

ABSTRACT

JOHNSON, BRADLEY ALBERT MANSI. *Inadvertent Leviathans: Three Essays on the Internal Dynamics of Local Government Organizations*. (Under the direction of Jerrell Coggburn).

Organizational dynamics are characterized as patterns of behavior and processes within the bounds of the organization. These patterns, which are the result of banal day to day tasks, adoption of (often contradictory) policies, resource constrictions, and cognitive bounding, accumulate over time into the organizations we generically call 'government.' This dissertation refers to this effect as accretion. Organizational accretion over time has become more ambiguous as governing relationships have grown more intricate and professional norms embrace overlapping waves of reform.

Organizational change, policy processes, and organizational theories have been used to understand the complex environment that public administrators inhabit. As their disciplines and attendant scholarly literature have matured, however, they have left a gap in the configuration of elements that most laypeople perceive to be government entities. Faced with an imperative to be flexible (157), organizations have increasingly developed extensive governance regimes, which the public, elected officials, staff, and leadership may not wholly comprehend. In a world full of contradictory incentives and significant policy processing, all cognitively bounded in terms of time, resources, and information, inadvertent administrative burdens likely emerge. This possibility increases as the effects accumulate over time.

This dissertation begins with a brief theoretical synthesis extrapolating the consequences of continuous policy adoption to specify a frame of organizational accretion. Accretion is a useful theoretical mechanism that connects policy theories to organizational theory. To empirically explore these assumptions, local government entities provide a large population size and variability in contextual variables, allowing the possibility of broader

cross-sectional analyses. These organizations also have increasingly made data of their day-to-day operations available. This is the 'transparency footprint' (Johnson, Forthcoming), a large quantity of data that has recently been placed online in response to open data initiatives at the local level, allowing the development of data sets that reflect their complexity. To leverage this data and test the assumptions of the theoretical perspective, three studies explore the internal dynamics of local government organizations.

The first study investigates departments in local governments. Departments are distinguished as an essential unit of analysis in the organizational study. In looking at 132 cities in 9 states, change and turnover occur frequently (71% and 66% respectively), with turnover being the only predictor of change.

The second study looks at administrative process sets that have implications for public records to connect two topics of recent scholarly interest: performance management and public participation. It discusses how different overlapping processes interact to generate information. It has two contributions. First, it conceptualizes the types of information that public participation processes may produce and how information is incorporated into the official record and documents. Second, it investigates the process set in the real world to determine if the typology has validity, a snapshot into the reporting of public participation processes, and testing the antecedents of different approaches.

The third study explores a new way to measure local government organizations through their municipal codes. This study builds on previous rule making and organizational measurement work while relying on new processing tools to provide insights across a vast set of documents. This study

Together these studies lay the groundwork for a fertile research agenda into the dynamics of public organizations as cumulative intersectional entities. In testing several assumptions of accretion theory, insights are clarified to inform possible ways public organizations develop unintentionally.

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Inadvertent Leviathans: Three Essays on the Internal Dynamics of Local Government
Organizations

by
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DEDICATION

To the IT folks trying to figure it out in cities around the world.

To my partner Nate, on this yet another mutual push we have achieved together.

To my parents for never wavering in their support despite a winding path.

And to the City of Raleigh that nurtured my love of this work.

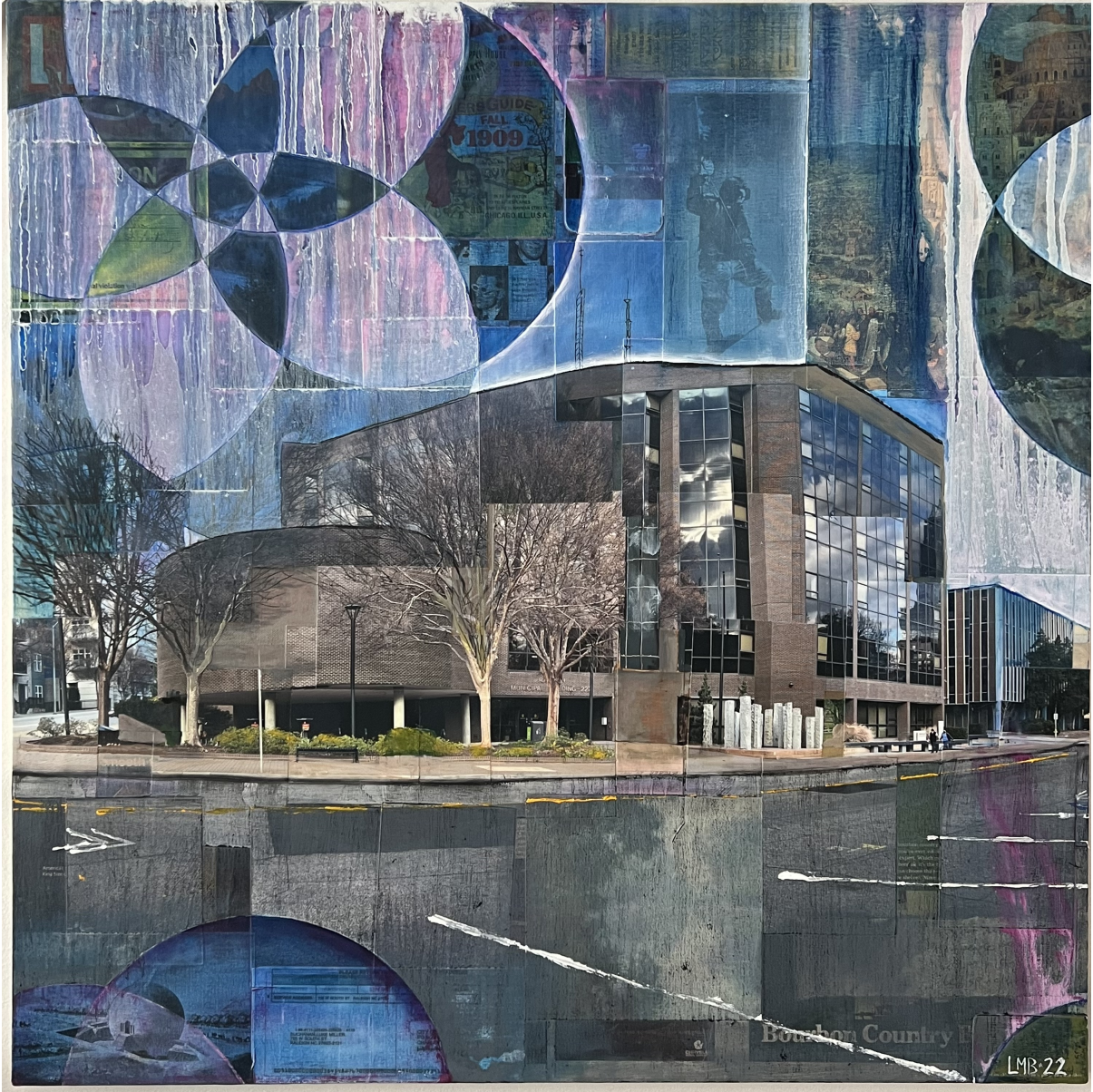


Figure 1: City of Raleigh Municipal Building. Artist: Luke Buchanan, 2022

BIOGRAPHY

Brad Johnson received his undergraduate degree in Urban Studies from the University of Cincinnati, and his Masters of Public Administration from North Carolina State University. He has worked in a planning office, government technology firms, and co-founded a civic engagement software platform used by hundreds of public agencies and the consultants that serve them. He is starting as an Assistant Professor at the University of Nevada, Reno, in Fall 2022.

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The opportunity to teach as part of my PhD program made me a substantially better researcher, reinforced my commitment to the field, and will make me a better professor. I appreciate all of my students - the most attentive and the least - for helping me clearly understand what the work is for and to clarify my research objectives.

My husband, Nate, has been a great support throughout this process and the best adventure partner one could ask for. My parents encouragement has been tremendous. My niece and nephews, Henry, Clark, Lucia, and one yet unnamed, motivate this work; making public organizations more accessible is necessary for them to change the world. The patience they exhibited as I put my career on hold to pursue a dream of being an academic was immense.

My time in Raleigh has been incredibly fulfilling as a member of a civic community. The opportunity to work with wonderful elected officials, including Mayor McFarlane, as well as considerate and thoughtful staff taught me an incredible amount about local government. My experiences on the Parks Board and a member of several other committees

and commissions motivated and informed my research interests.

I have taken a winding path from an urban studies degree to this dissertation; each step of which has informed my understanding of the public administration context. I appreciate all the experiences, from time at Poole's, to a small town permit tech, and working with hundreds of government agencies through technology companies and the company I nurtured, PublicInput.com, I am thankful for all the kind, patient, and frustrating people who taught me so much about this world. I am excited to continue to learn and use that experience to shape my future research and teaching.

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CHAPTER

1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Defining the Problem

Public organizations contain the processes and coordination functions to govern an established jurisdiction (222). At the local level, this responsibility frequently includes critical services, such as water, public safety, and human services. Research on these organizations has emphasized the public good and efficiency, improving approaches to governance and service delivery. However, recent scholarship has focused on emphasizing the burdens of engaging with the government, either as a service user or public citizen (156). The study of local government has also increasingly turned to issues such as equity (20). Yet, these

foci might only be skin deep. Research should investigate the structural effects of intersecting, historical, inertial policies that may affect the approach to a policy of interest at the moment.

How organizations react to changes is an essential question for public administrators. For most theorists, change is considered a necessary part of survival. Unfortunately, as Kaufman noted, public organization death is relatively uncommon, implying that organizations may not need to change or may face less pressure to do so in the traditional sense (112). The picture is even more consistent for general local government organizations in the United States as total number of general-purpose local governments has essentially remained stable since the 1980s while growth in other types of governments has arrived in waves (82). Despite significant political rhetoric about government reform to constrain the bureaucracy, the total outlays of government continue to increase (U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2018). One reason for this effect is the ambiguous incentives for local government organizations and the likely incomplete organizational change that results in leftover elements which accrete over time to expand the scope of the organization may be the hidden one.

This dissertation takes a public organizational perspective. Instead of how organizational change affects efficiency or outcomes (e.g. 166), I turn to how organizational change affects what the organization is lay the groundwork for future research into how easy or difficult it is to operate or access. Moreover, an organizational perspective considers how processes intersect within the bounds of the organization. While we have many studies of public participation, performance management, and budgeting, we have comparably few examining how the elements fit together. Instead, this dissertation explores what may cause peripheral or interaction effects in the organization and when engaging with the organization. To do this, it uses novel data collection techniques supported by inferential statistics, primarily regressions verified with supplemental tests.

1.2 Rationale and Background

Public agencies continuously face pressures: waves of reform movements, technological shifts, cultural norms, and constitutional bounds that continually shape and reshape public organizational systems (135; 226). Yet, agendas are limited, information processing capacity short, and the number of people able to make a decision few, decreasing the likelihood of smooth implementation of any policy (197) and incentivizing partial or selective implementation. Thus, the interest of this perspective is not in whether or not a specific policy was successful but in how the organizational system evolved as a result of the adopted policy or the assembly of multiple policies.

The design of bureaucratic organizations has been a bit lost in research, living as it does under the guise of scholarship on organizations(143) and Weber's rationalization in the sociological canon (98). Moreover, there is no clear conception of what ideal is or even if 'ideal' is a worthy goal, especially in management (4). Maxims about span-of-control within a hierarchy (Gulick) begat fuzzier visions of technostructure and divisionalization (150), and hierarchy versus matrix organizations, rejecting the archetypal norms, at least partially (186). Despite these shifting foci in research, organizational charts remain the predominant representation used by public agencies for themselves and are what students naturally draw when asked to draw an organization.

Since the heyday of organizational design and theoretical advancements in the 1970s and 1980s, academic assumptions about the nature of public organizations have shifted and blurred while technology has changed dramatically. The changing context has implications for an administrative practice that increasingly intends to grapple with 'systemic' issues. Without an effective conceptualization of public organizations, our ability to reform meaningfully is brought into question. Indeed, much of our public management practice emphasizes the strategic addition of elements to address these problems, but as individual

processes or changes in procedure tacked on to an existing administrative system while not completely removing the original elements (142).

A zeal for understanding performance, effectiveness, and values relies on the assumption the system's foundations are a given and stable. This assumption is not surprising given the positivist bent of current public administration research (154), which has primarily taken for granted that organizations are 'unified, rational actors' (121). Almost all of these analytical approaches look forward – what strategic decision or approach to organizational form is next, how it will be implemented, and what factors shape it. Yet, repeated change, implementation, and routinized processes can leave residue in public organizations and lead to potential pitfalls for policy adoption and democratic accountability. In environments where change is frequent and the entirety of the organization ambiguous, problems might arise. These complexities have been acknowledged in implementation studies (223), but have often been considered distractions from rationalizing reform and their presence can instead lead to pressure for reforms instead of analysis (e.g., new public management).

The way that policy choices affect organizational systems has not been thoroughly explored. Placement (in an organizational sense, within a hierarchy or some other representation) affects the success or failure of the policy, but also its effect on the existing organization: its structure, culture, and long-term performance. Internal actors might be motivated to place a policy where they know it can be successful or gain additional resources(99), not where it can be most effective or relevant. This process will depend on pressures of various sorts, potentially resisting change or guiding action somewhere other than the 'optimal' or expected location. While these internal and individual factors have been identified before when criticizing contemporary implementation studies (197), they are typically understood as maladies that ought to be fixed or challenges to be navigated, not something a manager would have agency over.

Changes (policy adoptions) can leave behind residues of previous policies, which may

affect outcomes in unforeseen ways: the inadvertent effects of repeated change. The popular press and scholarship include interesting metaphors for remnants of change: bureaucratic ghosts (123), grains of sand (135), and rule density (23). These remnants and popular concern with them highlight a need to analyze the interactions between elements in the policy process. The notion of incongruous, messy systems leading to ambiguous outcomes was well established by the 1970s in the characterization of modern organizations as organized anarchy with diffuse decision systems and policies chosen as if by random from garbage cans (40).

In an era of tight budgets (190), limited capacity (101; 48), and an increasing emphasis on public involvement in decision-making (215; 159), it is a useful time reengage with the structural content of public organizations. 'Structural' is meant to convey the operating arrangements, configurations, and pathways that are often taken for granted when analyzing specific outcomes. Efforts such as open government (86), transparency (147; 87; 49), implementation of diversity initiatives (35), sustainability (124), and participatory governance (84; 200), depend on a better understanding of the configurations that underlie public organizations and the systems they create.

The notion of organizational building over time is not new but connects to the oldest organizational conceptions of the public administrative system. The philosophers of the administrative state have always engaged in a discussion of an ever-growing behemoth whose origins were murky and whose very complexity took authority from the public. Hobbes' Leviathan is the archetypal monster government: a beast of control and justice responsible for our protection and happiness (46). To Weber, bureaucracy is the logical optimization of administrative responsibility (222). The technocratic orientation of public administration has been critiqued (212). But what exactly is the 'monster'? How is it made? How do the overlapping directives of transient political power affect its construction? The frequency of policy change and how the policies are placed, implemented, and routinized

holds the key to understanding the organizational systems we inherit.

The continuing salience of Weber's (222) ideal type implies that public organizations are eternal, stable bureaucracies with a consistent set of traits, neutral from specific people, and professionalized beyond politics. The continued use of archetypal representations, such as organization charts, implies that this interpretation remains relevant. This perspective emphasizes trust in the logic of the bureaucratic system and deference to the inner workings of organizations that have often been called a "black box" (169). A standard Master of Public Administration (MPA) curriculum does little to dispel the notion of de facto complexity navigated by well-intentioned public administrators.

The standard view is that organizations and the governance systems they inhabit result from a rational optimization in the face of an increasingly complicated environment (e.g. 163, p.3). This rational choice-based approach builds on the work of Tiebout (217) and is reflected in early organizational and management theory, including Weber and others. The reorientation after the significant devolution in the 1970s and 1980s led to an optimization paradigm tinged with contrasting values of efficiency and public participation in New Public Management (21). Local government organizations have inherited these paradigmatic shifts becoming increasingly hybridized and fragmented (204), polycentric (173), and have blurred the line with the growing third sector (62; 149). In policy scholarship, metaphors of garbage cans (40), streams of independent policy (118), and punctuation out of equilibrium (9), cumulatively emphasizing the complex and nonlinear dynamics in public organizations. However, awareness of these complexities has not been met with commensurate research into organizational assumptions.

Overall public administration research has yielded efficiency improvements for specific processes and service delivery. Yet, the effect of those improvements on what is called the 'organization' has not been studied. Individual units can be efficient, while the system itself might be highly complicated. Efficiency here may mean suitability, a more complete ren-

dering of efficiency (45). Commensurate with this ontology, students are taught to analyze policy in cost-benefit analyses and budgets through orderly processes that effectively iron out uneven substrates while also being encouraged to include the public in those processes, tensions not easily reconciled. Reconciliation is necessary as transparency of government procedure is considered an essential element of democratic engagement.

This dissertation explores how organizational systems develop internally within a high-volume, polycentric, diffuse policy environment. While much of this process may be unintentional and even optimistic, the effect is an intricate mosaic of relationships and structures, formal and not, which accumulate over time. Pierson (182) notes in a critique of political science the narrow focus on a single process hides the temporal effects of change. These effects and their interactions set the context for this dissertation's analysis.

To study internal dynamics of public organizations, three studies are presented. First, departments and the dynamics of departmentalization in terms of the frequency of increases and decreases in quantity are studied. Second, the dissertation analyzes two areas of procedural (and scholarly) interest in public administration – public participation and performance management – to see how they are operationally connected through information production. Finally, the dissertation presents a novel way to measure organizations through their formal rules, lending credence to the theoretical analysis that follows. In all three contexts, the interest is on the products they present to the world. In each analysis, data is used from open sources that allow for broad analysis, do not depend on individual perceptions, and plot a useful way forward for research.

1.2.1 Toward a theoretical perspective of Accretion

This review knits disparate mechanisms of organizational construction to clarify a new theoretical perspective on public organization growth and construction. The study of public

administration has focused on organizations as ‘unified, rational actors’ to simplify analysis (121). However, studies of implementation (228; 155), governance, and complex systems imply a much more dynamic reality. If the dominant contingency-based assumption to organizational development is not the only reason for organizational growth and development, what else might be at play? The preceding discussion implied that continuous policy change, in a context of uneven attention and significant satisficing (202), leads to incremental change designed to fly below political concern. These changes may represent simple adjustments on the fly to immediate conditions (expediency management), slowly shifting and contorting the ship of state. Pressures to reorganize are rarely complete organizational change, leaving different elements in different states, with different practices, that are rarely entirely reconciled. Several key assumptions are presented to conceptualize this reality, several of which are analyzed in the following chapters (studies).

1.3 Assumptions

1.3.1 Organizational Death

Despite the dynamism within the organizational context, the overall ‘population’ of general-purpose governments is relatively stable; growth has been primarily in new forms of quasi-governmental entities and special districts (82). Kaufman (113) noted that public organization death is relatively uncommon, implying that organizations may not need to change—or may face less pressure to do so in the traditional sense—to survive. Theories of organizational change tend to assume that motivation is driven by survival. Survival is a potent motivator for most organizations, but public organizations are a special case. Survival in public organizations may mean something different: reform, reassignment, or transition. Local governance organizations, when perceived as unitary, have also been relatively stable.

The total number of general-purpose U.S. local governments has essentially remained stable since the 1980s. In contrast, growth in other types of (sometimes novel) governments, particularly special districts, has arrived in waves (82).

Organizational responses to change can affect the organization's stability and lead to break up or reform (176). The notion of mortality in public organizations has been long studied but held with some skepticism. Local governments, municipalities, are even more durable and can be traced between state actors, but the dynamics of their departments are less discussed. Still, the public works department may become the transportation department and back to the public works department in a relatively short period (as study one discusses).

Assumption 1 General-purpose government organizations rarely 'die' in the sense of totally going away.

1.3.2 Ghosts, Grains, and Gremlins

If public organizations do not die, then at least philosophically within organizations, there may be elements that are no longer part of the predominant paradigm. Structural, human, or cultural elements can be out of alignment in that they duplicate, conflict with, or have limited political support within the current predominant paradigm but remain. These elements are distinct from persistent structures that continue to dominate an organization out of alignment with the overall institutional expectations. As Light observes in *The Tides of Reform*, each new reform wave leaves behind sediment, which he characterizes as positions that are designed in the service of each reform movement and slowly grow the administrative state (135; 136). The concept of ghosts expands this notion. Ghosts not only emerge from reform but from any number of conditions and motivations where theory guides understanding. The origin of ghosts may be uncertain or clearly tied to past reform or logic,

but the outcome is similar as the ghosts become isolated and potentially institutionalized. An example is a staffer who remains in the organization despite the reconfiguration of their original functional area. The agency's other obligations to the employee may outweigh the cost of firing her, and perhaps she can adjust to a new role. She has become an organizational ghost. Over time, that role may merge back into the organization, or it may remain relatively isolated from the new functional area she serves. Still, the fundamental notion is that the position was retained not because design or contingency dictated it but because of other pressures.

None of this analysis assumes that ghosts in organizations are bad. Instead, the goal is to identify them to construct a more nuanced approach to organizational theory that accounts for incomplete change and growth through change. Future studies may find that ghosts are driven by responses to institutional, ecological, or resource-based pressure. Alternatively, ghosts exist to support values-driven outcomes, such as public participation. For this study, the focus is on the former, but future attention should be paid to the latter. Understanding how ghosts relate to the current management paradigm is key to describing their impact. Bringing the ghosts and their effects into focus gives them weight; the weight of ghost accretion over time may become a burden on organizational performance if not acknowledged.

Assumption 2 Organizations include many elements that are left behind after change.

1.3.3 Continuous Change

Even without outright death, public organizations may be affected by similar logic in different ways. The same organizational pathologies that lead to private organizational death may instead contort public organizations (196). Research of agency termination, adaptation, and creation has been studied at the central government level. From this body

of work, a nuanced view of agency change and restructuring has emerged with the term 'transitions' (129). Transitions provide the theoretical departure for imagining different types of agency transitions that occur through the addition of changes, or more broadly and applicable, policy actions. While a rich typological value, these studies still are limited by a narrow policy focus.

From a management lens, departmentalization has been seen as optimizing organizations. For public organizations, motivations for change, or transitions, come from other sources aside from survival. For example, a source of motivation for reforms of public agencies is public transparency (16). Reforms and change movements are common in public management practice and have been identified in scholarship (27; 135; 226). Recent examples of these areas of interest include studies of strategic planning (15; 184), change management and innovation (80), integration of equitable values, open government (106), and other elements. The organizational effect of these priorities, not to mention a daily deluge of tasks and decisions facing any public organization, should be anticipated to have secondary and tertiary effects.

Assumption 3 Public organizations go through transitions that may be detached from overall organizational factors and resources. (Explored in study one)

1.3.4 Measurement of Public Organizations

Measurement of organizations deserves more attention. While research has more fully conceptualized the governance landscape, consisting of public and private third sector organizations, the measures of our organizations remains inadequate. Organizations continue to be conceptualized based on resources, such as total budget or number of full time employees. These measures have been linked to survival (42). The size of an organization leading to survival has also been demonstrated in federal agencies (218).

Yet, given the diffuse nature of the contemporary governance system with a preference for contracting out and devolved authority, new measures could be anticipated that allow for more detailed study of the organizations and organizational systems we call 'government'. One promising direction builds on the Institutional Analysis and Development framework (IAD) to acknowledge that organizations can be thought of as collections of rules (173).

Assumption 4 Public organizations can be measured in different ways.

1.3.5 Complex Systems Approaches

The complex adaptive systems (CAS) framework provides useful insights that can be applied to public organizations to prepare public managers for a chaotic environment (115). A focus on complexity in management emerged in the 1990s. Despite Kiel's (115) call for management of chaos and complexity - where nonlinear dynamics have effects on performance and outcomes - the field has remained focused on specific complex policy spaces analyzed through linear and deterministic approaches (170). In contrast, CAS are defined as having many parts, being highly interconnected, and the result of the interaction (121). CAS posits a heterogeneous system full of individual actors whose choices create emergent meso and macro effects. This is an ideal way to think of the cumulative effect of policy and routine processes on public organizations, where the individual policies can be both successful and have or generate adverse (unintended) long-term organizational effects.

In the study of the emergence of agents and the use of complex non-linear logics, the focus has been primarily on individual initiatives for topics (188). Research ought consider the effects of these nonlinear dynamics cumulatively, much in the same way that we consider other organizational outcomes such as fiscal health (108). Thus, what follows is a discussion of the elements of CAS as they are understood in policy and public organizations.

Complexity has been treated as a structural variable measured in three ways: vertical, horizontal, or structural. “Vertical complexity is the number of levels in an organizational hierarchy, horizontal complexity is the number of job titles or departments across the organization, and spatial complexity is the number of geographical locations” (1, p. 216). This approach has been supplemented by other measures that rely more on the complexity of the relations between actors (algorithmic complexity) and the informational complexity in describing the parts of the whole. This type of complexity assumes that an organization can be substantial, but it is not complex in its parts require little explanation.

Complex systems approaches are a useful frame toward a more causal theory of organizational 'structure'. To rely only on complex systems approaches would yield a study that could explain some elements of the public organization ecosystem but has little value in practice. A second reason is the tools also allow a valuable abstraction of concepts, as Cairney and Geyer (33) suggest, in the construction of organizations. 'Structuration' has a long history of analysis in sociology where it has been abstracted. Complex systems exhibit the following characteristics: feedback, nonlinear dynamics, self-organization (155), and include agents, autonoma, and actors.

Assumption 5 Public organizations are complex adaptive systems that exhibit characteristics associated with those types of organizations.

1.3.6 Policy Adoption in Complex Organizations

The policies that public agencies adopt are implemented into existing systems full of policy, adopted at different times, under different pretexts. The amount of policy they process is significant and nearly continuous. Bounded information about the context of public organizations and pressure to implement policy quickly and efficiently incentivizes ignoring the organizational effects of that adoption.

Increasing research has reviewed the role of capacity on policy adoption (177). Various theoretical underpinnings of policy have anticipated this problem including the notion of limited windows for policy adoption (118) or limited decision making capacity in anarchic bureaucracies (40). In both cases, as in others, the emphasis is on the ability of the organization to process certain policy over others. But many organizations have a lot of policy to process, often that exceeds the main (formal) policy agenda. To better help process these types of policy decisions these policies may be handled at different venues, or spaces of policy decision, some out of the public eye or handled through administrative discretion.

Assumption 6 Policy adoption in complex public bureaucracies is not holistic (or self-contained) and all policies and processes carry some weight in terms of resources and can have inter-sectional effects.

1.3.7 Accretion of Public Agencies

Local government organizations are complex systems that can be measured in different ways, exhibit continuous change that is substantial enough to be reasonably considered beyond complete comprehension, and are required to process nearly continuous policy adoption. Thus, they would be expected to retain elements of the processes and policies they adopt over time, particularly if the organizational systems are unlikely to die. The vast scope of changes, adoptions, and environmental triggers imply unlimited organizational growth in at least one measure of the organization. To provide conceptual value, these effects are integrated into a theory of accretion.

Organizational accretion is the process where organizational elements build up over time. While one or two extra policies may not affect the organization's ability to perform in the desired way, the slow accretion of policy ghosts can significantly alter an organization's capacity and create competing dynamics. While no technology (in the sociological sense

of the term) is conceptualized as a way to increase the size of organizations, over time the addition of these new processes and tools add layer upon layer of organizational structure that if not managed properly may eventually detach from a comprehensively understandable logic. The notion of regulatory accretion has been briefly discussed in the literature (195; 142). The growth of rules, much as the accumulation of ghosts, is often considered a certainty, something explored in study three. Regulatory theory contributes to the notion that a government standing still is constantly accumulating new regulations. In order to minimize that growth, the organization has to be proactiv.

Assumption 7 Public organizations grow as a result of contradictory and intersecting processes over time through a process known as accretion.

1.4 So what?

Together, these assumptions paint a picture that is not entirely detached from many maxims about the management of organizations; why integrate them in this way? After a decade spent working in public participation practice and as a volunteer in local government, I felt like we lacked the tools to engage the public (and many of my compatriots did as well). Why did government routinely fail to meet this seemingly basic mission of local government? When I began my research, I found an incredibly diverse array of scholarship about engagement practice (e.g. 158; 159; 39). We seemed to know the whole scope of public participation practice, and our scholarship (perhaps unlike other areas in public administration) was on the bleeding edge of the tools, researching innovative strategies in both stakeholder management (17) and techniques like participatory budgeting (200) and the use of technology (134). From my experience, it seemed like we knew what was going on.

Yet, public participation practice continued to fall short, at least perceptually. Why? A small anecdote about the frequency of engagement and the siloed nature of departments managing the engagement came to mind. In my city of 400,000 people, there were hundreds of meetings a year, not organized centrally, and conducted as if by habit. Many were using new techniques adding technology with the hope of engaging more people. I witnessed not a participation practice failure but an organizational failure.

In this context, the set of assumptions above is critical to investigate. At the nexus of public administration theory, organizational change theories, information theory, learning theory, and policy adoption and implementation theories, we are left to ask if the organizations we ask people to engage with are able to be authentically engaged. Have we created such complicated systems that it is nearly impossible for the public to engage in good faith reasonably? And if so, are those organizations the product of purposeful design (as is often implied in administrative burden literature (96)) or the accidental growth of organizations because of mostly good intentions. Accretion theory is a set of premises that assumes the latter.

Concerns about overly complex administrative organizations are not new. They are shared with a set of anthropology scholars who observed that increasingly complex, convoluted, and rigid bureaucratic systems eventually collapse when hit by a shock they do not anticipate (213). Scholars who treat the highly complex system as a matter of course potentially enable further complexity, incomprehensibility, and perhaps collapse. For anthropologists, this arc was observed in the Roman Empire, where the state fell apart when its administrative apparatus became too difficult to maintain and the relative simplicity of barbarian rule was preferable.

1.5 Preview of Upcoming Chapters

To explore these assumptions and set the table for future research this dissertation studies the first three core assumptions. First, it looks at the dynamics of public organizations through the lens of local government departmentalization. It finds that departments are increasing and decreasing frequently only due to executive turnover, and unrelated to other contingent factors.

Second, it looks at a ‘process set’ of nested processes that have been cobbled together over time based on different political, professional, and scholarly expectations to highlight a lack of understanding for the information created in public processes. It advances a typology of public participation information in formal government processes. In looking specifically at budget and planning processes, it finds that the information presented in official records of the process is hit or miss, likely to not be translatable into systemic performance information, and linked to the professional mores of consultants. This finding verifies insights about the unevenness of policy adoption.

Third, it looks at municipal codes as representing an organizational system. Rules, relatively unconstrained by resource limitations, can grow and adapt based on changes over time. It finds that size is nominally related to an organization being older, but that measures of shared word use is most strongly related to an older organization.

Combined, this dissertation contributes several key insights. First, it verifies that local government is a fruitful space for the future development of organizational theory. Second, it demonstrates that measuring an organization through its rules provides unique (and distinct) insights about the nature of ‘organization.’ Finally, it indicates that the incongruous nature of routine processes over time can create divergent outcomes in different organizational contexts. Together, these imply that a frame of accretion has merit for future study. Some preliminary integration of concepts is addressed in the conclusion.

CHAPTER

2

AN UNSTABLE HIERARCHY: DEPARTMENTAL DYNAMICS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

2.1 Chapter Preview

Local governments are ideal laboratories for studying administrative structures given their ubiquity, with over 89,000 units in the United States and hundreds of thousands more worldwide. Despite this, local government organizations are black boxes of operation, particularly

below the executive management level. This article lays the groundwork for what we hope will be a fruitful research agenda into the dynamics of departments and internal design choices. We explore the question: how do managerial shifts affect department reconfiguration? Using data from 132 municipalities at two points in time, five years apart, we identify organizational department change. We find that 71% of local governments in our sample have experienced a change in their organizational charts in the five years studied. Uniquely, we look at the frequency and quantity of change overall, instead of political or policy specific. Transitions in leadership emerge as the most robust antecedent of change, while changes in finance and population are unrelated. These findings have implications for our understanding of the independence of department configuration and emphasize the need for more research at this unit of analysis. Frequent change in departments raises essential questions about the nature of bureaucratic stability, democratic resilience, administrative burden, and comprehensibility.

2.2 Introduction

Although municipal organizations exist in most governmental systems, little is known about the dynamics of their departmentalization. In the United States, local government consists at least seven distinct forms of municipal local government executive leadership, within the context of each state's legal context, creating unique constraints, norms, and opportunities (164). In addition to the form of executive leadership, internal configuration (as noted by departments) demonstrates significant diversity. The rationale for these is unclear, however there are disparities in constitutional possibilities, institutional expectations, and local cultural norms within a given state. Aside from some elected executives and their staff, internal municipal structures are predominantly professionalized administrative systems. For public administration research, the large number of municipal governments can provide

a window into patterns of administrative evolution and reform. We build on departmentalization literature to conceptualize municipal governments as groups of departments that provide services within an explicit jurisdiction. Diversity in the configuration makes analysis of municipalities challenging, relegating internal configurational patterns into a black-box in a meso-analysis. This paper opens the box on these dynamics through analysis of department change. Using a novel dataset generated from official documents that contain organization charts, we analyze department change to answer the following question: what are the antecedents of department change in local public organizations? We look at four potential factors: authority for change, executive turnover, the form of government, population and budget changes, and regional patterns.

One could be forgiven for assuming that local government organizations are all the same. Substate governments are the most common government organization in the United States numbering nearly 90,000 (82). A subset of those organizations, municipal governments, are commonly known as cities, counties, towns, and villages and number more than 19,000. These organizations are directly responsible for core government responsibilities such as water, policing, parks, and land use. How services become organized into departments is unclear but has been implied to be a function of external factors - such as resource availability and municipality size - and functional distinction. Given that the ensemble of responsibilities governments provide is relatively stable, at least in short time frames, organizational departments may be expected to be stable, contributing to the sense that local government organizations are fairly consistent.

We distinguish the departments of local government as a valuable theoretical lens to explore the administrative system. The departmentalization of government has a long history with an explicit interest in rationalizing organizational processes and outcomes (222) or the ways in which departmental shifts are used to advance a reform agenda (22). It is helpful to clarify local government departments as a unit of analysis. This frame

has two benefits. First, we can determine if internal dynamics align with organizational characteristics, as is often implied. Departments, to be effective, had been assumed to be somewhat independent of others (22); frequent change could challenge this notion. Second, departments are a crucial signaling tool, as they have been the subject of many administrative reorganization studies and popular attention. Municipalities often represent themselves through organization charts, explicitly explaining departmental hierarchical arrangement. In contrast to a department perspective, research into local government has primarily focused on the form of government, following the reform movement that shifted executive authority, and most of the civil service, toward professionalized staff. Managerial discretion has been an ongoing debate in public organizations, stretching back to the original city manager in Staunton, Virginia, in 1908 (167). One distinction of executive authority is the ability to reconfigure their organizations without legislative oversight. In other cases, managers must receive approval for changes to the organization's structure. Ostensibly, flexibility and independence improve efficiency by allowing the organization to maintain nimbleness around ever-evolving goals. Alternatively, these moves can be seen through a lens of bureaucratic politics, implying a desire to insulate and avoid scrutiny through an appeal to professional judgment (152). Frequency of change has been shown to have negative effects on the internal culture of an organization and its effectiveness (206; 205). Management scholarship emphasizes the effect of change on individuals within the organization with the implication that individual coping is a key element of successfully implementing a change. "different configurations of the bureaucracy may affect public managers' work and its outcomes, even in highly networked environments (174; 227); individuals in an organization that is continuously changing might be expected to network to keep themselves protected.

This article uses a novel dataset that measures organizational change as seen through organizational charts. Charts reveal the configuration of departments in relation to the ex-

ecutive, legislative actors, and electorate. Looking at a set of cities at two points in time, 2014 and 2019, in nine states, we analyze increases and decreases in the number of departments for each city. We use four regressions (linear and probit), to study the antecedents to changes in the number of departments. Our results suggest that the strongest predictor of change is executive turnover, consistent with political theories of organization. Regional effects are also significant, with several states showing less propensity for department change than the reference state, Arizona. These findings contribute to the understanding of administrative discretion and complement executive turnover and local government scholarship. Our empirical results demonstrate the independence of changes from common organizational measures of population and budget. We also show that configurational changes in public organizations are frequent and ongoing, emphasizing the methodological value of studying departmental change.

The article is structured as follows. First, we discuss how 'structure' has been conceptualized in public organizations. We then discuss the need for a configurational perspective and its unique applicability in local government. Within this context, we identify mechanisms that may initiate changes and propose hypotheses. Next, we review our data collection and the statistical methods used. We then present the results and discuss their implications. In conclusion, we review key findings and highlight areas for future research.

2.3 Organizational Structure, Configuration, and Departmentalization

'Structure' is a common construct used in public administration and organizational science. Mintzberg advanced the traditional categorization of organizational structure for five types: simple, machine bureaucracy, professional bureaucracy, divisionalization, and adhocracy

(139; 150). These classifications are based on a mix of executive authority, culture, and reporting relationships, which roughly is a process of formalization and rationalization (in the Weberian tradition). In this context, structure as a variable is conceptualized as the sum of the relations between different firm members.

As a meso-whole-organization measure, structural classification has surfaced frequently (34; 67; 110). To simplify the analysis, usually based on the availability of data, 'structure' as a construct is typically simplified into categorical variables to relate categories of structural formalization to organizational outcomes. For example, knowledge management was more successful in organizational structures that were "less centralized, less formalized, more complicated, and more integrated" (140, p.518). Others have used structures of specialization and codification to show how organizational memory can be enhanced through new technologies (67). Quantitative studies have described structure using available data, such as rule formalization and centralization of authority or hierarchy (110). The actual layout and distribution of internal relations is not well analyzed, even though the term structure and summary measures can be interpreted that way. Thus, while 'structure' has appeared relatively frequently in the study of public organizations, the configuration and makeup of internal organizational units (departments) has been understudied and remains implied but unspecified in the many studies of change.

While the summative approach to organizational structure has provided valuable insights, it has fallen short in certain critical respects. Summative measures make certain (understandable) assumptions about homogeneity. Despite this simplification, structural configuration may create long-term path dependencies that restrict alternatives for change (182) or short-term opportunities to demonstrate that change is occurring even if it is not substantively. Moreover, as we increasingly engage in scholarship about network configuration, research assumptions about relational structure increasingly mean something different - detailed maps with relations that look like organizational charts (103) - but

are not consistent with the way the organization presents itself. We posit that in our increasingly conglomerated and networked public agencies, a better understanding of the configurational structure of organizations is necessary.

Departmentalization, the creation and reorganization of departments, has been studied as a reform process (22). In this tradition, the effort has been to understand either a rationalization (simplification) process (98) or as a contingent response to changes in the environment (7). This research has tended to emphasize case study analysis of individual organization (31). To extend beyond this narrow conception of departmental change, we rely on and clarify the concept of structural configuration, sometimes called bureaucratization. Structural configuration is the organization of departments into a relational hierarchy. While this is the classic notion of bureaucratic 'structure,' scholarship has often taken this reality for granted. Hierarchical ordering represents the (at least superficial) relationship between departments, executives, and the public.

The concept of configuration of departments in municipalities has a particular resonance, not only instrumentally but politically and normatively. Municipal governments increasingly cobble together many services and programs housed inside their organizations, contracted out with third parties, or provided through collaborations with other governments. These departments are distinct and often strongly independent, culturally and or relationally, but may also be Potemkin departments, provided by someone else for the most part. In municipalities, a focus on individual departments has focused on areas of larger interest. For example, police departments are often studied for their own 'organizational structures' (236), while sustainability departments (234; 94) and planning departments (122) have been studied for their origination and legitimacy. Organization charts, given their ubiquity in formal documents such as budgets, offer insight into how those departments organize into a hierarchical authority while communicating how the organization's priorities visavee these departments. Departmental change carries this normative implication

(37).

Municipal government “form” implies relational configuration of the organization. Yet, for the most part, “form” has meant a form of executive power. This emphasis is understandable as executive authority has been central to debates about the appropriate way to organize municipal and substate government since the progressive era push for professionalization (187). Despite this, analysis of form holds some insights into the context of municipal configuration. First, form of local government is dependent on what is permissible in state law (29). Some states offer broad structural autonomy, even without home rule provisions, while others are highly prescriptive, allowing for limited optional forms. Local government executive power is usually centralized in a single executive officer, either a professional manager or a mayor. As with most other aspects of local government, there is variability here, as several states allow for a form of government with no dedicated chief executive or administrator. The reform movement led to professionalized executives, typically called managers or administrators, exercising executive function. Public organizational form scholarship largely centers on the balance of administrative and executive authority, mainly about the form of government, identifying up to seven different types of configurations of executive power (164). Local government research on form is confused with organizational form studies in sociology, which studies how organizational elements exist in relation (179).

2.4 Organizational Change and its Effects

Organizational change or reform is an effort to adopt new processes or business units to improve organizational effectiveness. In business literature, organizational change is seen as a procedural challenge full of potential obstacles to success (31; 128). Administrative change scholarship has looked at individual changes, for example, a reform adoption (106); they

have not looked at more day-to-day configuration changes that accumulate over time. Inside professionalized public organizations, these changes may be chalked up to optimization and efficiency-seeking. Yet, the habitual nature of policy implementation and the external (and therefore knowledge-limited) nature of stakeholders in public organizations may complicate change efforts in distinct ways. For example, bureaucratic adjustments have not always been seen as optimizing as much as defense mechanisms (153). The field has embraced reorganization, reinvention, and local government as laboratories to try new ideas; the responses to these initiatives have often been emotional and adjusted the initial push with novel ideas that incorporate elements as politically viable (211). The innovation impulse is common to organizational dynamics, but challenges in making changes to public organizations may adjust expectations and have secondary effects.

Administrative burden is bureaucratic hurdles that impede the public's access to services and advocacy highlights the potential learning costs that organizational shifts might impose over time (156). Learning costs might include realizing that a department has shifted to pay a bill or take out a permit or who to contact in the case of a complaint or feedback on a public project. Moreover, administrative literacy is affected if the organization's configuration is unstable and can be predicted to be different with some frequency (56). In other words, lack of structural stability and greater organizational complexity requires a higher level of knowledge and investment of time on the part of the public and elected officials to ensure a complete understanding of how a local government is structured.

The configuration of organizational elements can facilitate information search (227). In an environment where departments change frequently, these pathways for learning may be disrupted inadvertently or retain elements to maintain them, potentially undercutting efficiency. In public organizations, effects on members of the organization could be expected to be present for not only internal individuals, but members of the public when engaging with the organization.

Political and scholarly interest has emphasized the role of transparency, that is “The more open and easy it is for the public to obtain information, the greater the transparency.” (Ball, 2009, p. 303) Yet, information search, cultural effects, and stress could be anticipated the with more frequent change. To explain their organizational structure, local governments have traditionally relied on the organizational chart to describe their operations graphically. The prominence of this representation of the approximate hierarchical relationship summarizes the organization’s operations and functional units. This representational nature of departments is an important component of best practices for formal processes like budgets (GFOA). A synonym of transparency, Comprehensibility is the ability of the public, staff, and politicians to effectively understand the nature of the organization, its operations, and its systems. Department organiaztion and reorganization has sometimes been motivated by a desire to simplify the public’s access to services and democratic outlets (16), so changes and their frequency should be under the microscope for whether or not they achieve that goal.

2.5 The Peculiar Case of Departments in General Purpose Governments

Departments matter as a unit of analysis in the study of local general-government organizations and should be distinguished conceptually. Municipal governments as institutions do not focus on a specific function but instead provide and coordinate a variety of public services, which are commonly divided into ‘departments’. As public organizations increasingly take on a governance role, the number and diversity of functional expectations has broadened significantly in the last fifty years, particularly in local government (163), where additions, contractions, and reforms have all followed policy directives. Their size and

number have been conceptualized as a product of internal norms and professional axiom. Best practices have been advanced since the early years (e.g. span of control) but have been under scrutiny as superficial (201). Unfortunately, while there is a practical value in terming these 'departments,' others have used this term to study departments at the central state level. A department is distinguished as an administratively subservient unit.

Each department can exhibit unique characteristics that are commonly extended to other units of analysis, such as the organizational layer, which may muddy the waters when studying municipal organizations. Mintzberg's conceptualization of a 'divisionalized' organization anticipated these type of quasi independent organizations (150). Yet, this assumes that the divisions, or departments, are relatively stable and endure. Organizational analysis has focused on the micro or individual level or the meso or organizational level something echoed in Mintzberg's focus on emphasizing executive leadership while emphasizing individual behaviors and culture. In municipal organization analysis, these levels make sense, as particular action and behavior can either accumulate into (as with street level) or be synonymous with (as with apex managers) organization action. Yet, some effects and dynamics are smoothed over if departments operate at cross purposes or display independence from environmental impacts, they need to be considered separately. Alternatively, if the departments are superficial representational constructs, analysis of them as unique mini-organizations, may also miss the mark.

We argue that it is necessary to consider departments of general government organizations as a basic unit of analysis in the study of public administration in municipal contexts. First, departments have unique goals and structural characteristics that can be analyzed; police departments and sustainability departments, as noted, are examples of previous study distinguishing departments for analysis. Second, departments exist within a structural configuration and are subordinate to the authority of the local government organization, either directly (as in a hierarchy) or indirectly (as through a board or con-

tract). This grouping of functional elements is often loosely understood as the organization. Responsibility for the observed configuration is either vested in the organization executive, the legislature (city council), or a mix, such as an executive's changes requiring legislative approval. Third, departments are representative of organizational intent. As strategic plans have emerged, they have also created the implication that organizations have certain philosophical priorities (141). As a result of these three factors, the configuration of departments could have implications for performance or comprehensibility.

The diversity of services provided by local government organizations creates implicit tension. In the United States, county and municipal governments are common types of general-purpose governments that are like conglomerated corporations without the overarching financial incentives, which may mean that the individual departments behave more independently than otherwise conceptualized. Yet unlike corporations, in municipal government departments are not all aligned to the same goal or can be loosely coupled in the pursuit of operating a jurisdiction. Instead, the departments can be relatively autonomous entities that manage functions that reflect a more coherent goal orientation. For example, a parks and recreation department has goals related to providing open space and opportunities for public recreation. It has its own 'structural' characteristics distinct from the police department, which has different goals and day-to-day tasks.

Thus, the way that departments are organized represents both the organization's functions and its current priorities. Yet, there has been little scholarly interest in these artifacts of public organizations. We argue that studying these dynamics is essential, particularly in light of recent interest in administrative burden that has drawn attention to the public's challenges when dealing with public bureaucracies. 'Administrative burden' is the concept that, either by design or accidentally, elements of the administrative system make accessing government services more complicated than necessary. If the government units are in flux, public members who are only infrequently engaged in government services may face a

burden each time they engage with it. To begin this conversation, we anticipate several potential causes for why departments may change over time.

2.6 Antecedents to Change

Despite a “constant impulse to reform” (226, p.11S) in local government organizations, the frequency and causes of department level change are not well understood. Our understanding of local government behavior is modified if there are common antecedents to departmental changes that modify our existing theoretical assumptions about organizations.

In policy theory, a focusing or triggering event is a moment where the perspective on priorities changes (18). Local governments are diverse organizations but do share regular focusing events such as an election (153), economic downturns (108), or executive turnover (41) and infrequent occurrences like the pandemic (229). Thus, public organizations and their executives navigate external dynamics.

Public sector reforms have dramatically oscillated over the last few decades, each introducing different conceptions of the organization’s goals and objectives (136; 226), while local government has increased its capacity through governance arrangements (149) and novel approaches to management (146; 203). A focus on a business orientation in public organizations as part of New Public Management urged public professionals to build highly efficient organizations that treat the public like customers (36). These efforts have shown up in the articulation of departments such as diversity and equity offices (117), innovation departments, or unified municipal emergency management and health roles (230).

Departmental structure has historically been treated as a result of a contingent process wherein executives and the organizations they lead to respond to shifting expectations and priorities by adapting and evolving the bureaucratic structure to meet them (Donaldson

2008). This may be modified in terms of a life cycle approach, triggered by external factors but still in response to them (Baker and Cullen, 1993). In terms of department configuration, this implies that department structure reflects organizational factors such as budgetary capacity or service demand with a contingent perspective anticipating departments would reflect these factors in order to be instrumentally effective (37). Instrumental rationales have been accompanied by values-based priorities such as democratic engagement and transparency (30; 106) and cultural expectations rooted in habit. Professional motivations have affected expectations for departments with strongly associated professional groups. In this perspective, however, departmental configuration is a natural outflow from environmental context, not something that moves independently of them.

This analysis is concerned chiefly with the circumstances related to changes in the number of departments over time. These changes illuminate the dynamics of local government organization and advance our understanding of the frequency and potential causes of organizational evolution. Departments and their divisions are often seen as products of the organizational context. The anecdotal assumption in public organizations is that changes are driven by the organization's capacity to undertake them (124). Therefore, financial capacity and population changes would be expected to show a positive relationship to change and nullify the other expected sources of change in analysis.

2.6.1 Authority and Empowerment

In local government, the day-to-day administration of the organization is typically led by a chief executive. The executive's ability to transform the organization is not limited to departments. Still, as the public-facing presentation of the organization's characteristics, executives could be expected to be interested in how they are configured, especially as departmental priorities (real or implied) highlight the organization's values. Executives are

not always empowered to make changes at the department level without council approval.

The phenomenon of expediency management has discussed the role that managers take in adjusting organizations to improve performance without oversight (171; 172). Adaptation in public organizations aligns with a business paradigm where the goal is to continuously tweak the organization in response to environmental pressures and optimize performance. This expectation reflects a constant tendency for political actors to pursue reforms (136). Thus, where executives have been given the authority to change their organizations at the department level, the likelihood of change will increase.

2.6.2 Leadership Change and Politics

Local governments commonly consist of a professionalized bureaucracy and elected officials who engage staff. This balance has led to a debate about the nature of the rhetorical dichotomy between political actors and dispassionate public administrators (210). Scholars have repeatedly emphasized that this separation is more symbolic than real, with the manager at least taking on policy roles and often managing political actors.

Government bureaucracies have incentives that distinguish them from other types of organizations, such as private businesses. Whether or not these incentives are engaged purposefully or not, their end consequence is implied to be the same: relatively isolated departments. Moe suggests that elements of bureaucratic structure are insulated from political interference through various mechanisms imposed by political actors of the moment, assuming that they will not maintain power permanently. The motivation for this movement is a claim of professionalization as a shield of the bureaucracy, allowing a claim to knowledge that is superior to political power and offering neutrality to prevent interference (153). In both cases, the outcome is that shifting is undertaken with the specific intent to create stability in programs but the subtext of making the policy challenging to untangle.

Executive turnover could be expected to provide a focusing event for leadership to assert their preferences on the organization. While turnover has not been linked directly to changes in departmental or department structure, it has been described as a seminal event (52) that possibly can improve fiscal outcomes (41). Turnover is not necessarily a political event; with appointed executives (city managers) who potentially move between organizations as part of career progression (52; 133). Organizational changes often follow or immediately precede political turnover, as studies of federal rule making have identified (185). Thus, it is reasonable to expect that a change of executive - whether elected or professional - would increase the likelihood of change in the organizational configuration.

2.6.3 Professional Insulation

Whether the chief executive is directly elected or appointed by a legislative body is determined by the organization's form of government (70; 164). Research has found that professional executives, managers, are also inclined to pursue innovative strategies (165). Deference to local government managers as a professional authority, advocated by the reform movement and reinforced through specialized education programs, further emphasizes the creation of departments. Organizational change literature has discussed what managers would do with that flexibility from the perspective of political bureaucracies and resource management theories, suggesting that changes would follow a reading of the environmental landscape. A professionalized executive, typically a city manager, is associated with increased innovation adoption, implying that a desire to optimize the organization through professional expectations may be at work in department change (50; 165).

Hypotheses

H1a If financial changes occur, the more likely the organization is to change its departments.

H1b As the population in a municipal jurisdiction increases, the more likely the organization will change its departments.

H2 Municipalities with chief executives (appointed or elected) empowered to make department changes will see a greater likelihood of change.

H3a Turnover of municipal chief executives (appointed or elected) increases the frequency of change.

H3b Turnover of chief executives will be more likely to change the number of departments.

H4a Council-manager municipalities will show an increased frequency of department change.

H4b Council-manager municipalities will be more likely to change the number of departments.

2.7 Research Approach

To study these hypotheses and demonstrate the usefulness of local government department research, we review the changes of departments in municipal organizations and test their relationships using an ordinary least squares regression (number of changes) supplemented by a probit regression (whether or not there was a change).

2.7.1 Data and Operationalization

This study uses a new data set compiled from publicly available annual financial reports, municipal codes, and U.S. Census data for 132 cities in nine states: Arizona, Georgia, Massachusetts, Missouri, Michigan, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia, and Washington. These states are roughly the same population (ranked 7-15 in the United States) and share consistency in their reporting information. Municipalities with populations between 50,000 and 400,000 were included in the sample. While this sample represents most of the population of municipalities, they are limited to where reporting was consistent, making the sample somewhat a matter of convenience. They represent a distinct set of local governments between the population range selected, roughly evenly distributed between the states. Financial reporting standards (and practices) are relatively standardized, resulting in financial reports that include valuable data for our analysis. Data was collected for the fiscal year 2014 and 2019. Five years is a suitable interval as all municipalities would have at least one election, with standard terms for council and mayor being either two or four years.

2.7.2 Independent Variables

Table 2.1 includes summaries of sample distribution by state. It includes the form of government (here distinguished as council-manager), whether or not the executive had authority (percent that did), and whether the executive (mayor or manager) changed during the five years under study.

First, we then consider the autonomy of the executive to make changes. In this case, with a mix of council-manager and mayor-council municipalities, executive authority only exists for about 18% of municipalities. We code the municipality as 1 if the executive (manager, CAO, or mayor) can make a changes, and 0, if the executive is required to have legislative approval or the council has apparent authority to make changes. To code this variable, we

Table 2.1: Summary Descriptive Statistics for Dichotomous Variables

State	Count	% of Sample	Changed (DV)	Council-Manager	Authority	Turnover
AZ	15	11%	80%	100%	13%	87%
GA	10	8%	90%	100%	10%	80%
MA	6	5%	50%	0%	0%	50%
MI	17	13%	53%	76%	18%	59%
MO	9	7%	67%	100%	11%	56%
NC	21	16%	86%	100%	43%	62%
OH	20	15%	70%	35%	5%	65%
VA	11	8%	82%	91%	27%	82%
WA	23	17%	61%	65%	30%	52%
n	132	11%	71%	74%	18%	66%

analyzed municipal charters and codes. While many cities allow managers and mayors to propose changes, most still need council approval. We coded these communities as not having explicit authority as our theoretical grounding assumes that flexibility to make changes increases the propensity to make the changes immediately.

Second, we consider the form of government, either the mayor-council form or council-manager form. While several typologies of form have been suggested that expand on this dichotomous measure, these two forms are adequate for analysis in our sample as they reflect the professionalized orientation of the executive. We code the council-manager form as one and the mayor-council form as zero. If municipalities had empowered administrators, we coded them as council-manager cities. This variable tests if political executives are more likely to preside over change.

Third, manager or mayoral turnover is coded based on a change in executive any time after 2015 but before 2019, resulting in a dichotomous variable of either 1 or 0.

Finally, environmental pressures outside of the leadership dynamics are included. We use population growth in the period studied, as a rapidly growing or shrinking municipality may trigger organizational changes relative to increasing or decreasing demands for service.

Therefore, we treat population growth as a percentage of growth or shrinkage. This data is collected from census data. Financial factors are represented by revenues, consistent with previous studies of financial stress (108; 95). We use general government revenue for the two years in the study, 2014 and 2019. In looking at our control variables to assess the sample, the distribution is roughly normal, as budget changes and population changes show a normal curve, with some showing a right skew (more rapid growth).

2.7.3 Discussion

The nine states exhibit regional characteristics of local government form. For example, Massachusetts and Ohio have a disproportionate share of municipalities with mayor-council forms. In contrast, Arizona, Georgia, Missouri, and North Carolina are entirely council-manager in the population range of interest, while Michigan and Washington are mixed.

The frequency of change, both in terms of executive turnover (66%) and in terms of departmental changes (71%) was high. However, executive turnover in municipalities, particularly mid-sized municipalities, has been studied before in smaller samples and shown similar frequency (52; 145; 133) lending credence to the validity of the departmental change metric.

Our data collection for this study did not include the types of departments that were added or subtracted as part of the analysis.

2.7.4 Controlling for State Context

The sheer number of local government organizations results in populations of organizations that are responsive to each other. Population ecology theory suggests that communities of similar organizations will behave similarly to maintain legitimacy (178; 214). In this context, departments may be shifted in response to how other organizations in the same community

of organizations are changing. Organizations in the same state would be expected to exhibit similarities. While nine variables for each state could muddy the model, regional groupings are unclear beyond variables already in the model (such as the form of government). Thus, a multilevel model is used to determine whether the relationships hold when accounting for local effects.

2.7.5 Dependent Variables

To distinguish changes in organizational structure, we used the self-reported structure of each organization, commonly called an organizational chart. We reviewed the organizational chart in each annual report in 2014 and 2019. The organizational chart allows us to see self-reported departments. From these, we counted the number of 'boxes' reporting to the executive leadership for each period. Boxes are typically sub-units. We ignored listings that were individuals. In the period observed, boxes were created, merged, or removed. An example of an organizational chart is shown in 2.1. The departments in this chart are represented by the lowest set of boxes toward the bottom of the figure. Our analysis looked at these boxes to compare the quantity in time one (2014) and time two (2019).

The mechanisms behind specific changes remain elusive. Future studies could investigate the dynamics of individual department change could be studied using more in-depth, qualitative methods, such as grounded and process approaches. While there is an exciting research opportunity in what types of new boxes are created or removed, the interest of this study is simply to analyze the frequency and quantity of change.

To test whether there is a relationship between contextual factors and the number of departments, we conducted a preliminary regression analysis comparing the number of departments and general government revenue. As expected, both population and revenue are significantly related to the number of departments. This result verifies that on the net,

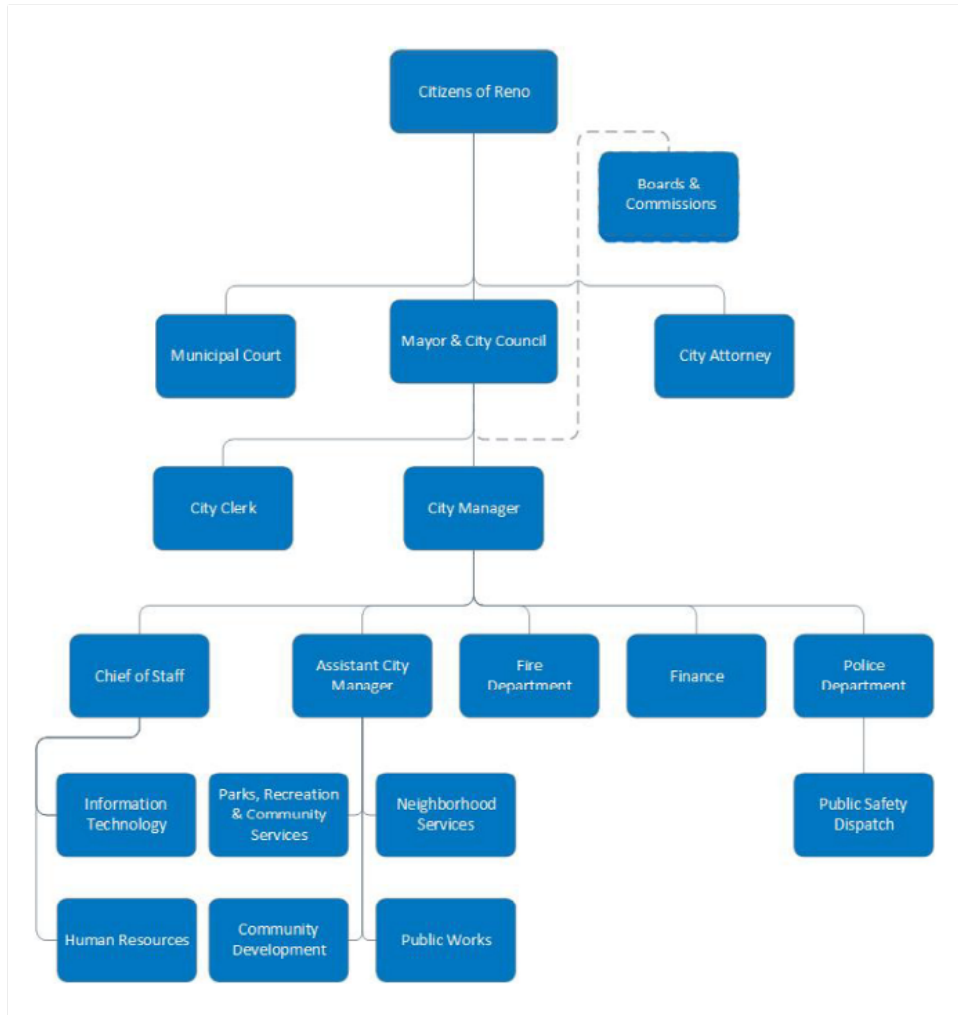


Figure 2.1: Example Organizational Chart. Reno, Nevada

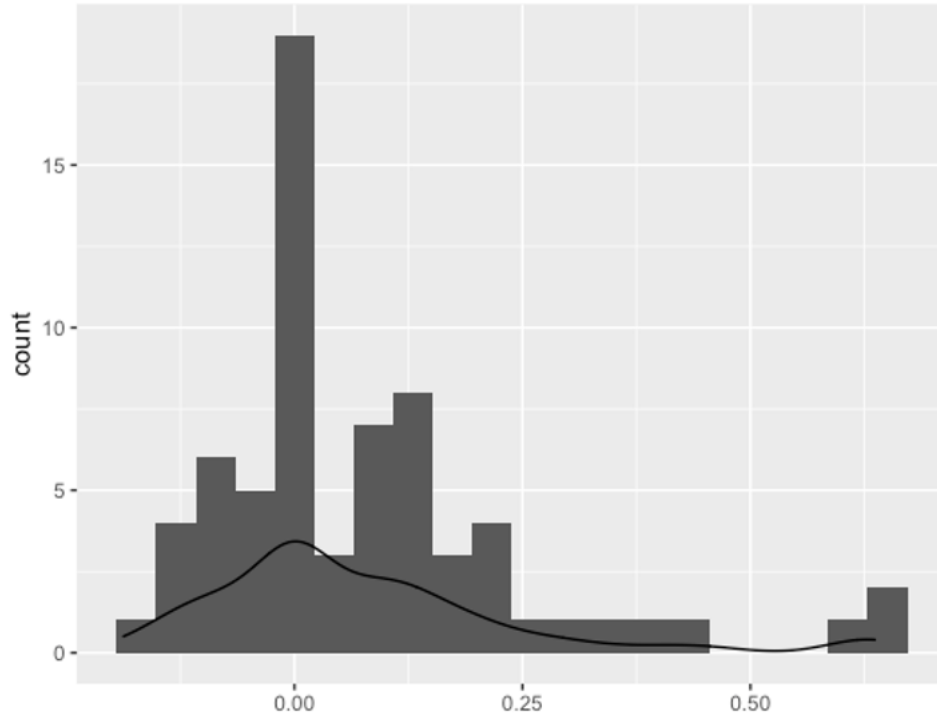


Figure 2.2: Distribution of Changes, As a Percent of Initial Departments

the larger budget in an organization and the more people it serves, the more departments it has. When logging the variables, the population has a more significant effect. For further exploration, There is a large variability in the number of departments in a municipality with a minimum of four and a maximum of sixty-two. The changes in department quantity the number in 2019 is subtracted from the number in 2014. An adjustment is made to adjust for the scale of change by converting to a percentage. Raw changes, year two minus year one, are divided by year one, converting them to a percentage change of initial value, resulting in a value between -0.5 (-50%) and 0.80 (80%).

The number of changes in organizational boxes is also roughly normal when using this technique, with a long tail to the right. This tail implies significant changes sometimes occur. This effect is consistent with assumptions of a punctuated equilibrium system where most organizations show little or no difference, but a few undergo significant changes (9).

Given that there was a skew and long tail, we included a second model (probit) based on the dichotomous variable: whether or not there were changes (1 for yes and 0 for no). This model helps to adjust for outlier effects and verify if change itself is different from the scale of change, controlling for limitations imposed by rules or practice.

2.8 Model

To study the relationship between antecedent conditions and department changes, we implemented two models with two sets of variables. These results are exploratory with a non-random sample of 132 from nine states. First, an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression is used with the changes as a logged continuous variable. This model allows us to understand what precipitates the most changes and in which direction. Note that the state variable lowers the parsimony of the model and is added in a second run.

$$Changes(Pct) = b_0 + (Turnover) + (Manager) + (Authority) + (State) + (C) + E$$

Second, we use a probit regression to determine the antecedents of change alone, where any difference greater than zero is coded as 1, while cities that saw no change in the number of departments the five years are coded at 0. As with the OLS, state variables are added to a second run.

$$Change(Y/N) = b_0 + (Turnover) + (Manager) + (Authority) + (State) + (C) + E$$

Implementing both an OLS and a dichotomous probit variable is to account for external

factors that may limit the number of departments that can be changed and verify trends are consistent. As our research question is primarily concerned with whether or not department quantity changed at all and what triggered it, a dichotomous variable loses some detail but verifies the results of the OLS.

To verify if the effects were stable if states were treated as a grouping variable instead of a covariate, a multi-level regression was conducted. The results are in the appendix; they are consistent with the regression results presented next.

2.9 Results

Table three shows the results of the regression analyses. For further discussion on the effectiveness of all models Appendix 1 includes several tests for each analysis. The results of the OLS relate the independent variables to the change in the percentage of departments. In comparison, the probit explains the probability of the independent variable's effect on the dependent variable (whether or not the organization changed at all).

Changes in population and budget are not significantly related, and the coefficients are not large, leaving hypothesis one unsupported. The coefficients are small, suggesting a low effect regardless.

Authority, the expected mechanism in hypothesis one, is weakly positively associated with changes but is not significant.

Turnover is positively associated with changes or increases in the number of departments at the .05 level of significance, confirming hypothesis three. The results suggest that in organizations that saw turnover of the executive, there were 7.7% more departments than those that did not. This result is consistent with the probit analysis, which verifies at the .01 significance level that turnover is associated with a 58% increased probability of changes to department number. As the dependent variable in this analysis is not continuous, the

Table 2.2: Regression Results

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Percent Change		Changed	
	<i>OLS</i>		<i>probit</i>	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
authbinary	0.073 p = 0.102	0.060 p = 0.183	0.337 p = 0.277	0.210 p = 0.523
turnover14	0.077** p = 0.043	0.081** p = 0.032	0.580** p = 0.019	0.509* p = 0.051
cm	-0.037 p = 0.393	-0.016 p = 0.756	-0.006 p = 0.985	-0.500 p = 0.171
popchngpct	0.170 p = 0.672	0.068 p = 0.887	-1.317 p = 0.622	-5.284 p = 0.124
budpchg	-0.087 p = 0.508	-0.159 p = 0.234	0.020 p = 0.982	0.060 p = 0.949
GA		-0.068 p = 0.447		0.004 p = 0.996
MA		0.097 p = 0.410		-1.722** p = 0.035
MI		-0.017 p = 0.840		-1.320** p = 0.030
MO		-0.101 p = 0.279		-0.683 p = 0.302
NC		0.087 p = 0.226		0.089 p = 0.871
OH		-0.017 p = 0.852		-1.061* p = 0.099
VA		-0.167* p = 0.059		-0.439 p = 0.505
WA		-0.058 p = 0.422		-0.787 p = 0.127
Constant	0.028 p = 0.567	0.054 p = 0.579	0.188 p = 0.556	1.443** p = 0.038
Observations	132	132	132	132
R ²	0.057	0.174		
Adjusted R ²	0.019	0.084		
Akaike Inf. Crit.			163.751	167.386

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

statistical analysis loses some strength, which is expected.

Council manager form, hypothesis four, has a near-zero effect, and the relationship is not significant.

2.10 Discussion

The results offer valuable contributions to knowledge about department dynamics in government organizations. First, descriptively, they show that local government department numbers are highly dynamic. Even within the relatively short five-year period under study, 66% of organizations in our sample experienced some type of department change. As discussed in our theoretical argument, research has demonstrated the possible negative effects of change on employees. These studies have most frequently looked at a single change, while this analysis suggests that change may be nearly continuous in medium sized local government organizations. It should be noted that there is significant turnover and change, which has not been observed so broadly before. Most studies have not had samples across this many states. We regard this descriptive result as an exciting finding with implications for the ability of the public to understand the organizations they are engaging with and for staff to adapt to new leadership and new configuration. This observation has less than ideal implications for employees, and for the public's comprehension of public agencies.

Executives of local government organizations also turnover quite frequently (63%). While this is consistent with previous research, it is the only variable that is significantly related to change, an effect that remained through all four models. This effect emphasizes the sensitivity of local government organizations to executive turnover, something that is very frequent in our sample but also common in local government organizations where elections and professional aspirations make turnover frequent. Our results do not support

the notion that professional executives, such as those in the council-manager form of government, will be more likely to pursue changes. In contrast to mayors, we posited that city managers would be insulated from direct democratic accountability, giving them more freedom to make changes, at least at the department level. Indeed, our results show that even without a significant impact, the coefficient of a professional manager's likelihood to pursue structural change is, on average, essentially non-differentiated from that of an elected executive. Similarly, executive authority to make changes on the scale or likelihood of making changes. Where executives (managers or mayors) have the power to make changes in department structure descriptively, there is a more considerable average percentage change, but the overall effect is not significant. Whether this is due to a desire to avoid legislative oversight or that elected officials block future changes is still an open question.

2.11 Theoretical and Methodological Implications

Taken together, these results imply that executives at the moment of turnover are making changes to department structure without making significant resource consumption changes. This has significant implications for the role of departments in public organizations as a leadership device. New executives, strapped by the realities of municipal resource constraints, and potentially delayed effect of adjustments like tax increases, are instead shifting departments. This adjustment can be interpreted as a way of "putting a stamp" on the organization. This result is consistent with the spirit of reform in municipal government (226) in an environment where municipal governments are not all on the same time frame. What is novel and a best practice for one executive is not for her successor; with a high frequency of turnover in executive offices, reform is less a matter of epochal fashions than the personal and political preferences of an individual.

Earlier in this article, we argued that departments are an essential lens for studying

public organizations, particularly in the municipal context. Our results suggest this insight is valid. The failure to support hypotheses related to structural elements of authority and professionalization, and those related to internal (budget) and external (population) changes, emphasizes a story about the nature of departmental dynamics. Our preliminary analysis shows on balance, the number of departments is associated with internal and external components; our analysis of changes demonstrates that department changes are largely independent of instrumental factors. The independence of department changes emphasizes the need to further conceptualize a research agenda on the dynamics of in municipal and other organizations.

While the turnover result is roughly consistent with theories of bureaucratic politics (e.g. 153), it requires additional theorizing around the performative role of department organization. With the frequency of change in departments, the current collection might be seen as representative of the organization's dominant philosophy. While their overall contours may remain relatively consistent, theory-building opportunities exist in the notion of departments being fungible elements that leadership can use to demonstrate attention. Lacking additional resources (in the form of revenue or population to service), departments provide a potential vehicle for leadership to express that it has made changes without fundamentally altering the bottom line. This insight is new because bureaucratic politics research has often grappled with the need for resources in the context of new interests (124). If departments are moderately easy to shift, even when legislative approval is required, this resource expectation may be wrong and may upend assumptions about cultural calcification.

We can also take for granted that changes in environmental context drive government 'reinvention'. New technologies are one of the most studied of these changes, particularly for the potential challenges for individuals (100). Yet, in the time period studied no new major technologies were adopted and advanced to government. The results imply that

organizations are constantly integrating new technologies - even ones that may have been around a while - and potentially tinkering with new innovations that have yet to be fully adopted. The inertia of long living organizations is also disputed; the rigidity of hierarchy did not prevent substantial changes in the sample.

The departmental dynamism highlighted by this study and the frequency of the most impactful event, turnover, indicate that additional research is needed to understand the specific types of departments being added, reorganized, and dropped in local government organizations. Potential department changes are related to functions that currently have attention or are innovative, consistent with research on innovation adoption. These entities might be an independent budget department, strategic planning, performance management, or sustainability function. Given the ever-changing fads of administration, departmental changes provide a critical window into how local governments respond institutionally to trends in the larger political and professional environment. This reaction may also be evident in the creation or devolution of municipal committees, an important department to elected officials' governing boards.

2.12 Limitations

Our window into department changes is admittedly narrow in only looking at nine states. As discussed, having established that there is significant dynamism in departments, immediate interest turns to what departments were created, dissolved, or merged for insights into current fads of leadership. We leave that to future research.

The strongest predictor, the turnover of executives, could be further extrapolated and clarified. For example, does turnover because of a resignation or election loss have different effects than turnover due to retirement or strategic change? It is unclear whether changes precede or occur immediately after a turnover. Most studies support the notion of turnover

as a moment of relative political unity, which allows for structural configuration changes. However, a small set of research about rules has highlighted how known impending turnover can also trigger changes immediately before a new regime takes office (185). This analysis cannot distinguish between the two.

2.13 Conclusion and Research Next Steps

We have discussed the dynamics of departments in municipal government and potential antecedents of changes in the number in an organization. Descriptively we find that net changes in the number of departments is widespread. More organizations than not (66%) saw at least one increase or decrease within our sample. This result suggests that while municipal department structure can be seen as a stable system, and studied as such (64), it is actually quite dynamic. We also found that while the quantity of departments is related to population and revenue size, changes are statistically unrelated to population and revenue changes during the five years under analysis. Together, these results imply that change is constant, not contingent, and is responsive to changes in leadership. This finding opens the door to future research on the individual processes behind change in public organizations and the possibilities of as a unit of analysis. In addition, the frequency of changes at the formalized department level, as represented by organizational charts, invites further investigation of shifting internal characteristics based on expectations within the organization or constraints at the executive level.

As governments increasingly behave as divisional structures within governance systems, the dynamics of departments merits further study. Indeed, while modifications to departments may seem relatively innocuous, in an environment where public participation is a key element of day-to-day operations, a chaotic department environment alongside a fuzzy governance system may raise important questions about just how much the public can un-

derstand about the organizations with which they engage. Moreover, the turnover-change implies that new political regimes may not fully comprehend the organization they are inheriting and seek to clarify or put their stamp on the configuration. Comprehensibility concerns merit future study, and the use of departments provides an additional analytical lens.

Municipal government structures are dynamic systems. Consequently, the structural configuration of departments holds promise for further investigation into how these systems translate policy preferences into organizational systems. This article provides a step toward a better conceptualization of the internal configurations of public organizations and more honest discussions about the nature and effects of internal department change.

CHAPTER

3

PROCESSES AND INFORMATION: THE CASE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

3.1 Chapter Preview

Public participation is included in many routine public organization processes. However, the information generated is not well understood, and translation into policy is fuzzy if used at all (60; 59). This situation could be linked to how overlapping processes adopted under different pretexts are cobbled together. In this study, formal agency processes (budget and planning) are analyzed in this perspective: the process is set up internally, the public is

notified, the public engages, the result of the process can be presented on the internet, and the content of the public's participation is translated into information. The study tackles this condition theoretically and empirically. First, to better understand how these results are potentially presented, this article proposes a typology of four types of public participation information. Second, to evaluate this approach, public participation in 152 standard processes and documents were reviewed from the U.S. context. This analysis contributes several insights. First, information reporting is inconsistent at best, even though all the agencies had websites. Second, where available, document presentation of participation is consistent with the proposed typology. Third, highly professionalized processes that rely heavily on consultants are the most likely to report detailed process information. Connecting the conceptual frame of performance information to public participation holds promise for the quantitative analysis of the implementation of public value processes and highlights incongruity in implementation between two areas of high research interest: transparency and participative engagement. The starkness of the contradiction of process adoption has implications for how we understand and study organizations: as individual processes and whole organizations, or as the cumulative effect of intersecting, overlapping, and accretive processes that may or may not achieve their intended goals. Attention paid simply to the input or the output may create incentives that result in overall ineffectual management but seemingly successful implementation, as is the case with consultant projects in this study.

3.2 Introduction

Increasingly, the field of public administration has turned its attention to data (148). However, the use of data has been uneven, particularly in areas of normative interest (120). An area ripe for a data-centric perspective is public participation. Public participation practices have been formalized and incorporated into many administrative processes, substantially

increasing the data generated. At the same time, traditional methods like public comment have been extended into a wide diversity of techniques, each yielding different types of data. Despite this institutionalization, the type of data collected, and information generated, is not well understood. Instead, the focus has been on individual activities, emphasizing normative value: public participation is essential and provokes trust (221; 14; 159). This article addresses this linkage in two parts. First, it explores how the data collected and analyzed by public agencies in public participation can be seen as performance information and proposes typology. Second, it uses a process based data collection approach to empirically test the typological assumptions.

Over time, public engagement has become an essential public management responsibility (216). Public managers have been pulled in two directions: reluctance by staff to embrace participation based on risk perception (59) and pressures to adopt broad engagement strategies (75). Studies have extensively described the tools used by administrators to fulfill this obligation (107; 162; 231; 193; 116). Novel approaches, such as participatory budgeting, seem to emerge every few years and represent innovation (64). To justify normative preferences public participation has been related to performance (166), fiscal health (81), and management effectiveness (232). However, these studies are limited by the data they employ, typically surveys of the officials managing the engagement. A notable omission is the data collected during the process and the information presented post hoc, leaving a gap between tools and outcomes. Public participation, like any other administrative process, generates data.

Linking participation data to performance information scholarship is helpful. The latter has also been cited for its normative value (79), yet has been systematized and linked to improved organizational performance (78). However, performance information implies an outcome product: operational data that has been processed to improve management decisions is performance information (127).

Public participation processes create significant and varied data within the bounds of standard techniques. While some information about a public process is often reported, it is not standardized. The feedback content is not commonly regarded as performance information, and its reporting can vary substantially (184). Kroll's (125) conception of routine and nonroutine performance information can be extended to a typology for participation information reporting. Coupled with the motivations of organizations implementing these processes, either instrumental or normative, four types of public participation performance information are proposed: technical, box checking, summative, and integrative.

This study advances an integrated approach that answers the call of Yang and Pandey (232) for a more systematic study of public participation, starting with data generated. Standard processes, budget and planning, for 152 public organizations are studied. These processes follow similar patterns, including newspaper notification, public participation, and reports commonly published online. These reports are evaluated for incorporation of participation information and categorization. A probit regression finds that budget processes are less likely to incorporate data into their final documents than planning processes, consultant-driven and planning processes are much more likely to integrate nonroutine data, and information presentation patterns align well with the proposed typology.

To address information in the formal processes of local government, this article is separated into two parts. First, the conception of an organizational process is clarified and the way different processes are connected is discussed. The article first reviews public participation scholarship and its relationship to performance information. Next, theoretical motivations for information use are explored. Together, these are used to create a typology of four types of public participation performance information strategies analyzed descriptively and empirically. Finally, the implications of the findings are discussed, and the next steps are extrapolated.

3.3 Part I: Distinguishing Process Sets and the Information they Generate: the Case of Public Participation in Formal Processes

The purpose of part one is threefold. First, to situate public participation practice as part of a larger 'process set' in formal government organizations. Second, to distinguish the practice of public participation and its lack of engagement with information generation. And Third, to distinguish the types of information and motivations behind the inclusion of information. Together, these elements combine to create a typology of public participation information reported in formal documentation.

