Working Families, Global Cities:
Inequality and Democratic Change in 21st Century America

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1 Overview

Around the world and across the United States, two questions are being asked with increasing intensity in recent years. First, what public policies will be effective in the face of massive governance and humanitarian challenges that have arrived or that loom just over the horizon: environmental instability, dramatic population flows, increasing inequality, and precarious public safety? Second, can democracies characterized by high levels of social and political polarization deliver those policies, and govern themselves effectively and responsively?

While most analyses of democratic performance understandably focus their attention on the nation-state, analysts of the U.S. are becoming increasingly aware of the renewed importance of subnational policymaking, and some are especially optimistic about the possibility for policy and political innovation in major cities. This book builds upon these localist voices, but also curbs their enthusiasm with a close examination of the promises and perils of using local policies to improve city-zens’ lives.

The turn to subnational politics is driven by the intersection of several historical trends. First, urbanization continues steadily, even in the U.S, where more than 80 percent of residents live in urban areas, an historic peak. This urbanization means that local regulation, which might entail more effective and precisely delineated management-solutions to at least some of these challenges, is a potentially powerful tool for addressing some of these issues. Second, the complex transformation of the economy from mechanical to digital and from national to global, has prompted changes in American social, economic,

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1 Acemoglu and Robinson [2013], Alesina and Glaeser [2004], Page and Gilens [2017], Achen and Bartels [2016]
2 Trounstine [2009]
3 Barber [2013], Katz and Nowak [2018], Schragger [2016]; in the U.S., state politics are also becoming increasingly important venues for policy innovation and variation. Grumbach [2018]
4 For the first time in human history, most people now live in urban settings. This is a recent phenomenon: according to the United Nations Population Division we crossed the 50 percent-urbanized threshold in 2008. The trend has been most dramatic in the global South, but it continues in the United States as well.
5 Whether through democratic or other avenues, city-level action to mitigate pollution, provide valued goods for the average person, and constrain are perennially on the local agenda, though nation-level solutions and international cooperation remain tremendously important.
and political geography. