

# **Governance in Ethnically Mixed Cities**

*Edited by*  
**Sherrill Stroschein**

# Governance in Ethnically Mixed Cities

This collection of original essays breaks new ground by examining the dynamics of ethnic politics at the local level, rather than following in the footsteps of many previous studies which focus on the macropolitical level of states and nations.

*Governance in Ethnically Mixed Cities* is based on extensive fieldwork and local observation, providing perspectives from a range of academic disciplines including Political Science, Geography, and Anthropology. It covers a variety of geographic areas from the Middle East (Kirkuk, Haifa, and Tel Aviv-Jaffa) to Europe (Mostar, Bolzano, Toulouse, and Florence), Central Asia (Osh in Kyrgyzstan) and the United States (Durham, North Carolina). In spite of the variety of disciplinary approaches and geographic diversity of the case studies, the contributing authors uncover a number of common elements of local ethnopolitical dynamics in mixed cities: the power of informal institutions, the effect of numerical balances between groups on local politics, and the significance of local competition for material and symbolic resources. Each of these areas provides a promising avenue for future research.

This book was previously published as a special issue of *Ethnopolitics*.

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First published 2007 by Routledge  
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada  
by Routledge  
270 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business.*

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Typeset in Times Roman by Techset Composition, Salisbury, UK  
Printed and bound in Great Britain by MPG, Bodmin, Cornwall

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*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

ISBN10: 0-415-45126-4

ISBN13: 978-0-415-45126-0 hbk

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# Politics is Local: Ethnoreligious Dynamics under the Microscope

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Remember that we have to live here. So be careful what you do.

Such was my father's admonishment when he learned that his teenage daughter was mustering a protest against religious instruction by the local religious majority in her public school. Not long before, a rumor had spread of two families in a neighboring town who had been forced to move elsewhere after challenging a similar issue. They had allegedly taken the matter to court and won, but were never spoken to again by their fellow locals—a serious sanction given the skewed demographic balance. The informal punishment was far more powerful than the formal court victory, and the families had eventually packed up and left.<sup>1</sup>

Needless to say, I gave up on the protest.

However, the profound lesson remained with me: that *formal* rules set by the state to curb majorities in divisive local activities could be easily trumped by *informal* local realities, or informal institutions (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004). In mixed cities in which ethnic



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or religious cleavages are salient in politics, informal rules and norms serve as a powerful regulator of exchange. Moreover, at the local level, these norms can exert a greater influence over exchange than formal institutional structures. The following contributions demonstrate the local importance of informal institutions. This insight is one of several provided on the dynamics of ethnic politics at the city level, where individuals of different groups interact on a daily basis.<sup>2</sup>

Because informal norms of exchange are locally-generated, they can develop local particularities. A second primary insight that thus emerges is the fact that rules of interaction between individuals of different groups might differ significantly by locale, even among cities with similar ethnic or religious demographics. Third, in spite of these variations, structural factors such as demography, formal local governance institutions, and institutional relations between a city and the central state do play some role in constraining local parameters of action. A fourth insight relates to the allocation of resources. Power is not the only resource sought by different groups; material, linguistic, and symbolic resources also matter. Disputes over the distribution of resources at the local level are a common focal point of tension in any city—but in ethnically-mixed cities, these disputes often elide with ethnic cleavages.

These four insights are discussed in more detail below, with reference to evidence from the pieces in this volume and from the author's own fieldwork in mixed cities in east central Europe.<sup>3</sup> Much theorizing on ethnic politics has focused on macro-level entities such as states and nations. However, these pieces show that the conclusions of these theories may in fact be inappropriate for understanding local dynamics of ethnic politics. Both normative theorizing on minority rights and social science work on ethnicity would do well to pay more attention to the *de facto* dynamics of ethnic interaction in local contexts.

The contributions in this volume represent both a diverse array of cities across geographic locations, and a variety of disciplinary angles: anthropology, geography, and political science, with many insights from sociology. These theoretical perspectives combine with an impressive depth of local knowledge and extensive ethnographic fieldwork. The contributions are clear and practical examples of a growing trend to examine the infrapolitics (Scott, 1990) of ethnicity—the way in which it is actually practiced at the local level (Stroschein, 2001; Varshney, 2002; Petersen, 2001, 2002; Brubaker *et al.*, 2006), and provide a corrective to a previous trend to emphasize larger entities. A step in a new direction of research into the politics of the local, many of the themes analyzed here present promising avenues for future research.

### The Power of Informal Institutions

As defined by Hemke & Levitsky, informal institutions are “socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels” (2004, p. 727). Institutions structure social interactions by influencing individual behavior, whether formal or informal. However, while the presence of formal institutions is more easily visible to observers, the influences of informal institutions can go undetected, particularly in studies that overlook local-level interactions. In-depth observations of political life at the city level thus holds great promise for advancing our understanding of informal institutions. In turn, the conceptual framework of informal institutions holds great promise for understanding how ethnic politics is actually practiced at the local level.

Informal institutions may take a variety of different forms: horizontal networks, patronage networks or norms of interaction (Putnam, 1993; Stark & Bruszt, 1998; Chandra, 2004; Helmke & Levitsky, 2004; Ledeneva, 2006). Like formal institutions and bureaucracies, they provide means of allocating resources and “getting things done,” functions that are typically associated with formal institutions and bureaucracies. However, informal institutions stand in stark contrast to the structure of rational and routinized formal bureaucracies as outlined by Max Weber, which serves as the foundation of much standard work on administrative structures. In the Weberian understanding of bureaucracies, well-defined rules are applied equally and transparently to individuals regardless of their social position. A rational and routinized bureaucracy thus de-personalizes individual interactions with state or city institutions. In this way, it serves a crucial role in the modernizing project (Weber, 1946). In contrast, patronage networks and unwritten rules and norms tend to be viewed by theorists and practitioners as hindrances to the establishment of successful states or city administrations, as one’s placement in a network tends to determine access to resources (Granovetter, 1985; Tilly, 1998; Petersen, 2001). While the strong importance of networks for access can indeed violate notions of equality, networks need not always work against formal institutions. As noted by Helmke & Levitsky, informal institutions may sometimes provide support for formal institutions. They outline a typology of various potential relationships between formal and informal institutions, including both positive and negative interactions (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004, p. 728).

Three of these forms are useful for the study of mixed cities in this volume. First, informal institutions may provide a foundation for positive inter-ethnic exchange that lies beyond the reach of formal institutions (Granovetter, 1985; Varshney, 2002). In terms of the Helmke & Levitsky typology, they thus may take a *complementary* or a *substitutive* relationship with formal institutions that intend to foster positive group interactions.<sup>4</sup> As described by Larissa Vetter and Matteo Fumagalli, informal network ties in the cities of Mostar (Bosnia) and in Osh (Kyrgyzstan) establish and preserve communication between ethnic groups. In Mostar, pre-war ties between individuals of different groups are re-forged as individuals join in a multi-ethnic protest to advocate the rebuilding of their apartment complex, destroyed during the war. In Osh, these ties are linked to patronage networks in the form of control structures that preserve inter-ethnic peace in spite of previous local violence. These strong patronage networks also allow the local Uzbek minority to make the most of the few formal offices they hold in the local government.

In a comparison of three cities across three countries, Harlan Koff observes that in Florence (Italy), local government officials often abdicate responsibilities for issues related to integrating Senegalese immigrants. In this context, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have stepped in to provide informal services that one would tend to expect from a government. Andrea Carlá notes how in Bolzano (Italy), despite efforts of strongly divisive institutions to separate German and Italian linguistic groups, individuals tend to learn enough of the “other” language to engage in polite, informal exchanges in public life. Such linguistic politeness is also common in cities with Hungarian minorities in eastern Europe, in spite of high levels of political tensions regarding language (Brubaker *et al.*, 2006; Stroschein, 2007). Mixed communities are like ecosystems in which different components contribute to the well-being of the whole. In order for such communities to function, social norms of interaction often require at least a minimum level of politesse. This thin layer of interaction may be supported by inter-ethnic networks, but need not be—the informal norm of politesse can still permeate exchanges in which individuals have very little contact.

These linguistic examples also demonstrate a second relationship between formal and informal institutions. Formal institutions that separate groups for the purpose of preserving group identity (multiculturalism) or representation (consociationalism) may reduce the potentially integrative effects of informal institutions. As Carlá notes, in Bolzano the formation of informal networks between individuals of different groups is hindered by the formal institution of a rigid language regime, which preserves the separation of groups at the expense of city harmony. The other institutional extreme can also create trouble. Institutions structured with the opposite goal of integrating groups by not recognizing difference can also have negative effects, as Koff observes in the case of Toulouse (France). Toulouse is a city that strongly endorses the republican model in its formal institutions, and thus recognizes only individual rights claims, rather than the claims of minorities as groups.<sup>5</sup> He argues that the formal mis-recognition of group claims at the city level fosters resentment among the sizable immigrant community and has thus fostered local outbreaks of violence.

Third, informal institutions can contravene formal institutions in ways that encourage the *exclusion* of local minorities—the opposite of the integrative functions outlined above. They thus may engage in a *competing* relationship with formal institutions by providing counter-incentives to formal rules (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004; Deets, 2006).<sup>6</sup> In my hometown, the threat of a powerful informal sanction, silent treatment by the local majority, was enough to prevent those in the minority from pursuing rights claims that formal rules would have endorsed. Instruction in the local majority religion in my school thus did take place to a degree that surpassed legally recognized thresholds, but with resigned acceptance by those of us in the local religious minority. In Miercurea Ciuc, a city in Romania where demographics are reversed and Hungarians are the local majority, the Romanian state has made continuous efforts to formally enforce Romanian language use in schools and administrative offices. These efforts have been easily met by informal routines of resistance by ethnic Hungarians, who are 83% of the local population. Local Romanians, who are 16% of the local population, thus must often learn Hungarian in order to foster a meaningful local existence for themselves (Stroschein, 2007).<sup>7</sup> Whether or not one lauds these effects of informal institutions will likely depend on one's placement in local networks—or whether local norms tend to operate in one's favor. However, their powerful effects cannot be denied, and they are a fruitful avenue for future research.

### **Locally-specific Event and Discourse Trajectories**

The fact that informal institutions are generated at the local level, through local events and contexts, demonstrates how cities with similar demographic structures can develop different types of interactions. In a comparative study of Indian cities, Ashutosh Varshney (2002) observes vastly different levels of Hindu–Muslim violence across cities with similar demographic configurations. He argues that the presence or absence of informal institutions such as inter-ethnic networks explains these differences. But the presence or absence of such networks can also be the symptom of deeper local histories and trajectories of either peaceful or antagonistic ethnic relations. Local histories tend to produce different types of ethnic interaction in different locales, and local discourses can become self-fulfilling prophecies of a particular city as tense or peaceful (Leibovitz, this volume, Stroschein, 2007).<sup>8</sup> These dynamics show that there are some limitations

to the degree of generalizations we can make regarding structural influences in mixed cities. Indeed, local events may contribute to a large degree of uniqueness in each city's ethnic interactions.

The sociological perspective that perceptions and actions are embedded in social relations (Granovetter, 1985) sheds some light on how these local particularities may emerge. As individuals are socialized by local events, the actions of individuals are tied to these previous events, creating path-dependent local event trajectories. The insights from the historical and sociological institutionalist schools regarding path dependence, feedback effects, and logics of appropriateness provide a useful framework for understanding how strong differences can thus emerge even in demographically similar local contexts. Path dependence implies that interactions do not move to a generalizable efficient outcome (or equilibrium), as posited by rational choice theorists. Interactions are instead strongly channeled by local informal institutions, such as the existing networks and local norms outlined above. Local logics of appropriateness based on these networks and norms will thus constrain the possible trajectories along which events unfold, confining the potential path of local histories. (March & Olsen, 1984; Granovetter, 1985; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; Thelen, 1999; Pierson, 2000; McAdam *et al.*, 2001).<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, feedback effects reinforce these local trajectories. For example, levels of support for ethnic parties can vary dramatically across cities with similar demographics and governance structures. The city of Târgu Mureș, Romania, which experienced a local riot between ethnic Hungarians and Romanians in 1990, continues to exhibit levels of support for ethnic parties of both groups that exceeds that of other Romanian cities or in cities with similar demographics in Slovakia and Ukraine (Stroschein, 2001). Local elites are thus more likely to be elected from ethnic or nationalist parties there than they are in other demographically similar locales that did not experience local violence. These reinforcing processes provide an endogenous aspect to local ethnic politics that must be incorporated into research (Beissinger, 2002).<sup>10</sup> Even the politics of particular neighborhoods within a city may vary according to their own local histories (Brubaker *et al.*, 2006).

In this volume, two contributions emphasize the discursive construction of local, rather than simply ethnic, identities from specific local contexts. In her study of Mostar, Veters examines how Mostarians were able to construct a local, multi-ethnic social movement, the "Displaced," around a category constructed by international institutions. These Mostarians, who had remained in Mostar throughout the war and thus could not obtain the housing resources meted out to refugees, declared themselves "Displaced in our own town," an effective slogan for a very particular context. The identified mechanism of creating a new categorical boundary (Ron, 2000; Abbott, 2001; Tilly, 2003, 2005; Brubaker, 2004; Brubaker *et al.*, 2006; Jackson, 2006) using local discursive resources provides a valuable insight into how polarization between ethnic groups can decrease through such affiliation to a new bounded category. Similarly, Joseph Leibovitz examines how boundaries between groups are differently negotiated in two Israeli cities. Although Haifa and Tel Aviv-Jaffa are in the same country and feature somewhat similar population demographics, the local discourses that prevail in each create quite different interactions between local Jewish and Palestinian groups. As in the case of Mostar, boundary construction between groups takes shape according to local meanings, prompting a more salient mobilization cleavage between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians in Tel Aviv-Jaffa than in Haifa. Interestingly, this boundary difference is largely a discursive product rooted in

particular histories, rather than a reflection of a better material situation for Palestinians in Haifa. Indeed, demographic figures do constrain possible actions for the Palestinians in both cities. As they are less than 10% in each, they will never win a majority of city offices in either. This scenario highlights the significance of structural factors, discussed below.

### **Structural Influences**

Insights into informal institutions and locally specific event trajectories contribute greatly to an understanding of local ethnic politics. However, it cannot be denied that structural influences also play a role. Local demographics will constrain what minorities and majorities can accomplish in a local setting. Formal institutional structures for governance at the local level may also encourage some power-sharing to mitigate the dominance of a local majority in democracies. Finally, formal institutional relationships between a city and the state, which determine the extent to which the center can intervene in local affairs, will greatly affect the dynamics of local politics.

### *Demographics*

Local demographic structure, or the “head-count” proportions of ethnic, linguistic, or religious groups, certainly enables or constricts what each group can accomplish in politics at the local level. The politics of “reversed” cities or enclave regions, in which statewide minorities comprise a local majority,<sup>11</sup> present a dilemma for theories of and policies relating to minority rights, because defining just who is a minority involves issues of scale. Minorities at the state level can be majorities at the local level, sometimes using their local demographic power to enact policies that harm local minorities—who may be especially resentful of this dynamic if they are majorities elsewhere in the state.

The importance of these relative group proportions is magnified in democracies, particularly those with a great deal of power devolved to local levels of government. Macro-level studies of nations and states often overlook the politics of ethnic enclaves and reversed cities. These regional demographic variations can explain why statewide majorities often favor centralized government structures, while statewide minorities often favor increased decentralization. Such is the dynamic for Hungarians in Romania, Slovakia, and the Ukraine, as devolved governance powers would give them more political control in enclave areas. For similar reasons, the titular populations (Romanians, Slovaks, and Ukrainians) are likely to oppose decentralization, and to express concern about the livelihood of their co-ethnics living in Hungarian enclave areas (Stroschein, 2006). This logic easily applies to other mixed states in which minorities hope to gain increased local control through decentralization.

It is important to keep in mind that demographic structures may undergo changes over time that strongly affect inter-ethnic dynamics and relations. In Romania, towns such as Târgu Mureș and nearby Cluj, both previously under Hungarian rule, experienced large migrations of Romanians from rural areas over the past several decades. These newly arrived, rural Romanians settled in newly-constructed neighborhoods of these cities and tend to exhibit a more strident Romanian identity than Romanians in older neighborhoods, whose families have historically lived mixed with Hungarians (Brubaker *et al.*, 2006; Stroschein, 2007).<sup>12</sup> When such demographic shifts are rapid, they can foster inter-group

tensions and some competition for resources (Olzak, 1992; Slack & Doyon, 2001). The birthrates of a minority group may also outpace that of a majority group, allowing a minority to perceive its minority status as merely a temporary one, and fostering some resentment among majorities (MacGinty, 2003). Mixed cities may also feature an ethnic reversal of the surrounding territory, as in the cases of Osh in Kyrgyzstan, Bolzano in Italy, and Kirkuk in Iraq. Cities in this category that serve as capitals of surrounding regions may find themselves in tense engagements with surrounding smaller communities, particularly if their leaders actively engage in regional politics. These interactions serve as a promising area of further research, especially as rural areas surrounding mixed cities may be more homogeneous.

However, the examination of demographic effects also poses some potential problems for researchers, as statistics and census data on group proportions may be fraught with controversy. Groups are particularly likely to condemn official results as inaccurate when they are designated a local minority, as David Romano notes is the case for Kirkuk. In addition, attempts by the state or by researchers to classify individuals who consider themselves to be members of more than one group, or of neither, presents further complications—as groups themselves are contested categories (Anderson, 1991; Nobles, 2000; Kertzer & Arel, 2002; Brubaker, 2004).

#### *Formal Institutions of Local Governance*

The comparative study of formal local governance institutions and their potential effects in mixed cities has been a rather underdeveloped area of research. The following case studies, however, offer a number of interesting insights on these dynamics. First, in mixed cities with relatively equal demographic proportions of groups, the office of mayor will tend to be particularly contested, as it cannot be easily divided between groups.<sup>13</sup> Where there is a strongly skewed ethnic balance, such as an 80% majority and a 20% minority, mayoral elections tend to be associated with a sense of entitlement by the majority and resignation by the minority. Informal institutions in the form of local norms may provide a way around some of these power dilemmas. Although a formal mayoral office is not easily divisible between groups, local, unwritten local norms may dictate that a vice-mayor or a close deputy must represent the other ethnic group.<sup>14</sup>

Second, the distribution of other local offices for different groups in mixed cities is another commonly-contested issue. In Vetter's discussion of Mostar, there are strict institutions to ensure distributions between groups. Yet as Romano outlines in his analysis of Kirkuk, the Kurds have made explicit attempts to gain control of these offices at the expense of the Arab and Turkomen populations. Minorities have similarly small representations in the Israeli cities and in Osh. Serious asymmetries of offices at the local level in democracies can sometimes foster election boycotts by minority groups, as Arab and Turkomen populations have used in Kirkuk. However, the power of informal institutions may mean that the number of offices held by minorities does not tell the entire story. As outlined by Fumagalli, the powerful importance of patronage networks in Osh implies that the few formal offices held by Uzbeks are less indicative of the actual reach of these individuals' powers. As with the case of vice-mayors and deputies outlined above, local informal norms may also dictate how many offices should go to one group, to either the benefit or detriment of minorities. In my hometown, cross-group voting was common, with one

exception. The religious majority's desire to maintain at least three of the five school board seats to influence school policy meant that if that third seat was up for election, the group would then vote along religious lines—as an apologetic friend of my father's explained to him after admitting that he had voted for his opponent.

Third, institutions may also vary in the degree to which administrative control is centralized within the city itself. The city of Mostar, as noted by Veters, was administratively divided into Croat and Bosniak (Muslim) parts in the decade after the Bosnian war. Efforts by the international community to centralize the city administration, begun in 2004, are now bringing formerly separate institutions such as schools and local services under joint administration. Interestingly, a similar dynamic can be seen in Koff's discussion of Durham, North Carolina, where highly decentralized administrative structures create schools of very different ethnic and socioeconomic character—producing a separation of African-American and white children. Similarly, Carlá shows how separate institutional arrangements for German and Italian groups in Bolzano, established by the 1972 Statue of Autonomy, foster polarization as the population is “institutionally trained” to think of themselves as separate groups. The tension between multicultural institutional arrangements (which protect separate group identities) and integrative institutions is a common feature of institutions at the local level in mixed cities, just as it is for divided states at the macro-level.

#### *Local Institutional Relations with the Center*

A third structural area of importance is the design of formal institutional relations with the center. As noted above, the level of government decentralization, or the degree of devolved powers from the central to the local level, is of primary importance. Devolution is often presented as a positive, pro-democratic idea, as it carries an image of granting control to the people by moving more power to the local level (Watts, 1998). However, these implications become more complex in mixed cities and regions, as a glance at the local level reveals. Structural logic and empirical evidence repeatedly demonstrates local majorities may attempt to dominate local minorities as much as institutions will allow. Thus, where devolution is high, granting strong powers to local majorities, they may establish policies that are viewed as problematic by local minorities. Such domination usually relates to the allocation of material, linguistic, and social resources, but it might also go as far as to infringe upon local minority rights. These dynamics can emerge whether the local majority is a statewide majority or a statewide minority—the content of the group appears less important than the structural incentives for maximizing power in a mixed setting. Direct intervention by the central state can reduce these motivations in an effort to protect local minorities, as was the case with desegregation in the American South. Formal protections may be limited by the strength of local informal institutions, but they can improve some conditions for local minorities—here, they did so by making the conduct of practices such as segregation more difficult. This *de facto*, intervening “center” may also be the international community, as in the cases of Mostar and cities in Kosovo.

It should be noted that minority enclaves and reversed cities in strongly-divided societies can pose control issues for states. Local enclaves in which the statewide minority is a dominant majority, or “core ethnic regions,” have more potential for secession than other areas of the state (Hale, 2004). The state might also express concern about the fate of statewide majorities who find themselves “stranded” as minorities in these

regions or cities, due to the potential for local domination mentioned above. In addition to attempts at direct intervention in such areas the central government may also try to increase its symbolic presence there. It can be no accident that a large base for the Romanian army has been placed in Miercurea Ciuc, a city with a strong Hungarian majority—the arm of the Romanian state is thus clearly visible in the commonplace sight of uniformed soldiers walking throughout town.

### **Claims for Local Resources**

The positive integrative effects of ethnic mixing at the local level can be reduced by local competition for resources (Olzak, 1992; Slack & Doyon, 2001). At the macro-level, competition for resources can take the form of policies that are somewhat abstract, such as legislation for or against affirmative action or to fund the activities of particular groups. However, at the local level, competition for resources usually takes more tangible forms, such as competition for ownership or access to specific land, housing, or schools. Local resource competition is identified as a strong focal point for group conflict by all of the pieces in this volume. Many local disputes emphasize property and housing, while some involve linguistic, cultural, or symbolic resources.