Management of local government organizations includes numerous administrative processes or procedures that have been formalized over time. A process (or procedure) is defined as a set of operational actions related to accomplishing some goal. These goals are often routinized, institutionalized, and socially habituated. For example, implementation of a policy is a process, but it may also establish processes and procedures that remain long after a policy is implemented the first time and the policy has left the agenda. In practice, existing processes are under constant scrutiny and evolution. When scrutiny reaches a point of leadership or political interest, scholarship on process changes and optimization has followed (37, p.22). In public administration, processes are a crucial part of understanding the operation of public agencies and the ways they institutionalize over time. The institutionalization process, without significant reorganization, has been understudied. However, repetition has key organizational benefits like learning. Learning is nearly impossible without some anchoring set of information and institutions (32).

Public policy reforms often initiate administrative processes with different objectives, sources, and values that interact and are cobbled together. Individual processes within

these policy sets, perhaps not regarded as such, have received attention from the larger public administration community. A formal process, for example, budgeting, has secondary processes (e.g., public involvement), a third (e.g., transparency, information presentation, etc.), and potentially other ancillary elements (e.g., news media involvement), implied within its bounds. As individual processes, these areas of interest have received attention. For example, the management of the budget process (114; 194), public participation (58; 200), impacts on policy (161), and the presentation of data (10). The data generated and processed into information is not well understood.

Each 'process set' includes informal and formal elements with different origins. For example local government budget procedures have professional norms and (typically) a set of state and regulatory requirements about how they are to proceed (12). Public participation, which may have started as a relatively simple add-on (a meeting), may carry many more expectations. Increasing calls for transparency may have made posting this information online routine (indeed this is how we often judge websites in an academic sense (2; 66). Looking at budgetary and planning processes through three lenses - adoption of regulatory frameworks (1), public participation (2), and transparency (3), we can consider how they are interacting as part of the extensive organizational system. Either in concert or with little regard for each other. Critically, these different processes, merged into one by time, politics, and eventually habit, has an under realized but evident tension between procedures considered technical (e.g. budget requests, revenue forecasting, performance management) and those considered normative (e.g. participation, transparency). Figure 3.1 shows how the processes in a set have different expectations for information reporting and procedural data. A process set orientation differs from previous studies in not looking at individual elements. Instead, it ties them together to see the result (if it is even present). Notably, while they may appear to be continuous, these different processes and procedures represent different reform eras.

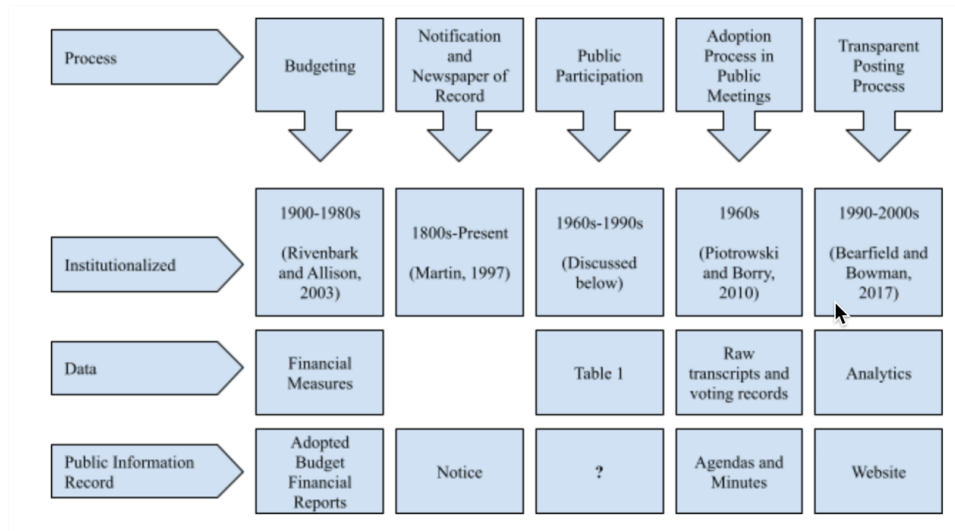


Figure 3.1: Processes Integrated, Budgeting Example

As shown in figure 3.1, public participation is nested within a process set and expectations for a budget process, each of which generates data and includes expectations for information in the public record. While budgets are anticipated to produce documents, the documentation output is less clear for public participation.

3.3.1 Public Participation Processes

For this study, public participation is a standardized, formal procedure designed to collect or elicit public feedback, in either one or two-way exchange of information, nested as part of a set of formal government processes. The combination of process and engagement distinguishes the concept from ad-hoc feedback received by public employees on the fly during the day-to-day business. Instead, public participation follows routine processes in public organizations (162).

In the United States, the institutionalization of public participation can be followed from initiatives at the federal government level. Throughout much of the 1960s, federal legislation included provisions to ensure adequate public participation in federally funded

initiatives to standardize the requirements of the administrative procedure act. Two acts created a framework for public involvement in projects receiving federal funds: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act (1964) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA; 1969). NEPA's public participation requirements include all environmental processes and most major transportation projects. These acts have been codified and standardized into numerous regulations and procedures at the federal and state level. As a result of these regulatory imperatives highly standardized methods have emerged. With the devolution of federal resources, these practices have become common throughout public agencies at the national and subnational levels.

At the local level, a standard toolkit for common processes has emerged, usually including public meetings, either formal (hearings) or informal (workshops and information sessions)(159; 58; 183). Literature has described these strategies as 'conventional public participation,' implying that they do not live up to the potential of public participation (162). A panoply of strategies and mechanisms has developed as the formal public hearing has expanded into numerous participatory techniques throughout government (74; 57). In the 1990s, these techniques became increasingly professionalized and conducted by third parties (111). New tools and approaches have begun to change the dynamics of public processes. An example is a recent debate over net neutrality, where the use of e-tools yielded nearly 24 million comments, many from non-human algorithms (28) or participatory budgeting that involves citizens in the budget process (84).

The technological transformation of public participation has not come with attendant expectations for systematic reporting and transparency, a notable omission as public participation practice is often heavily scrutinized and often fall short of expectations (60). Processes that received high numbers of comments, even with increased complexity, were more likely to receive more political attention (199). The effect has been to reduce often complicated and thoughtful participation processes to "'fire alarms' that facilitate elected

officials' efforts to ensure that bureaucracy is responsive to their constituents" (225, p. 66)(West 2004, p.66).

Empirical studies in public participation they have been primarily through the lens of perceptions of success by management (232, e.g.) or practitioners (132). The results of these studies are mixed but overall point to a conservative approach by managers skeptical of potential consequences(189; 59; 235). Alternatively, engagement has been studied by surveying participants involved in the processes themselves (92; 116). The advantage of perceptions is readily available data as regular surveys of the public and management have included questions about the topic. This article assumes that a perceptions-centric approach is insufficient to grapple with the ubiquity of public participation practice.

The effectiveness of public participation has been addressed (192; 14). Studies have begun to evaluate how engagement relates to process or project success find strong support for the notion that public participation is not just a value or legitimizing kabuki but can improve the delivery of projects: both broadening participants' awareness of government action and project quality (166). However, comparative data collection over time has not been conducted rendering systematic analysis less likely.

As a tool, public participation is increasingly a task of public management. George, Van de Walle, and Hammerschmid (77) frame the adoption of tools as a matter of contingent logic. The rise of professionalized public participation in the 1990s throughout the western public administrative system created an eager support system of contractors, professionals, and technologies whose role was to engage the public in novel ways (Johnson, 2019). As the variety of techniques for participation has expanded, the data generated has not been explored.

The perspective of performance information is a path forward for scholars to address value-laden topics such as public participation while addressing a concern amongst public participants that their feedback simply goes into a black box (232). Moreover, a systematic

approach to information reporting could yield tremendous benefits to both research and comparative analysis of projects and practice over time

3.3.2 Performance Information in Administrative Processes

Administrative processes have increasingly become subject to expectations of generating performance information (PI). When processed to have relational value, data becomes information (238). Increasingly, public participation scholarship has begun to discuss the evaluation, incorporating elements such as accountability and communication of results into best practices (159). PI is a way to reconceptualize the data collected and processed in participation. A PI lens allows for an increased expectation that the data is processed in a standardized way to be comparable across methods and processes. Linkages between public participation and PI have been implied before, notably in the notion that the cultural adoption of performance systems is related to an external orientation, similar to what is required of successful engagement (127). PI use has been advocated to improve public attention as it provides the information necessary to meaningfully participate and build trust (105). Performance management systems and strategic management are motivated by similar values to public participation, especially when translated into day-to-day practice.

Performance information is used to demonstrate how organizations align with goals identified through strategic planning efforts to improve accountability (Locke and Latham 2002). The call for new public management focused heavily on strategic planning, and the practice of developing strategic plans, many of which emphasize public participation, has become ubiquitous (15; 30; 184). As a result, measuring performance data for describing government activities has been established as necessary for understanding agency performance and planning more effectively. The public sector would benefit from broadening the PI concept, especially in standard processes that have been widely implemented but

generate fewer 'routine' data points. Performance information is typically expected where quantitative data is expected, such as the number of permits or arrests. While value-based activities are increasingly expected, the data they generate is less clear. Counts of participants do not carry the qualitative data collected during participation processes, while comments and feedback can require significant processing time as well as subjective analysis. While this challenge may seem benign, the repeated deferral to "fire drill" responses when the public engages more than anticipated or frustration when there is perceived low engagement highlights the need to identify how these increasingly frequent processes translate the data collected into information.

Performance information is of two types: routine and nonroutine (125). Routine information fuels standard performance management systems, metrics collected as part of standard processes to help organizations meet their goals. Performance information is typically ex-ante, meaning that it refers to a previous measure to show change over time. This type of information's quantitative and predictable nature has made it a 'normative expectation' over time that has come to represent the organization's performance. Non-routine data, in contrast, is information collected as part of day-to-day operations that is difficult to summarize and use but is still critical for helping the organization operate. For example, public participation can create routine data, such as the number of meetings, but is also a source of significant nonroutine data, such as preferences for a particular zoning condition, process improvement, or insights about service delivery. Nonroutine data can also be information collected in the course of business, such as a person providing feedback on a permitting process. For the purposes of this study, the emphasis is on the former.

Conceptualizing Public Participation Information Through Motivation Several explanations exist for why public participation data has not been translated into performance information. First, the participation process itself has been advanced as an antidote to performance management gone too far (30)(. Second, with its nonroutine and subjective

interpretations, the data collected may carry risks to staff (59). Finally, the process brings dueling motivations for public participation implementation in regularized functions: one to satisfy regulatory imperatives, instrumental, and another to maintain values (for the organization, project, or their self and public image), normative.

It is unclear how public participation processes, and the data they create, are being translated into information. A concern has been that the participatory engagement can lose much of its richness as it is standardized and simplified. Much of the data collected through public participation processes and unlike standard quantitative measures of performance information, could be classified as nonroutine. Such data is typically qualitatively rich, reflecting the variable nature of processes and their participatory approaches, such as comments on the budget at a public hearing or notes about dialogue at a transportation workshop. In day-to-day practice, this type of data is often preferred over routine information, which could be considered dry or dull (125). The reasons for collecting nonroutine data might be related to maintaining legitimacy or a stakeholder orientation (72). While processes are regularized, frequent, and common, each creates opportunities for routine and nonroutine feedback. Nonroutine feedback is qualitative and unpredictable, which carries concerns and implied risks (59). Managing the process's preferences and habits will dictate how and if the data is ultimately used, translated into information, and presented.

The measures of public participation are ambiguous. While data about how often the public was engaged may be counted, the comments collected during the same process are more difficult to summarize and apply as its objectives are less than clear (after all what is 'advancing democratic values'). While measure development typically begins with a statement of purpose (126), public participation can have vague goals such as improving the final product, strengthening the relationship between the government and citizens, or simply satisfying regulatory requirements. Thus, statements supporting public participation in administration tend to be values-based: do it because it is the right thing to do.

Nevertheless, there are signs that improvement in the data surrounding public participation may help to improve the design of processes and improve the transparency of often opaque impacts.

Public participation is not alone in reaching a point where measurement may be necessary for its continued maturation. In a similar vein, as the field increasingly emphasizes equity in its work there is an increasing need to improve measures of diversity and equity, such as in public participation processes through collaboration with historically underserved groups (38). In this regard, equity provides an interesting 'goal' for evaluating public participation processes and has been used to assess individual engagement methods in the past. However, calls to improve an understanding of the outcomes of public participation and communicate whether they have met their equity goals are still limited by the data available (162). This gap might be attributed directly to the unique and third-party-driven nature of public participation practice or a lack of expectations.

Public participation and engagement implicitly represent information transfer. The transfer of information can be one-directional or bidirectional. A simple classification of the information generated was proposed by Rowe and Frewer (193). Table 3.1 summarizes how common types of participation techniques create data, highlights the increased use of digital tools, which can anonymize participation and do not require face-to-face interaction. While participation can generate routine data, such as counts, there are also examples of nonroutine data, such as comments. In either respect, the bespoke nature of public participation practice often renders even quantitative data a one-off collection, with unclear reporting practices.

Routine Information

Participation practices generate metrics much like other administrative practices. Routine information can be detailed (such as the number of people at meetings) or simple (the

Table 3.1: Public Participation and Data Generated

Type	Technique	"Routine" Data	"NonRoutine" Data
Outward Analog	Newspaper, Media Notices	Counts	
Inward Analog	Surveys, Public Hearing, Comments	Quantitative Results, Counts	Open-Ended Comments, Letters, Mobilization
Outward Digital	Emails, Website	Views and Counts	
Inward Digital	Online Surveys	Counts	Comments, Facilitated Comments, Emails, Social Comments
Both Ways Analog	Workshops	Count of Participants	Rich Comments, Discussions, Deliberations
Both Ways Digital	Interactive Web Software	Count of Participants, Location of Participants	Comments, Discussions, Rankings, preferences

meetings happened). In public participation, perhaps more than other processes, this information does not provide much information about public preferences.

Nonroutine Information

The rich nature of participatory processes generate data that is not unique types of information are not uncommon in performance management. Kroll described both the usefulness and impact of nonroutine data (2010). Nonroutine data is that which is not expected, does not fit neatly into a reporting paradigm, but that nonetheless is qualitatively rich and can provide valuable insights. Nonroutine feedback is the most valuable for public participation processes whereas coproduction is a value because it provides insights about adjustments that can be made to a process or project. Yet, processing nonroutine data into information, particularly if a substantial number of comments is received can take a considerable amount of time. This processing cost is often not accounted for in public participation

practice. In table (1) that follows, all the processes can produce facilitated or unfacilitated nonroutine data. Facilitated assumes there is a vehicle to collect nonroutine data, whereas unfacilitated assume a member of the public would have to seek out the opportunity to provide it.

In a universe of practices as extensive as public participation, typologies help simplify the landscape to postulate the types of data that staffers might collect during an engagement process. Public participation typologies, notably Arnstein (3), Rowe and Fewer (193), Nabatchi (159), have conceptualized the process as a range of activities from non-effectual to citizen control, where the interest is in how the participation process legitimates the public's involvement. These approaches have provided valuable insights into the depth of public participation (162, thick or thin,) and direction (one or two way). However, these approaches have not categorized public participation's information outputs. Instead, there is an underlying often unacknowledged assumption that the efforts themselves will impact the organization directly (as in changing the direction of a policy or project) or indirectly (such as building public-government relationships). This connection should be made more explicit.

Similar to participation practice, the motivation behind performance information has been of interest to scholars for some time. However, despite focusing on both the reform and research communities, its adoption has been uneven and fallen short of its promise (126; 54). The institutionalization of performance measurement is the most vital determinant of its use, with the caveat that its usefulness is linked to practical goals. Interestingly, this motivation is similar to public participation, leading to shared questions about whether it matters (75; 107). Ideally, performance information is part of an ongoing measurement process to improve processes a matter of enhancing a metric; this instrumental motivation is distinct.

3.3.3 Motivation in Information Publishing

While expectations for what is reported in public participation processes are unclear, many institutionalized processes, however, do produce documents. These documents are so expected that their presence has been measured when evaluating websites for transparency (10). However, when information about public participation is reported, it reflects two features: instrumental or normative objectives. A normative approach would emphasize the act of the process, its depth, and have an eye toward building trust. Alternatively, an instrumentally motivated process would include measures that at least in theory could be compared between techniques and allow numeric evaluation of the procedure. In both frames, motivation may be inspired by concerns about compliance with federal, state, or local policy, however, reporting of the results can be categorized by whether the information presented has some instrumental value (metrics) or normative value only (demonstration of intent).

Instrumental

The first frame treats the data collected and measured during participation activities as helpful in achieving more efficiency or responding to requirements. In this model, participation data is reported in ways that can be understood and compared with other processes. Technical feedback mechanisms are useful for agencies looking to broaden the portfolio for a decision-maker to make the most vetted decision possible. Public participation is typically referred to vaguely in strategic planning, making the measurement an important distinction. An organization seeks to meet strategic goals, and objectives and often includes specific measures to understand progress (78). Public participation is also bound by regulatory objectives that can set a process' baseline goals (Martin, 1997). How an organization chooses to incorporate those regulatory constraints into its reporting can inform

its approach to public participation. The first assumption about public participation is that staff understand the community's needs where a project is occurring and design processes to match those situations. In that case, the liberated manager and professional staff will develop tools for public processes that align with the project's needs, but nothing more (78).

Normative

While public participation in government processes is not always perfect and genuine, it is generally viewed as key to the health of the democratic community (131). Roles for the public have shifted depending on political preferences, from advocacy to satisfying customer demands, to partnership (216). Recent literature has focused on public participation as a representation of public values. The emphasis on values could be expected to be light on quantitative substance, as the qualitative content of the comments (individually or in sum) or the execution of the process itself is seen as the value proposition. Nevertheless, mimetic pressures present as departments (and teams within departments) work to copy each other toward 'best practices', often driven by political interest or fear of political exposure where expectations of political leaders encourage the deployment of public participation activities but rarely require any reporting. This values-based approach has been central in the literature of public administration. In the early 1980s public participation began to be seen as a tool to rein in bureaucracy (131). Even now, these two concepts are often placed in opposition (21). However, the data for organizations driven by this type of motivation is less likely to connect to management systems, particularly details about measures, sometimes deliberately. Thus, the information produced would highlight that the process occurred, and possibly themes that were gleaned from it, but no information systemic enough to be used comparatively as part of a performance management system.

3.3.4 Proposed Typology

It is helpful to conceptualize both the instrumental and normative approaches as the two sides representative of organizational motivation in the development of reporting. Table ?? summarizes the types of reporting that organizations may pursue. It identifies four categories of public involvement practice based on the intersection of motivation and whether nonroutine data are addressed through synthesis and application: technical, checking the box, summarizing, routine nonroutine.

Table 3.2: Information Types in Public Participation Reporting

Data Reporting	Motivation Instrumental	Motivation Normative
Routine	Technical	Checking the Box
Nonroutine	Integrative	Summarizing

3.3.5 Types of Organizational Approaches to Public Participation Information

Technical

The regulatory or strategic framework motivates reporting measures of performance information. Activities are reported as a list or summary of counts. The information collected is routine and part of an institutionalized process, but not more than the number of activities and participants reported. This type of activity minimizes uncertainties while reinforcing claims to a legitimate process. Integration of public feedback may be implied, but it is not explicitly called out in the reporting document.

Checking the Box

An agency driven by isomorphic pressure to include public participation will reflect an orientation to meeting expectations of the professional field with an awareness of regulatory objectives. While Public participation is a routine activity, information presentation will reflect a desire to assert political and professional legitimacy. For example, the Government Financial Officers Association's requirements suggest budget documents reference a public process. Information from this perspective lacks the same measurement imperative of the technical approach. Instead, the goal is to demonstrate an organizational commitment to participation (85). The information would be like the regulatory process, noting the types of meetings and processes used but not providing summary measures. This result is likely expected for many local government jurisdictions where public participation has become informally adopted as part of processes but not tied into outcomes. This approach is likely to reflect the character of the manager of the process or the organization's culture but does not include metrics that can be compared across processes.

Summarizing

The summarizing approach to data is used for organizations responding to an interest in the content of comments received. In this paradigm, institutional logic still strongly supports creating and adopting engagement strategies, perhaps pushing the organization to adopt various new tools through mimetic pressure. However, unlike the box checkers, this approach would be expected to identify themes from the data, acknowledging the nonroutine data collected in the process but not connecting it to outcomes. Moreover, as a normatively driven process, the measures expected in a technical frame would also likely not be present.

