

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Authors: Craig Burnett, UNC at Wilmington; Vladimir Kogan, Ohio State University

By conditioning their support for political incumbents on observed government outputs, voters can motivate policymakers to faithfully represent their interests. Whether elections serve this function in sub-national U.S. jurisdictions remains unclear, however, because the existing research on retrospective voting in these contexts focuses largely on outcomes over which government officials have little, if any, influence. In this study, we examine one outcome -- the quality of local roads -- that is unquestionably under the control of city government. In doing so, we leverage variation in service quality within one of America's largest cities and show that such variation can explain neighborhood-level differences in support for incumbents in two political offices -- mayor and city council -- across two different electoral cycles.

**FR10.30.17 Does a municipal electoral campaign remain a relevant place to politicize citizens? The example of the municipal election of 2013 in Montreal**

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By observing a citizens' committee in the Park-Extension neighborhood of Montréal, we look at whether the 2013 municipal election campaign helped citizens to cultivate some concern for the wider world and induced them to hold discussions in public terms. The reflections on politicization have privileged the analysis of civil society by neglecting the role of institutions. This perspective fails to understand how institutions can also contribute to politicization or avoidance of politics, leaving the only responsibility for depoliticization to citizens. We use a definition of politics without limiting the term solely to institutions. According to our conception, politics require a public-spirited discourse; the latter involves an antagonistic dimension (I against us) or an argument referring to an idea of justice. This definition of politics underlines that a discourse held in an institution is not always a political discourse. It allows us to gauge what interactions and debates contribute to politicization or the evaporation of politics, and what is the role of representatives and citizens in this regard. The research is based on an ethnographic survey. We participated in all the activities of the citizen committee during the campaign; we conducted a participatory observation of municipal councils, electoral meetings and carried out interviews with representatives and citizens. We maintain that the municipal election campaign has not helped the emergence of public-spirited discourses, more particularly within the institutions. The processes of politicization or the avoidance of politics that are at play here testify to the tensions between divergent conceptions of municipal democracy on the part of elected officials and citizens. One single case is not sufficient to expand our conclusions, but they point out the necessity of studying the role of the interactions within the institutions between citizens and representatives to understand the impact of the political system on depoliticization.

### **FR10.30.17 “Engaging State Power”: Lessons from Chokwe Lumumba’s mayoral tenure in Jackson, Mississippi**

Presenter: Sage Ponder, University of British Columbia (caroline.ponder@geog.ubc.ca)

Authors: Sage Ponder, University of British Columbia

Chokwe Lumumba (1947-2014) was a human rights lawyer, a long-time political activist associated with the movement for Black self-determination; and for seven months, he was also the elected Mayor of the Deep South state capital, Jackson Mississippi. He was elected on a populist campaign platform that was deeply tied to the social justice agenda of several affiliated community organizations. Yet when his untimely death spurred a special election seven months into his first year in office, his son and fellow human rights lawyer, Chokwe Antar Lumumba, ran on the same platform and lost. In the context of a recent rise in campaign wins for progressive Mayors across the nation (i.e. Ed Murray in Seattle, Bill de Blasio in NYC, Betsy Hodges in Minneapolis), it is crucial to investigate not only how these progressive shifts in urban elections can facilitate place-based equity movements, but also how the neoliberal and austerity-driven challenges these administrations face while in office simultaneously work to undermine their social-justice agendas; and thus potentially their re-electability. This paper presents results gathered from participant observation and document analysis, on the lessons Lumumba’s short-lived mayoral tenure holds for urban social justice movements with electoral ambitions.

### **FR10.30.17 Selecting police chief in the postindustrial economy**

Presenter: Adam Uddin, Wayne State University (er2594@wayne.edu)

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The primary function of city government is to maintain public safety for residents and visitors. In big American cities, public safety is the responsibility of police departments that operate under a chain of command headed by the chief of police who is accountable to city government, not the people. Unlike an elected sheriff, chief of police is a political appointment of the mayor or city manager. Arguably, the decision to select a police chief is the most important ways that government officials affect urban public safety. Consequently, what is driving the decision to select police chiefs in major cities in the United States? Why is one particular chief chosen among a pool of theoretically qualified candidates? The conventional wisdom suggests police chief selection decisions hinge on the political structure of the city defined as reformed or unreformed. Other schools of thought argue the selection process influences the decision to select a police chief. Conversely, one area that has been ignored by the academic literature is the role of political economy in the decision to select police chief. To answer these questions the case study method will be used to evaluate what variables are relevant to selecting a police chief. This paper will evaluate and present the results of case studies of police chief selection decisions from 1930 to 2015 in the following cities: Milwaukee, WI, Cincinnati, OH, Columbus, OH, Cleveland, OH, and Detroit, MI. Ultimately, city leaders must attract investment to sustain and grow the economy. The selected cities exemplify the current shift from the old, industrial economy to the new, post-industrial information economy and as such are ripe environments to study motivations for selecting police chiefs. Is public safety being used as a tool to aid in urban economic development, or are police chiefs being chosen on their merit?