Land and housing are strong mobilizers (Toft, 2003). In Osh, a dispute over the allocation of land produced a local riot between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in 1990. Protest movements emerged in both Mostar and Tel Aviv-Jaffa in relation to the development of particular residential areas. In Mostar, this movement was multi-ethnic, composed of local residents who had been displaced from their old apartment building by the war. In Tel Aviv-Jaffa, Palestinians protested a development that they feared would displace them from the neighborhood of Jaffa.

Rapid population shifts such as displacements, settlements, and resettlements can make conflicts over land and housing resources particularly charged. Government efforts to settle members of one group in a new area are often interpreted by local members of other groups as an attempt to decrease their relative demographic presence, even in the absence of efforts to force out other groups.<sup>15</sup> Sometimes governments use both resettlement and removal strategies simultaneously. As Romano discusses in the case of Kirkuk, Kurdish officials have made explicit attempts to encourage or force Arabs to leave the city and for Kurds to relocate to the city. He notes that this resettlement strategy is an effort to establish demographic “facts on the ground” before an official decision is made regarding the status of the city. However, settlement without removals is a more common strategy. As outlined by Carlá, the Italian government engaged in policies to encourage Italians to settle in Bolzano after it obtained control of South Tyrol in 1919, resulting in German protests. A similar strategy was followed by governments in Eastern Europe after World War II.<sup>16</sup> In addition, immigration patterns have also created competition over economic resources, as Koff notes in relation to the cities of Toulouse and Florence.

Non-material resources such as linguistic, cultural, or symbolic issues can also become objects of group contention in particular contexts. Carlá notes that the stated desire to preserve “pure” linguistic groups in Bolzano has fostered political polarization between groups. He argues that language itself need not be an area of division, but that it becomes particularly charged under certain conditions, to the extent that it also polarizes the political environment. Indeed, mixed linguistic communities often produce a natural bilingualism or mixing of languages, demonstrating that purity is not an inherent aspect of language.



The salience of language in particular political contexts can be understood as a product of discursive framing (Goffman, 1986; Tarrow, 1998; Jackson, 2006). Framing, or “spin” by particular officials, can construct an issue as indivisible, or non-negotiable—when it could also have the potential to be framed in more divisible, or negotiable terms (Lustick, 1995; Toft, 2003; Goddard, 2006). In the case of Bolzano, the goal of preserving linguistically pure communities has been framed by formal institutions as a non-negotiable identity issue. Similarly, Hungarian minorities in several states of Eastern Europe tend to describe the Hungarian language as an indivisible symbol, their “sweet mother tongue”<sup>17</sup> that must be protected from being erased due to their minority status. In both cases, language is attached to the notion of cultural survival, and with this link it becomes a non-negotiable issue. The invocation of cultural survival can frame the issue of language preservation as a crucial resource, similar to land and territory. Another symbolic effort, the “marking” of territory through the use of group-specific names for places or through statues of a particular group’s heroes is also a common feature of politics in mixed cities. Local territorial marking links land, language, and culture together, and as such is often a strongly contested act between groups (Andrić, 1977; Kaplan, 1994; Csgero, 2002; Brubaker *et al.*, 2006; Stroschein, 2007).

### **Conclusions and Research Implications**

The focus on the local in the following contributions produce a number of revelations into the actual dynamics of ethnic politics in practice. First, intensive research into mixed city dynamics illustrates the strong influence of informal institutions in local settings, an area often invisible to projects emphasizing macro-level entities such as states and nations. Second, strong variations in ethnic dynamics between cities with similar structural conditions such as demographics and formal institutions demonstrate the path-dependent nature of politics in local settings. These particularities emerge from informal institutions such as local network configurations and norms, local discourses, and the influence of past local events. Third, structural factors such as demographics, formal local governance institutions, and institutional relations between a mixed city and the central government provide background conditions to these influences that will enable or constrain the actions of groups. Finally, groups compete at the local level not simply for material resources such as land and housing, but also over linguistic, cultural, and symbolic resources. All of these areas provide promising avenues for future research.