Integrative

Finally, the integrative data approach balances the routine-regulatory frame where approaches to public participation are designed in response to a framework and within a contingent assumption that the strategy will derive from policy and be set up to react to needs with an implied impact on the process at hand. Information presented in this lens is explicitly tied to outcomes in the reporting document. Project and organizational goals are connected to the public participation data, such as the diversity of the participants and explorations of how participation varied. Limits are discussed and explained. The rich data of nonroutine performance information is managed by a robust structure enforced through policy and technical commitment. In addition, public participation feedback will be collected and analyzed, and the process allows the flexibility to respond to each comment in a way that meaningfully affects the process.

3.3.6 Discussion

This typology provides a pathway to evaluate how participation information is reported. Participation reporting, within the context of a formalized process, represents how the organization has translated waves of reform into an output, in this case the documents produced by the process. Performance information and performance systems represent systematized data that can be compared across processes (126). Expecting public participation data to be systematized in the same way these elements are systematized is perhaps asking a lot. However, the “technical” and “integrative” approaches may be best suited to a longer term performance information systems. In contrast, it may be less useful if the information is treated as normative in the “box check” or “summarizing” approaches.

The delivery of public participation information in the official record, as placed in an official, publicly accessible, web repository is not assured. The typology above assumes that

the process set has been effectively combined and certain norms (as represented by the availability of a website) are in place within the organization. If these assumptions are incorrect, information from public participation opportunities and the processes themselves may be unavailable.

3.4 Part II: Evaluating the Typology

It is unclear how the processes that incorporate public participation translate those activities into information in the formal reporting documents. Formal processes are common in public organizations that have, over time, incorporated public participation. Participatory processes generate data whose information output is unclear. This section empirically tests the typological assumptions about information generated in participatory processes in budget and planning initiatives. It classifies the information presented as non-present, technical, checking the box, summarizing, or integrative. It reviews the findings which distinguish budgeting from the planning process and the unique role of consultants.

Availability of the formal documents generated by the processes that include public participation has been used to judge whether or not an organization is 'transparent' (10; 66). In this context, a new process is applied to the original procedures, which may or may not affect the process itself. Websites are the baseline for a transparent local government organization in the digital age (66). Therefore, publication of the official records of the formal processes on them is expected.

This approach to empirically analyzing the typology represents a process-centric analysis technique. This reflects an assumption that processes have steps that can be used to identify cases that are distinct from the step under analysis. In this context, formal processes are anticipated to have public notice of a public participation step in the process while later posting the adopted document online.

3.4.1 Types of Processes

Formal processes provide a window into how public participation is translated into information: budgets and planning. Each is typically maintained by a different professional group, either as staff or hired consultants, but reflects a generalized professional expectation of public participation that is not necessarily consistent across government entities (231). Although, public participation continues to be a critical concern of local government study (20), studying common, routine processes that local governments undertake can provide insight into the procedural inclusion of public participation.

Finance: Budgets

The annual budget process has been seen as a venue of public participation since the emergence of the formal budgeting process in the early 1900s (58; 57). Professionally, the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) distributes budget awards for the best practices in budgeting which expects a mention of the budget process. In addition, the new GFOA standards (effective in 2021) include an explicit requirement to include a description of how the public is involved.

GFOA is also active in research, including studies investigating how its members have used participation in the budget process. For example, Hatcher (93) found a preference for more traditional participative methods such as public hearings over more intense methods for winners of the budget awards. Others have found a more nuanced picture showing reluctance to use all available mechanisms, but typically more than only the traditional tools. Because budgets are routine processes in most government agencies, consumers of public reports expect that the data reported about the budget public engagement is similarly routine and likely to follow a technical approach.

Hypothesis 1 Budgets would be more likely to include a technical orientation.

Civil Engineering: Highway and Transportation Plans

American transportation planning came of age during the implementation of the interstate highway system in the 1960s. Adopting the environmental planning process as part of the National Environmental Planning Act (NEPA) created the stage for a dynamic public participation ecosystem. This regulatory frame from within which departments of transportation (federal, state, and local) operate provides a strong incentive to adopt contingent and routine approaches to public participation based on default to coercive pressure imposed in law and policy.

The Transportation Research Board (TRB) has been a fertile ground for research on public participation. Research has emphasized the techniques that public participation can use to improve engagement tools. Structured public engagement highlights the interest in building procedural processes that are systematic and intentional (88). While at the same time, transportation research has emphasized new tools for engagement that professionals in that field might expect to show up in process documentation (220; 207). These cultural elements would highlight that transportation planning would be expected to use new tools and be more likely to synthesize routinized data. Still, there is less emphasis on the measures of the process. For example, reporting required by Federal policy requires responses to each comment presented; it is unclear if that is included in public documents and that process may inhibit translation to the formal document.

Hypothesis 2 Transportation reports would be expected to reflect “technical” or “check the box” orientations.

Urban Planning: Comprehensive Plans

The urban planning profession has embraced public participation in its processes (132). Like other fields, it has taken a critical eye toward the effectiveness of public participation

and found similar challenges in the engagement of broad constituencies (39), but has been relatively silent on reporting. Given the interest in incorporating the public in planning decision making and the focus on public legitimacy in routine but relatively emphasized processes, it follows that these planning documents should include reporting about how project and process teams collected the data.

Hypothesis 3 Planning processes will be more likely to present data as check the box or summarizing approaches.

In sum, the three processes would be expected to report public participation data in their formal documentation. However, while hypotheses are proposed, it is not clear how strong these professional motivations translate into data reporting from public participation processes. Thus, while it is expected that the processes will appear in newspaper notices as required by law, their translation into formal documents is less clear.

3.4.2 Professionalization

The role of consultants in participatory activity has become standardized (111). While budgeting has seen relatively limited use of consultants for preparation, planning processes have become dominated by consultants (138). Consultant-driven processes would be more likely to produce reporting because of the increased professionalization of public participation that has also been found to impose their preferences, such as “smart” growth (138). In this perspective, reporting is a professional expectation and an opportunity to demonstrate their bona fides and market them, increasing the possibility they use integrative approaches.

Hypothesis 4 Processes affiliated with consultants will be more likely to report public participation practices, measures, and the qualitative content of public participation data.

3.4.3 Research Approach

To examine these processes a unique data set is constructed. One of the challenges of public participation scholarship currently is that it relies heavily on practitioners' perceptions (93) and the public. It is also common in the analysis of public engagement to consider a single case to understand the role of the public in a particular process (69; 200). These circumstances provide insight into effective public participation practice. However, while case studies have provided significant insights into the use of engagement tools, mainly using large, sampled public members (11), they can imply that these types of intensive and thoughtful engagement exercises are at play everywhere. While these approaches yield interesting insights, the interest of this paper is actual data use, placing emphasis on in-process data generation is for both research and systemic internal analysis. A process set orientation depends on the results of the process being included in a commonly accepted and accessible repository, typically a website (2; 66).

To address data concerns, this project constructed a unique dataset. Assuming the arc of the process is intact, public notices were found in newspapers in 2017 for the three process sets identified. The public notice could be an official legal notice or a newspaper article about an upcoming opportunity to participate. These records were collected and categorized, and any additional qualitative content was noted. Data collection then turned to organization websites where the reports from the referenced process were assumed to be posted if the organization had adopted a transparency orientation.

Two analyses follow—first, the descriptive review of the availability of the documents and participation information. If available, public participation information is classified according to reporting type. Second, a probit regression with different types of reporting as a set of dependent variables. In both cases, the analysis will examine the proposed typology for applicability in practice.

3.4.4 Data Collection

Public organizations are typically required to post notices of public hearings in newspapers (144). A search in the newspaper database (Lexis Uni) for the calendar year 2017 yields over seven thousand newspaper results for "public hearing" or "public comment" in the United States alone. The role of newspaper articles to find the public processes reflects the longtime relationship of local media organizations and local government to announce participation opportunities, often required by law (144; 13; 97). Limiting the analysis to standard processes (budget, transportation plan, comprehensive plan) ensured an increased likelihood of a resulting report or document is online given standard expectations (10). By studying processes announced in 2017, enough time had passed to provide the larger projects to complete (the last of which finished in 2020). Subsequent cleaning yielded a sample of 152 processes, of which 114 had the associated document available on their website (75%). While a member of the public could request the document from the organization, increasingly, the presence of the documents themselves is seen as a public engagement tool (10; 198) and a reflection of a transparency orientation. These documents were coded based on whether they included participation information (0 if not), and the relationship to the typology (1-4). The resulting convenience sample is based on the aggregation of public notices (and newspaper articles) in Lexis Uni.

The organizations included are county and municipal governments throughout the United States, as shown in Figure 3.2; the sample skews to the east.

The presence of the news article and posting of the resulting document itself may reflect a certain level of community and organizational capacity and potential interest in open data (transparency) practices (10; 233). This preference introduces a slight bias into the sample for organizations that maintain their documents online. Of organizations with a document, a majority (55%) referenced the public process.



Figure 3.2: Locations of Municipalities in the Sample

3.4.5 Dependent Variables

The dependent variable is information about public participation in the process document, split as binary variables for the four types and non-reporting. Most government websites associated with the projects had the final document. The processes were then classified into the type of data used based on the previous typology. The four types (technical, checking the box, summarize, and integrative) are considered categorical, not ordinal.

3.4.6 Independent Variables

Type of process is included as an independent variable. Budgets are least likely to be available, while the planning processes are much more likely to include information in their documents. Figure 3.3 shows the distribution by type and process. Governance is included in the analysis with organizations are categorized by mayor-council or city-manager with mayor-council as the reference. Processes are classified as consultant-driven if the document references the authoring consultant on its front matter.

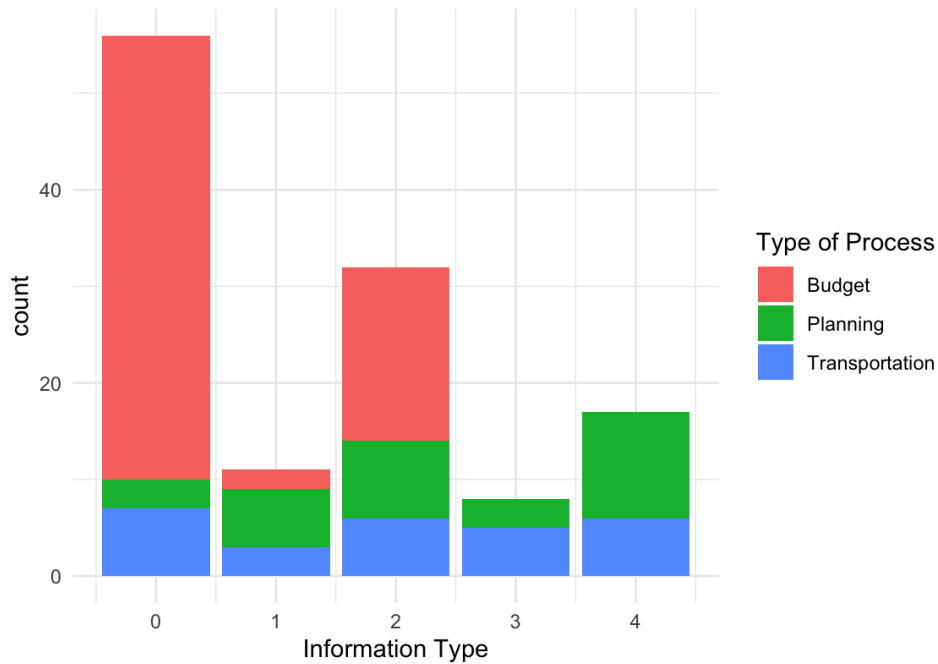


Figure 3.3: Distribution of Processes

3.4.7 Descriptive Results

Discussion

Figure 3.3 shows the distribution of documents collected, with 0 signifying no document, 1 signifying “Technical”, 2 “Checking the Box”, 3 “Summarizing”, and 4 “Integrative”. Note the high frequency of budget unavailability, something considered central to being transparent through websites. The characterization of checking the box, simply saying that a process was conducted in the final document, is the most common type of information presented, confirming the cultural perception that civic engagement goes nowhere (60).

Planning and Transportation projects included nonroutine or qualitatively rich information, reflecting several elements. First, as a professional predisposition to their inclusion. Second, federal procedures make the management of that data routine. And finally, a potential lack of rich data collection for budget processes.

3.4.8 Control Variable

To control for other effects, the population is used as a control variable. The processes studied cover several different organizations, making other controls less available. The city population is logged to minimize skewness. The descriptive statistics reflect the nature of the variables, with the binary variables denoted with an asterisk representing a percentage of the total sample, either 152 or 114 (those with documents available).

3.5 Regression Model

A probit regression is used to study the probability of reporting different types of information within the typology. A probit is useful for this analysis for two reasons. First, the dependent variables are all dichotomous. Second, the coefficients represent the probability of a certain outcome compared to the reference.

For the probit, the following model is used:

$$Pr(EngagementData = 1|Y) = (0 + 1Type... + 3Gov... + 5Cons + ...6pop)$$

Where “Engagement Data” is the classification of the data in the final document as a function of the type of process, transportation, or comprehensive planning with budget as the base, the type of governance of the organization, city manager or board with mayor-council as the base, and whether the organization employed a consultant in the process, controlling for population, which is logged.

Table 3.3: Results of Probit Regression

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>					
	nodoc	doonly	tech	box	sum	rnr
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
plan	-1.0** (0.4)	-0.8* (0.5)	1.3** (0.5)	-0.3 (0.4)	5.1 (494.3)	4.2 (322.9)
trans	-1.4* (0.8)	-1.2** (0.6)	1.2** (0.6)	-0.2 (0.5)	5.1 (494.3)	4.6 (322.9)
cm	-0.2 (0.3)	-0.1 (0.3)	0.02 (0.4)	0.3 (0.3)	-0.3 (0.6)	-0.4 (0.5)
board	1.3 (0.9)	1.5* (0.8)	-4.9 (367.2)	-0.1 (0.7)	-0.3 (0.9)	-1.1 (1.0)
cons		-1.7*** (0.6)	-0.5 (0.5)	0.1 (0.4)	-0.1 (0.5)	1.8*** (0.6)
lnpop	-0.3*** (0.1)	-0.1 (0.1)	-0.02 (0.1)	0.1 (0.1)	0.2 (0.2)	0.1 (0.2)
Constant	2.5*** (0.9)	2.0* (1.1)	-1.7 (1.5)	-1.4 (1.0)	-8.8 (494.3)	-6.3 (322.9)
Observations	152	114	114	114	114	114
Log Likelihood	-64.5	-53.7	-28.1	-66.6	-20.5	-25.9
Akaike Inf. Crit.	141.0	121.4	70.1	147.1	55.1	65.9

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

3.5.1 Results

Table 3.3 reports the results of the probit regression and the standard errors. For processes, budget is the reference category, and mayor-council governments are the reference or government form.

Budgets processes are less likely to have a document on the website or only have a document than planning processes (as designated by the negative coefficients for both planning and transportation variables (-1.0, -0.8; and -1.4, -1.2 respectively). This effect is significant at the .01 and .05 levels.

The technical process is more likely to be involved in a planning process. The checking the box process shows no difference between budgeting and planning.

The two non-routine reporting approaches, summarizing and integrative, are much more likely to occur for the planning processes based on coefficients, but the relationship is insignificant. This result is consistent with the hypothesized relationship, but the lack of significance implies substantial variation.

Using mayor-executive organizations as a reference, the presence of a city manager has no relationship to both document availability and the reporting of information. However, board-run organizations are more likely to post documents online (significant at the .05 level). Still, all the public participation reporting direction is negative, if only slight and not significant.

A consultant-led project is unlikely to result in only a document online, significant at the .01 level. Consultants are also much more likely to employ a systematic nonroutine process, which is significant at the .01 level.

The city population has a significant effect at the .01 level in lowering the likelihood of no document online, in line with expectations that the larger a community is, the more likely the document will be available. However, the city population is not significantly related to

the different data processing approaches.

3.5.2 Discussion

The presented information in the formal processes analyzed is consistent with the proposed reporting typology. Only 23% percent of the processes included quantitative data that could be easily used as performance information (instrumental) instead of simply recognizing that the participation had occurred (normative). Slightly more noted that participation had occurred in the process, and even included some themes for what had been collected but could only be used in a binary way. This process included participation and this one did not.

Despite identifying 152 processes through newspaper searching, only 75% of those processes had the resulting document available online. This gap represents a disjunction between value-laden processes in public organizations: performance management, public participation, and transparency. This gap highlights the inconsistent nature of emphases of public administration interest. From the descriptive results, we can immediately see that data generated in public participation processes is not regarded as performance information.

The role of consultants is highlighted by the empirical analysis complicating recent research about performance systems implementation, which showed that normative motivations were not the main reason for strategic planning (78). The results emphasize the role that consultants have come to play in the communication of public participation as they were significantly likely to use the integrative approach. There are many reasons for this professionalization process (Johnson 2019), yet the implications deserve further analysis. Notably, the data they produced is potentially isolated in the consulting firm that collected it, making a systemic comparison between processes over time difficult. In addition,

while consultants often presented detailed information about the participation process, it was polished in such a way as to imply a marketing purpose instead of a performance improvement one.

Finally, the role of local media and the potential breakdown of a long-term symbiotic relationship particularly in smaller communities has implications for the future of public administration and public participation. The atrophy of local media is a well-known story, and its impact on democracy has been popularly discussed (209). In this analysis, this effect can be observed. Of the 152 news articles, 47 discussed specific public comments and feedback on the process. More interestingly, of the 33 news articles that referred to organizations that had not posted their documents online, 11 still documented the public feedback. This suggests that public participation data may have historically been seen as a responsibility of local media. Notably, many local media outlets have formal roles in local government organizations as the official 'newspaper of record' (144). From a blurry organizational perspective, newspapers may have played a more substantial role in formal processes than has been historically understood. As local media capacity shrinks (209) alongside government capacity (which may be reflected in reporting in budget documents, which are primarily completed in-house), organizations may have lost an important part of their information system.

While many newspaper articles appeared to have been written by communications staff, others described the engagement as it occurred and provided the documentation of public reaction. Elements of the projects were highlighted in headlines, like a tax increase, and several discussed frustrations about the lack of comments. This effect would imply that where processes are established and not novel as is the case with budgets instead of plans, actual public participation is low. On the other hand, there may just not be anything to report in those budgets other than an acknowledgment. In that case, the lack of participation might raise whether that is also a performance measure worth reporting.

3.6 Limitations and Future Research Opportunities

This study is a typological analysis of public participation information. It demonstrates the usefulness of participation information for the empirical study of engagement practices, which also has implications for other value-laden processes. The data in this analysis is random insofar as it is gleaned from news article search results ordered temporally, yet it still is a convenience sample. It assumed that the document would be available on the government website, but this was not always the case (25% were not).

This approach highlighted a challenge of participation research so far. Innovative processes or already engaged practitioners can contribute insights into the use of these tools. However, over many decades of advancing public participation practice, only 63% of agencies referenced the public participation process, many at the bare minimum.

Participation information disproportionately in consultant-led projects implies that public engagement may be a differentiator. When choosing a consultant team for a comprehensive plan project, internal project leads may be looking for expertise and novel approaches to public participation. The more substantive use of public participation data by consultants is a double-edged sword. It highlights the increased role of consultants in engaging with the public, an interesting question of democratic accountability, and discrete processes. On the other hand, the near lack of detailed data provided in budgeting processes, even though they are regularized annual or biennial processes, leaves an opportunity to understand performance further.

Administrative processes should be explicit and they generate information. Process sets are a window into organizational systems, providing value in understanding history. In scrutinizing how different waves of process adoption and integration combine in a set, a new window into organizational theory is provided. In particular, the ineffectiveness of individual elements of the process should be understood in the context of the set of

processes they are nested within. Each organization can be conceptualized as a group of process sets, which generate administrative data and information, with the attendant implications for transparency.