It is worth emphasizing that the local particularities identified across city settings are one especially important insight provided by the following contributions. The specific nature of local ethnic interactions is often overlooked in research projects with a stated goal of seeking general laws of politics. A strong emphasis on generalizability may lead even those observing local politics to dismiss local particularities as undesirable “noise” in a general equation. For these reasons, a number of theorists propose the search for causal mechanisms as a preferable research goal over the search for general covering laws (see Elster, 1998; Hedström & Swedberg, 1998; Tilly, 1998). In their effort to uncover and explain these local differences, rather than bury them, the following contributions tend toward this mechanistic vein of empirically based research.

Normative theories of minority rights would also do well to pay more attention to the dynamics of politics at the local level. Whether a group is a minority depends on one’s level of analysis, as minorities at the state level can be majorities in enclave areas or demographically reversed cities. In this capacity, they may infringe upon the well-being of local

minorities as well. In addition, Koff's comparison of three cities across different state contexts demonstrates that strong ideological paradigms of democracy can cause problems for the *de facto* integration of groups at the local level.

The studies presented here are a reminder to theorists of all types that the dynamics of local ethnic politics are often quite different from those posited in the realms of abstract theorizing. What follows thus presents a corrective to a longstanding emphasis on macro-level entities such as states and nations in research on ethnic politics. The four areas of insight outlined here present a promising step for future locally-based research into the dynamics of ethnic politics where individuals interact directly, on a daily basis. More work in this area is sure to follow.

## Acknowledgements

The author is grateful for useful comments on an earlier draft by Stephen Deets and Stefan Wolff.

## Notes

1. These are rural communities in south-eastern Idaho. Although these were religious, rather than ethnic distinctions, group identification was a salient cleavage that permeated nearly all exchanges. However, in my hometown of Aberdeen (population around 1800), the demographic structure has shifted in the past few decades due to a large influx of Hispanic migrants, thus creating new cleavages.
2. Many of the author's own observations are taken from extensive fieldwork for Stroschein (2007). That project is a comparative study of local contentious politics in cities in Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine with varying proportions of Hungarian minorities.
3. Stroschein (2007).
4. They credit Hans-Loachim Lauth with the terminology for complementary institutions.
5. It thus stands in contrast to multiculturalist models.
6. In Bosnia, for example, formal reforms in the health care sector by the center have been blocked at the local level, a scenario that Deets (2006) calls the "passive-aggressive state."
7. In addition, strong networks within one ethnic group can also facilitate stronger mobilization (Petersen, 2001).
8. On the emergence and propagation of particular discourses see Jackson (2006).
9. For a detailed examination of how politics evolves in a local context, see Brubaker *et al.*'s (2006) study of Cluj, Romania.
10. Further discussion of the importance of attention to feedback effects and their implications for the conduct of social science research can be found in Thelen (1999) and Pierson (2000).
11. A useful analyses of surveys on varied ethnic attitudes in enclave regions appears in Massey *et al.*, 1999.
12. Primary fieldwork by the author was conducted in Cluj and Târgu Mureş in 1997 and 1999.
13. These competitive dynamics were particularly visible from the author's fieldwork in Târgu Mureş and Rimavská Sobota in Slovakia.
14. Such norms may also be applied for county officials, as has been the case in some Romanian counties.
15. Governments have often intended to do just this. However, even when demographic change is not an explicit policy of governments, it is still likely to be interpreted in this way by longstanding local residents.
16. This resettlement policy has left its mark in Cluj, which experienced a large influx of Romanians from rural areas (Brubaker *et al.*, 2006).
17. "Édes anyanyelv" is a commonly used phrase.

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