3.7 Conclusion

Viewing the data collected in public participation processes as performance information is important to the maturation of public participation processes and acknowledgment of their place in day-to-day practice. Considering process sets and the administrative data they produce and how it is translated into performance information yields valuable insights about the nature of public organizations. Public managers, project teams, and consultants make strategic choices when they choose how to gather feedback and then handle the feedback gathered in a public process as routine or nonroutine and manage the process as technical or normative. The documents produced by governments and published on their websites reflect that the information collected during public processes has become an expectation.

Yet, values and normative actions have costs, too: they require resources, specializations, and accommodation unique to the public sector. These factors affect public agencies in ways that are poorly understood. A gap in research between public values and the tools deployed to engage the public requires attention. Considering the near-ubiquitous use of these strategies, developing a typology for public participation performance information provides a beneficial first step. Advancements toward systematic information pave the way for it to be empirically studied alongside other management concepts.

A typology of the way public participation data is translated into published reports provides insights into the future of public participation practice. Its usefulness in exploring the information produced at the end of the process is demonstrated by the results of this

study. However, less than a quarter of the processes resulted in measures that could be used comparatively in the future, highlighting the importance of future research and practice building around public participation. As the field continues to embrace transparency, it is necessary to address what information is available. Public participation, along with other areas of administrative practice, should consider whether they should include elements like performance measurement in linking public participation to outcomes and strategic objectives.

CHAPTER

4

CUMULATIVE ORGANIZATIONAL DYNAMICS: ACCRETION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE

4.1 Chapter Preview

Discrete measures of what passes as the ‘organization’ have been tricky to establish, especially incorporating temporal effects. Public institutions have been characterized as the sum of rules and the American system as a “utopia of rules.” One path forward is the sum of for-

mal rules an organization promulgates. Local government municipal codes are possibly the most extensive, most diverse corpus of law in the United States. They reflect organizational dynamics that are not present in other measures of organizations. However, their sheer diversity and size have made them difficult to study. As a result, there is almost no analysis of how the ordinance can inform the study and practice of government. Administrators are asked frequently to write and engage with code. Standardization of codification and the rise of a computational social science toolkit provide an opportunity to treat ordinances as a measure of local government organizations. This approach allows the identification and verification of patterns in local governance that have yet to be explored and presents the opportunity to distinguish new variables for the study of governmental complexity. Seventy-seven ordinances from local government organizations (cities) whose jurisdiction includes 90,000-110,000 persons are analyzed using code size and network topic analysis. Patterns predicted by institutional and ecological theories are somewhat consistent with the adopted ordinance text. However, the strongest finding is that ordinances have accumulated words over time, with the oldest organizations having the most shared words, both common and uncommon, with others. These findings provide several contributions to the study of local government organizations. First, municipal codes offer a distinct measure of organizations consistent with some theoretical expectations and are not related to revenue, another commonly used measure. Second, municipal codes, when employing the processing power available in computational tools, may provide unique insights into the management of public organizations that may not be immediately apparent.

4.2 Introduction

Municipal codes and ordinances are the foundation of local government organizations yet are absent from public administration scholarship. While in practice, administrators

and their legal teams use codes to help guide decision-making, little work has analyzed whether these codes follow theoretical expectations about size, institutional context, and accretion. This gap is odd, as code defines the organizational scope day to day interactions with the public and could provide insight into performance. Much of the code is an artifact, adopted piecemeal over time, and may reflect the priorities of the moment of adoption. One reason for the omission in scholarship may be attributed to each document's size and relative uniqueness. This challenge can now be addressed with new data availability. This study has two purposes: 1) it highlights the assumptions of organizational pressures that apply to local government organizations and as represented by municipal codes, and 2) it tests these assumptions using both size and text analysis tools.

Despite the ubiquity of municipal codes, they rarely appear in scholarship. This blind spot is notable given that local government organizations are the locus of much of the recent action in areas of interest such as equity, public safety, networks, and collaboration (19) and how they constrain or facilitate action. The diversity of local government units may be part of the challenge. Historically generalizations have been tricky; local governments are a product of their distinct contexts and histories. The study of local government has emphasized the study of government 'form' or the balance between elected officials and executives and professionalized management. In American local governments (isolated from the international context), there are at least seven forms of local government or leadership configuration (70; 164). At the same time, hybrid governance strategies have emerged to create a paradigm that shares public responsibilities between local governments, private entities, nonprofits, and quasi-governmental bodies (62; 63). These elements have contributed to complex organizations that can be difficult to conceptualize. Municipal codes provide an intriguing pathway to conceptualize and study organizations.

While attention in scholarly circles has been limited, local governments are increasingly publishing their ordinances online, with their availability being a key component of being

considered transparent (10; 66). For this study's target population of municipalities, 75% were available in an analyzable format. When combined into a corpus, these codes provide the ability to analyze patterns, allowing the analysis of systemic assumptions. Ordinance size is a way to conceptualize organizations, allowing for a new way to test expectations about organizational characteristics. In addition, recent methodological and computational innovations provide a valuable catalyst to study local government ordinances and tackle organizational complexity through text analysis. Increased processing power combined with accessible open-source software tools has made studying large documents comparatively possible. This technology means that a rough organization measure (the number of words) can complement a similarity score between the different documents. This study finds little evidence that code size is related to typical measures of organizations, such as revenues or population. It also finds that contextual effects are not related to size. However, it does find that the oldest organizations are the most similar; the addition of a multilevel analysis emphasizes this finding, implying that state statutory pressures are present.

This article is structured as follows: first, the assumptions about organizational elements are discussed, using ordinances as a proxy for organizations. Next, we review the research method used for this study and present the results. Finally, the results are discussed, and opportunities for future research are presented. This approach yields exciting insights into the development of organizations as represented by their sets of rules.

4.3 Conceptual Review

4.3.1 Understanding Local Government Organizations

Local government analysis in public administration and political science has not engaged with the internal characteristics of local government organizations as a systemic whole.

Instead, local governments have primarily been a venue to understand the dynamics of public administrative practice and individual policy choices. Extensive research has focused on the role of street-level bureaucrats(137), functional specialization (234), specific departmentalization (168), and procedural efficacy, such as public participation (160), or human resource management (181). As a result, we have a moderately clear picture of how public officials manage public responsibilities. In contrast, we have a much more superficial view of the scaffolding that holds these elements together, assuming contingency. Similar to organizational theories of contingency, there is far more potential for institutional logic taking over, mainly as processes cycle repeatedly.

Local government scholarship has addressed government form as an institution, typically as represented by the configuration of executive leadership (55; 165). These studies have shown that certain demographic factors are consistent with certain types of government form, emphasizing a strong or directly elected mayor compared to a city manager. The only notable predictor of strong-mayor governments, for example, is the immigrant population (65). Instead, local government structural measures have mostly been confined to studies of executive authority (34), other elements of local governments are far less understood.

Ordinances occupy a significant role in the day-to-day management of government but have not been explored or applied to research. Limited research has investigated the role of code in adopting specific types of policy, such as sustainability policy (61; 175), but the entirety of the codes themselves have not been taken into consideration. This situation is related to the challenge in policy analysis and implementation, where the focus is on a singular policy's performance instead of the entirety of organizational adoption. Thus, ordinances are an opportunity to understand organizations and their relationships more fully.

4.3.2 Municipal Codes as Organizational Measures

Municipal code is one pathway to better understanding local government organizations. As public administration has shifted into a governance paradigm, measures for the entire organization are less clear, especially those that measure somewhat bounded elements such as employees. Weber's ideal type is described as being 'jurisdictionally bounded' (222), yet in the blurry governance era, we are left with few discrete measures of an organization.

Code builds on conceptualizations of formal institutions as groupings of rules, which had considerable interest in sociology in the middle of the twentieth century. The famous business consultant McKinsey called increasing the number of rules critical to effective organizations (4). In public administration, rules have been considered synonymous with red tape (26) even though they require formalization. The rule density of an organization is linked decreases in efficiency of processes (23).

Following other measures of organizations, codes can be interpreted two ways: their size and their content. For example, when looking at an organization's fiscal space, some spending measure or revenues are used (109), which are often extrapolated into efficiency measures, themselves contested in a public environment (44). This approach is related to the size of the organizational character. Similarly, as in the number of departments in the organization chart, functional services have been used to measure organizations (139). This summary is the organization's content, and municipal codes also represent the organization's scope as they guide the day-to-day operation of the municipality.

4.3.3 Implementation of Regulations as a Micro Action that “Creates” Organizations through Accretion

Rules are also artifacts of organization construction. They are cobbled together over time and incorporate elements of the processes that created them (237; 142). Studies of rules have

highlighted how they structure action to inherit and adapt to the previous rules. Despite a thorough study of university rulemaking and structuring, March, Shultz, and Zhou's seminal text (142) did not trigger a larger conversation about rules as organizational characteristics. In the law community, a brief conversation about the nature of regulation as an accretive process over time (195) echoed previous analysis of the organizational effect of reform where repeated reforms and adjustments may leave "grains of sand" in the code (135). These reforms have been particularly present in local government organizations (226). When coupled with insights about accretive decision making (224), our assumptions suggest that organizational growth and development through accretion may be explored effectively through formally adopted organizational rules. Together, these studies demonstrate the likely accretive processes at work in local government organizations.

Chapter two (study one) of this dissertation explores change frequency in local government organizations. The significant number of changes in the organization in a relatively brief time imply that change is not a matter of waves of reform, as might be observed in a single organization, but a continuous and potentially contradictory process that is happening all the time. As much of the theory-building done around reform adoption was done at the federal level, the highly dynamic environment of local government may experience different reform cycles. Similarly, the cobbling together of processes over time in process sets (as in chapter three) results in rules as a critical linkage or impetus for continuing behavior over time.

Rulemaking at the U.S. federal level - the process whereby public law is translated into operational policy - can significantly affect how government operates and is perceived by the public, elected officials, and internal staff (185). One law can translate into thousands of policies as its details are negotiated over the following decades. The effect of public law and its organizational and community impact has been studied in the policy analysis literature and imply that ordinances matter in the local governance context (151). Municipal codes

structure street-level encounters with government, defining the rules about nuisances at the heart of the local government policing function (191, p. 151).

Understanding the patterns of code development and relationships between different organizations has implications for policy implementation. Implementation is the study of the success or failure of a policy (223; 104; 130). This orientation tends to assume that elements of the organization are affecting implementation success or failure, but treats them as barriers to be navigated or overcome instead of systemic burdens to be adjusted. An outcome perspective makes sense, particularly in light of policy emphases and political interests in policy adoption. However, the adoption of policy itself creates rules, perhaps initially only informal ones, but likely at some point formal policies that are added to the larger corpus of the organization. As chapter three (study two) of this dissertation showed, processes can be the product of multiple eras of reform, technological, and human realities. Rulemaking to keep up with shifting environmental conditions has emphasized scholarship on technology management (76, p.167) and policy design in general (102). These implementation challenges deserve attention.

A reframe of implementation from an organizational perspective reflects two approaches: path dependency, where implementation of any policy modifies and builds upon previous approaches, and reform scholarship that has acknowledged that repeated adoption of reform can leave behind traces of previous regimes as a matter of expediency and practicality (135). Organizational code may help identify unique cultural elements and impediments acquired during the change process that affect implementation (142). This approach holds promise for better policy adoption, both operational and values-based, such as equity and democratic accountability. Examples in the municipal context about professionalized standards in rulemaking abound. Model city charters have been used since 1915 to encourage codification and professionalization of cities (71; 226).

4.3.4 Understanding Organizational Changes at the Meso Level

In contrast to the contingent logic adopted in chapter two (study one), public organizational change and decision-making have been conceptualized as the result of institutional pressure (53; 68). Frequent executive turnover in local government organizations may imply that new leadership is bringing along ideas from elsewhere. The institutional conceptualization has been difficult to study in a sample of organizations (73). For this analysis, it is assumed that code development, as a representation of the organization itself, is partially a response to isomorphic pressures over time. Rule development has been shown in case studies of universities to reflect institutional pressures (237). In local government organizations, multiple sources of institutional pressure exist and would be expected to emerge (8). Institutional theory suggests that three types of pressure are present in organizations: coercive, normative, and mimetic (53). These pressures shape organizational decision-making and configuration within the local government organizational field and the organization itself, creating an "iron cage" that is difficult to escape from. Ordinances could be expected to represent the sum of pressures over time and may reflect the nature of the cage.

Coercive pressures consist of the organizational limits imposed by higher-level authority and might be called constitutional rules (219). For municipal government organizations in the United States, this would be state and federal authorities who set the limits of their constitutional authority and any potential funding sources. In the United States, most states are so-called 'Dillon's rule' municipalities whose responsibilities and activities exist expressly within the jurisdiction defined by the state or reasonably a function of local government (89). The use of this authority has been uneven. In states such as North Carolina, local governments have no home rule entitlement. However, they have historically been allowed the freedom to develop their approaches and services (175), only to find more recently that authority is somewhat curtailed. Several states allow for the creation of 'home

rule' municipalities allowing for the extension of power and autonomy for the local government independent of the state, such as Nebraska, Florida, or Texas. The independence or constraint on local government authority and activities reflect coercive pressures that can shape what elements are present in an ordinance or expressly set the bounds of what can be in the ordinance. From this effect alone, it is anticipated that cities in the same state should share similar municipal code content.

The second type of pressure on local government organizations is normative. Normative pressures are related to how an organization reacts to professional standards (53). Local government organizations have an interesting tension: their elected council leadership is typically volunteers who do not serve full time. In contrast, management is generally professional administrative staff who have been trained specifically to operate public organizations and are part of professional communities. For some communities this is a city manager, in others, this is professional staff below an elected executive (typically a mayor.) The allure of best practices is difficult to ignore for both elected officials and professional staff due to professional norms and complementary roles (210). Local government is the source of some of the oldest best practices in public administration. The National Civic League has regularly adopted a 'model city charter' since 1895 following in the footsteps of progressive era reformers (71). All local governments start with a policy document, usually at the beginning of a city's code, in the form of a charter. A city's charter forms the basis of the local government ordinance and guides what comes after.

Third, mimetic pressure assumes that organizations exist in a community and adopt similar practices as a shortcut to survive and fit in. Given the constrained capacity of local government organizations and the amateur nature of their political leadership, it is likely that these organizations will copy each other as they adopt new policies. Salient issues of the moment, such as calls for police reform (236) or sustainability (94), may trigger elected officials to ask staff to create responses on the fly through structural changes or

code adoption. In response to uncertainty and in the interest of maintaining legitimacy, organizations will be expected to copy others they see as their peers and regional leaders. DiMaggio and Powell highlight this tension well: “The ubiquity of certain kinds of structural arrangements can more likely be credited to the universality of mimetic processes than to any concrete evidence that the adopted models enhance efficiency” (53, p.153).

Mimetic pressure is related to population ecology theories. Population ecology assumes that in communities of organizations, evolution occurs together, both as a means of safety and stability, as organizations emulate other successful ones (5). Local government organizations are more like a community ecology, in that they share similar coevolutionary characteristics. Still, different populations have emerged aligned to their origin, regionality, demographic makeup, and objectives over time. This community ecology perspective is helpful as it helps explain why elements of city form, such as strong-mayor, are predominant in the midwest while city-managers are predominant in the southeast. In this way, municipal codes would be expected to reflect distinct communities of approach roughly aligned to form. Organizations may be dependent on power relationships that require at least the perception of certain elements to maintain resources (180).

The reliance of municipal governments on certain private organizations to manage the codification process raises the likelihood of mimetic behavior between organizations managed by the same company. Similarly, previous work on regional demographic characteristics creating ‘best practice’ logic also implies copying should occur in this context.

Hypothesis 1a Older organizations should have larger codes.

Hypothesis 1b Organizations that have more revenue should have larger codes.

Hypothesis 1c Organizations from the same states should be similarly sized.

4.3.5 Relationships Between Ordinances

In addition to size, we may be more interested in the similarity between ordinances. This analysis is useful as the economy of words may not represent the organization well. Studies of the measures of organizations state that as organizations grow and age, they become more complex. Complexity is determined by the number of functions or specialized elements. Thus, code similarity to others, that is the amount they share with other organizations, could be reflective of the organization. In local government, two expectations, which are at odds, emerge for how the age of an organization may affect similarity between organizations.

First, it might be expected that the newest organizations would be the most similar as they have recently adopted boilerplate ordinances. Local government organizations are highly professionalized. The National Civic League has adopted a model city charter since 1912. The document, which has been consistently updated (and is currently in the process of a sixth edition), is considered the standard or local government code (71; 226). Thus, newer organizations, and their codes, may be expected to contain the most rote elements of code and be broadly most similar.

Amid shifts in pressures, ordinances are often the subject of decades of revision, political changes, and reforms that have shaped their contents (182). It is unclear how these processes may shape the ordinances. However, if the organizations collect policy over time, accumulating grains of sand (135), we expect the oldest organizations to be the most related. Moreover, they should be unique but share elements from many previous adoptions.

Hypothesis 2a The newest organizations should be the most related.

Hypothesis 2b The oldest organizations should be the most related.

4.4 Research Method

This analysis aims to (1) demonstrate that analysis of whole ordinances can provide useful insight and (2) verify that some basic patterns are consistent between ordinances. The analysis includes complete ordinances because there is a significant variation in ordinance content. It is challenging to review patterns below the organizational level, and limited research has been attempted.

While the unit of analysis is the organization, municipal codes are collections of individual elements that have evolved, reflecting the unique diversity of public organizations and the mix of pressures in local government organizations. This emergent whole from the ordinance provides unique insight into how the organization has evolved and relates to other organizations in the same (diverse) population of organizations.

4.4.1 Data

To ensure a diverse sample, this analysis used cities whose 2019 population (estimated by the Census Bureau) is between 90,000 and 110,000. Of the 102 cities in that population, this analysis includes 77 cities from 28 states whose ordinances were available online and could be exported in easy to analyze formats. A map of their locations is shown in figure ??.

The chosen population bracket is useful for several reasons. First, cities of this size are found in many states and reflect large organizations reasonably expected to be complex and professionalized without being overly specialized. To improve the efficiency of the analysis, cities in this sample would be expected to have somewhat smaller codes than larger cities. Second, it includes both central cities (the largest cities in their statistical area), suburban cities, and exurban cities (relatively independent cities or new cities on the far edge of the metropolitan regions). The sample includes 24 (31%) central cities, 43 (55%) suburban cities, and 11 (14%) exurban cities. Geographically, 36 (46%) of the cities are in



Figure 4.1: Cities in the Sample

the west, 25 (32%) in the south, 12 (15%) in the midwest, and 5 (6%) in the northeast. This distribution is understandable as larger cities in the west and south tend to be suburban and new. The mean organizational age in the west is 96 years, while in the northeast, it is 233.

Third-party codification entities primarily conduct the codification of municipal law in this bracket. For the sample of 77 cities, 48 (62%) use MuniCode, 12 (15%) use Code Publishing, 10 (13%) use American Legal Publishing, and 2 (3%) are self-published (via PDF on their website).

Before conducting the analysis, the corpus was cleaned, removing stop words (such as “the” or “a”), numbers, and punctuation. An initial review identified twenty common words that were unlikely to affect subsequent analysis or could bias the results (for example, a state with more than one city in the sample or ‘bend’, which was found in two city names). After cleaning stop words and common words, the data was converted into the tidy format with one word per row in the table, resulting in over 14 million rows, with 32.5 million words in total. The average municipal code in the sample is approximately 417,600 words, with a

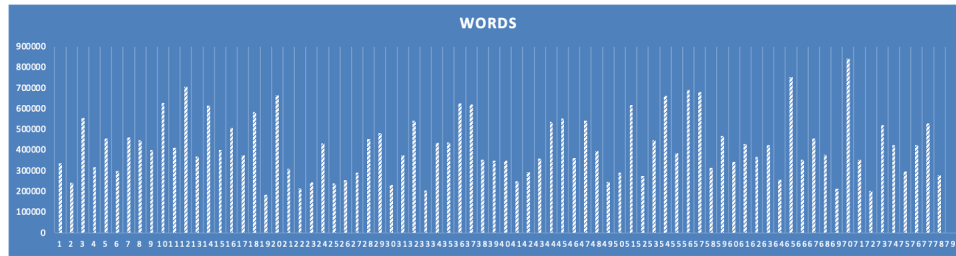


Figure 4.2: Words in Codes, sorted by population from least to most

standard deviation of 147,000.

Two dependent variables are used to analyze the relationships in this study. First, the codes' size is postulated to correspond to other measures of organizational size. Second, using document similarity methods to analyze the use of words to understand the relationship better.

4.4.2 Size of Code

If the code is a measure of the organization, it is assumed that the number of words in the code should be consistent with the expectations of the organization. Previous measures of organizations include fiscal measures, services, departmentalization, and functional diversity. The number of words post-cleaning is used as a measure of the organization. The size of the code is a useful proxy for the organization itself. Several tests were conducted to test whether this measure was consistent with other organizations' measures. First, it was demonstrated that code size bore no relationship to revenue or the number of departments in the organization. Second, two regression tests were used to analyze the relationship between identified independent variables and the code size. As a single-level model and verifying as a second-level variable in a multilevel analysis.

Table 4.1: Results: Size

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>				
	words				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Age	193.287 p = 0.460			248.964 p = 0.414	992.240** p = 0.023
Revenues (2020)		0.0001 p = 0.743			
Revenues (Logged)			18,081.330 p = 0.671	-1,874.298 p = 0.970	42,539.730 p = 0.490
Code Publishers					753.464 p = 0.994
EasyCode					29,453.230 p = 0.791
MuniCode					10,241.590 p = 0.889
Sterling					210,655.400 p = 0.319
States (x 26)					...
Constant	394,188.100*** p = 0.000	406,526.500*** p = 0.000	83,293.500 p = 0.917	425,007.100 p = 0.636	-402,453.700 p = 0.729
Observations	78	77	77	77	77
R ²	0.007	0.001	0.002	0.011	0.496
Adjusted R ²	-0.006	-0.012	-0.011	-0.015	0.109

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Results: Code Size (Number of Words)

The results for dependent variable, size, are presented in the table above. Hypothesis 1a, relating the size to age, is only significant in model five, where a year increase in age equates to a 992-word increase in the code. However, this effect is useful to explore as it requires controlling for states, which do exhibit effects as groups. On its own, age is not related to size.

Similarly, H1b is disproved relating size to revenue, showing a weak effect as an actual number and logged.

Finally, H1c is partially proven with several states exhibiting significant differences from the mean. For example, Massachusetts and North Carolina both contained significantly fewer words than the average.

Codification companies also seemed to have little effect, with no significant differences between the main codification companies and no significant effects.

4.4.3 Betweenness Centrality

A secondary measure in a document is the use of words. Several approaches to word use have been developed, primarily based on frequency. The frequency of words provides a similarity measure based on the number of times that words are used within a document. These approaches have utility, particularly for relatively short documents and comments (6). In the context of codes, however, the frequency of word use may be too blunt a measure and is likely to be overwhelmed with the number of words. A preliminary analysis of the most common words verified this assumption.

An alternative way to measure the similarity of documents is to combine frequency with the rarity of words. In calculating the measure, words that appear rarely but are in multiple documents are counted more than those that occur frequently. The documents are then

related in network analysis. A network analysis produces measures of cultural betweenness and a visual that allows for the review of clustering, which should roughly organize around states and regions and act as a validity check. Using the textnets package developed by Bail (6) and after cleaning, the network analysis was run, resulting in 77 nodes, edges, and six modularity groupings. The emergent network has several distinct visually identifiable clusters.

As far as network clustering, California, Colorado, Washington, Georgia, and Wisconsin are very distinct groupings of nodes. There is also a central 'heartland' element with less distinct but still observable groupings for Texas, with regional states being close within the network. Interestingly, in the center (and reflected in centrality measures) are older communities in the northeast and Midwest. The toolkit suggested six modality classes (or groupings) for the documents delineated by the colors in the network graph. Suffolk, Virginia, (one of the oldest cities) stand out, as does Bend, Oregon, and the connecting California cities on the top right. Suffolk is an older central city at the center of the eastern cluster while Bend is a newer central city that seems to be at the center of the western cluster. There appeared to be a connector city for each state cluster that helped to connect to others. The independence of Florida, Wisconsin, and to a certain degree Colorado and Washington cities is very evident in this graph, as their nodes are quite small compared to the others.

Text network analysis uses machine learning techniques to construct a network based on relationships between words grouped by an entity. The grouping variable is 'city' for this study, and the ordinance content supplies the text. Text network analysis reviews the complete corpus to identify patterns of relationships. Networks are constructed using nodes (cities) and edges (relationship connections) and can be quantitatively calculated to determine relationships between nodes in the network. This technique holds promise for independent documents in the same ecosystem but whose relationship is unclear. The

resulting graph of the text network allows for visualization and further analysis. A toolkit, textnets, has been developed using natural language processing allowing for simplification of word use and automatically combines several additional analytical tools for text analysis (6). Textnets identifies the grouping classes based on word use in the documents. These classes can then be analyzed to determine what words are driving the analysis. Grouping is based on community detection within the algorithm, while the connections are based on word usage. The number of groups is similar to topics, which can be used in the following secondary method.

For this analysis, 'cultural betweenness' is used to determine the relationship between the different codes. This metric is calculated as part of the procedure that analyzes documents and connects them to each other. A node that links between node clusters has a brokerage role, which allows it to connect between multiple codes. Brokerage is a key component of network analysis, allowing bridges between different clusters of individuals (traditionally) or documents (in this case). For Bail's analysis, this measure was simplified into centrality measures (betweenness centrality) as an independent variable (6). The interest of that analysis was to determine if nodes that included messages that were common in multiple clusters were more likely to prompt more comments in social media contexts. This 'brokerage' function of networks, that helps to construct the visual interpretation characteristic of network analysis, is based on the use of different themes.

In municipal codes, the use of disparate language that is common to different clusters of documents (or posts / comments in Bail's analysis) is interpreted to mean elements of code that are either rote language (H1a) or the product of multiple adoptions of reforms over time (H1b). A null relationship of this brokerage would imply more environmental effects, where the brokerage element is based on the proximity of municipalities to each other, implying isomorphic effects. To tease out a metric that represents those calculations, centrality measures provide a unique window.

Centrality measures are calculated as influence or the pathways between nodes through a node. Where nodes are arranged based on their brokerage relationship, based on the inverse frequency of words in the documents, we can assume that centrality provides insights into the relationship between the different codes. For the H1a hypothesis, or the newest codes, it might be expected that these codes are more central given they are closer to an 'original state' and provide simpler pathways between the other nodes. Alternatively, for H1b, older codes having accumulated more words and a diversity of words over time (critically here this is a distinction from size) also provide pathways between nodes that are more significant.

The assumption of the relationship between centrality and age of the organization was tested using a simple bivariate regression between age and centrality. In the following model, both numbers are logged to account for outliers (as shown above and in the previous age graph).

$$\ln(BetweennessCent) = b_0 + \ln(Age) + (controls)$$

To aid robustness, several additional document networking tools were employed to verify the conclusions reached below including a secondary text network analysis and cluster anova analysis which is consistent with the findings presented.

Results: Cultural Betweenness

The results confirm, with older organizations having more cultural betweenness' than younger ones, which is significant at the .05 level (M1), even when controlling for codifiers and state (which strengthens the relationship) (M2).

These results have exciting implications for current codification, implying that the boilerplate of new codes is not as similar to others and that theories of accretion - where

Table 4.2: Results: Betweenness Centrality

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	betweenness centrality	
	(1)	(2)
Age	0.526*** p = 0.004	0.827*** p = 0.010
Revenue(logged)		-2.231 p = 0.961
Code Publishers		40.851 p = 0.554
EasyCode		18.275 p = 0.821
MuniCode		43.623 p = 0.413
Sterling		40.458 p = 0.792
States (x26)		...
Constant	8.154 p = 0.737	-17.409 p = 0.984
Observations	78	77
R ²	0.105	0.484
Adjusted R ²	0.093	0.088
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

an organization is the result of the cumulative adoption of policy over time - is supported within the larger system not just within the individual organization.

4.5 Discussion

The results of the previous analyses show how comparison of local government ordinances can be a fruitful methodological expansion of local government scholarship specifically and public administration generally. Some expected patterns were evident, providing support for hypotheses H1c and H2b. Coercive pressures impacted the network map as state groupings were evident in each analysis. Mimetic pressures were evident in the centrality of the oldest organizations (against the hypothesized relationship, H4). Normative pressures are a little more difficult to tease out but are still reflected in the bridging edges between suburbs and central cities.

However, the top words uncovered in the codes leave questions about how boilerplate the codes are and what subtle patterns might be uncovered with additional theoretically driven cleaning of the corpus. Municipal codes clearly have significant distinctions, but those distinctions rest in relatively infrequently used words, and it is less clear what analytical directions could be used to organize them. Structural topic modeling of an individual or smaller set of codes might provide a path forward.

4.6 Conclusion and Future Research Opportunities

Local public organizations produce numerous operation artifacts, including municipal codes, budgets, contracts, and others. This research demonstrated that assumed patterns of organizational relationships emerge at the systemic level utilizing organizational level documents. It also emphasized how central organizations follow similar practices based on state

and type. Future research can build on this approach to analyze additional organizational-level documents and dimensions.

CHAPTER

5

CONCLUSIONS: LOCAL GOVERNMENT: A
DYNAMIC PLAYGROUND FOR
ORGANIZATIONAL STUDY AND A
POTENTIAL CANARY IN THE COAL MINE

5.1 Chapter Preview

The overarching lessons from the three studies of internal intersectional organizational dynamics are discussed. The theoretical implications for their contributions are synthesized. The implications of these studies illuminate the need for future research about how organizations develop in ways that relate to these dynamics.

5.2 Reflecting on Study Value

The study of local governments is a valuable context for understanding the intersectional internal dynamics of public organizations. Research on burdens and democracy in public organizations as well as the implementation of distinct public policies is improved with a deepening of our understanding of internal dynamics. This dissertation has demonstrated the unique case of increasing and decreasing departments, the role of considering information production in process sets in formal practices, and the unique insights of measuring an organization based on its rules, something long implied but increasingly possible. The findings of this dissertation set the stage for the future theoretical development of public organizations.

Taken together the three studies offer insights into the nature of internal dynamics in local government organizations. The first demonstrates the high frequency of change, the second explores the ambiguous nature of data and information production in formal processes, and the last demonstrates similarities between government organizations using code.

5.3 Integration of Policy and Organizational Theory

Policies at their heart are instruments of change. Despite the obvious diversity of these potential changes, they are often reduced to successes or failures, operational puzzles to be optimized. In this context, the bureaucracy is reduced to a “black box”. While understandable, this reduction can hide the organizational dynamics at play in policy implementation. If the organizational systems engaged in policy adoption are hidden, administrators are incentivized to stretch their resources in complex ways to achieve the outcome that is expected. While we are often looking at the macro-level for overall organizational understanding, these results are often the result of a micro-meso-macro dynamic. For example, an enterprising manager (micro) who wants a policy to succeed may give it to a team (meso) she knows has the capacity to successfully deliver and political buy-in. This push to demonstrate effectiveness - often within time frames dictated by political pressures - can undermine thorough reform efforts by encouraging the collection of complete policies instead of reorganization of what already exists. If organizations judge a policy by its output success, the residue of the policy after it was placed to ensure that output success, is almost never discussed. The functional diversity of policy and the increasing fragmentation of public bureaucracies creates a variety of potential homes policy within the organizational systems that constitute the public bureaucracy. Each has its own literature but has not been synthesized as possibilities along a spectrum or one of several possibilities that arise with variability but exist throughout the organization. Generally speaking, scholarship treats these decisions as a given, even though they are potentially driven by many mechanisms such as turnover (as in study one), the expectations of distinct but conjoined processes (as in study two), or the passage of time (as in study three). These can be considered elements of a spectrum that react with organizational systems differently.

A lesson from study two highlights the incomplete and uneven nature of policy imple-

mentation compared to generalized assumptions. While the processes reviewed (budgets, public involvement, etc.) are often considered self-explanatory or discussed in previous scholarship, they represent an important outcomes of policy adoption into an organization over a long time: policies are often implemented partially. This happens frequently in situations with limited capacity, when employees resist change, or when waves of succeeding policy are appended. Policy is almost never organization-encompassing. Thus, partial change is a real and constant part of day-to-day work: software is implemented in pilots or certain community centers are upgraded but not others. Strategic placement can have ripple effects on the organization over time - other units and factions requesting new software, other community centers needing updates - which can, far beyond the policy decision, limit and constrict future policy decisions and alternatives.

5.3.1 Wading into the System

Public sector change studies have been relatively constrained to studying issues of individual policy success or failure, a 1 or 0. In management, change management is an entire field of study, with managers' careers often dependent on that success (31). Yet, these analyses have been largely constrained to case studies. These approaches provide insights into the pitfalls of implementation and the importance of process management. Business management literature is raft with discussions about change management and process improvement precisely because of this problem, but has been overcome with fads (27).

A common emphasis on success or failure, while understandable, misses whether the change was manipulated by or came at the cost of organizational dynamics. Opportunities exist for further research in public organizations looking at precisely how policy is integrated and the micro-elements of that process. Where a policy is then adopted or placed within the context of preexisting processes and departmental norms has an impact. This

dissertation explored how policy sets can result in divergent outcomes and demonstrated that organizations collect elements of rules over time, even if they have no 'weight', while demonstrating that a political change is the most salient antecedent to organizational change.

Public management has emphasized strategies for coping with change. Yet, reform efforts are often documented as additions to existing systems. For example, Ingrams, et al. (106) discuss the 'new wave' of reform as being one of 'open government.' In a review of the proposed policy solutions, however, none of the articles cited discussed *structural* changes to improve comprehensibility, which might make it more transparent (e.g. actual reform of the organization) instead advising novel practices to make data more available, such as web sites. This approach to reform might be better-called neo-form as it is placed on top of existing paradigms and policies, often requiring awkward translation.

5.3.2 Expansion of our Definition of Policy

Policy is often narrowly defined, but an extension of 'policy' provides unique insight. If policy is considered *all* things that government does, but can be further conceptualized as a series of processes or interconnected systems: "A public policy is better conceptualized as the whole of the activities of and relations among self-conscious, purposeful, and inter-dependent actors" (154, p.10). The entirety of policy involves all changes and their effects, both outward and inward. Organizational change in public organizations is a policy action, even if no specific policy is adopted in a formal venue. As study one explores, departmental change occurs frequently, most often at the behest of new leadership.

Government organizations, particularly local government entities, however, remain enigmatic. Despite all that is known about business organizational change, understanding of local government change is sparse. Burke suggested three factors for this omission in

public agencies broadly: a diverse constituency, rarity of significant change, and not much is known about them [[p.285](31). This is especially true at the local government level, where change and adjustment study has been focused on the organizational leadership level.

As study one explores – and studies two and three confirm – the configurational elements introduced in the previous section can be better understood by the motivations behind their initial setup. This motivation is often deferred to professional competence or neutral efficiency, but as many scholars have highlighted, there is no such thing as a neutral institutional design (208). Bureaucracies themselves imply a set of offices and actors with whom new political leadership has to grapple (91). Politicians mold the administrative apparatus to their interests to protect their priorities and gird against organizational change (153). Bureaucrats similarly develop neutral structures that have the same effect, and low knowledge leaders in the middle may see no better option than to maintain everything, at least at some scale.

This discussion highlights the question of agency - is the organization being steered as if by the captain of a ship or does it adapt organically without any agency. Or, perhaps more interestingly, is it something in between; a set of probabilistic alternatives dependent on a variety of conditions. This distinction is critical in the understanding of how motivation proceeds and an area rife for both theoretical exploration and empirical study.

5.4 Future Work in Accretion Theory Studying Extended Structure, Process Sets, and Policy Adoption with Big Data and Simulation

The data for this dissertation demonstrated three ways to use artifacts of public organizations to analyze organizational effects. The insights gleaned from these efforts demonstrate that local government is a valuable venue to deepen knowledge about organizational dynamics and extend theory.

Simulation methods, such as agent-based modeling, are a way to further extend the lessons explored in this dissertation. Game theory suggests this approach is useful to understanding how patterns develop at a parsimonious level of abstraction (83). A way to understand this phenomenon and its effects on organizational configuration and structure is Braess' paradox. The paradox, identified by a Danish mathematician in 1968 and subsequently empirically corroborated by those actors trying to speed their travel times by taking alternative routes, ultimately delayed the overall system (128). Similarly, public administration scholars have discussed how public employees, seeking to overcome the burdens of the bureaucracy, create new processes to solve problems. This phenomenon, dubbed 'expediency management,' has similar results as employee workarounds have been shown to slow things down and detract from other needs (172). An emergent structure will occur as a result of self-organization along the lines of the different configuration elements discussed. The choice of configuration and placement could be motivated by one or multiple logics that can conflict and work against each other, similar to the efficiency seekers in Braess' paradox, in an organizational environment that in most cases will remain As chapter two (study one) explores, this type of change seeking occurs frequently.

5.5 Inadvertent Leviathans

If government is a Leviathan, in the Hobbesian sense, the natural question is how did we get here. Recent concerns about the rise of a technocracy echo similar concerns voiced long ago. The assumptions verified in this dissertation demonstrate how organizations may grow inadvertently. Processes cobbled together with different intentions, changes made not based on contingency but political practicality, and the collection of rules over time, imply that lack of intention in growth is a hallmark of contemporary public agencies. As the edges of local government organizations blur, making their measurement challenging, it is not surprising that organizations are difficult to comprehend, completely reform, and therefore 'grow' into seeming Leviathans even with no one intending for that to be the outcome. This is an important distinction, because a lack of agency does not provide a clear way to address the problem.

For burdens that are accidentally created over time, the red tape literature of Bozeman and Feeney provides some insight, albeit in the context of organizational rules and the costs associated with compliance. The tapes of bureaucracy (red, white, green, et cetera) began the conversation of internal logic causing 'red' tape, or difficult to access services seemingly full of meaningless processes (24). As Herd and Moynihan clarify, however, red tape is something to be experienced by the public negatively, while administrative burdens are actively constructed (or deconstructed) experiences with programs or policies that affect the costs associated with public use. Red tape, however, is further clarified as something that can happen inadvertently, but an exploration of that space has not extended much beyond rules (formal or informal) (25). Red tape has been negatively linked to democratic participation (119). While rules are the backbone of institutional configuration, they are but one component of the structural arrangement (a specific subset of institutional designs) of organizations.

Organizational arrangement, design, and structure can have an impact on the innovation of an organization (43). Innovation is the adoption of new and novel policies. In local government, innovation is a valued strategic capability (165). The government's ability to adopt new technologies such as social media has side effects on accessibility and accountability (47; 51).

Organizational 'structure' can also have an effect on the public's ability to engage. Public participation was intended to be a check on the bureaucratic system (131), but has increasingly become institutionalized. "Administrative burden" articulates the impediments faced when engaging with the government (156). In this frame, public processes and programs are rendered less accessible to the public because of administrative constructs that make using them more difficult, specifically highlighting the potential for the erosion of democracy in situations where administrative burden makes participation more challenging such as recent additions of burdens in voting participation. Bertelli and Sinclair (16) further address this issue in the United Kingdom, which sees 'massive administrative reorganizations' as a question of democratic agency.

The adoption of policy action may create inadvertent structural complexity over time that is bounded in numerous ways, an iron cage in an iron cage, with fuzzy edges that is frequently changing. There is a real possibility of an inadvertent administrative burden that is created by repeated reforms, the adoption of new processes, new technologies, and new staff together accumulating to create a highly complex system. For a public with less discretionary time, it is a big ask to expect the ideals of deliberative, participatory democracy. Government organizations trying to do the right thing in encouraging public engagement may ironically make themselves less democratic over time. The less accessible an organization seems, the less comprehensible it is to the public, the more likely lower trust.

The dynamics at play in this dissertation demonstrate that local government organiza-

tions, a large population of diverse entities, are dynamic and susceptible to path dependency, especially as a process of accretion. It is imperative that future study dig deeper into the organizational context to clarify what public administrators can have agency over and what they cannot. Left to their own devices, public organizations are increasingly highly optimized sets of processes that have collected beyond the bounds of cognitive imagination in the interest of stability: Leviathans.

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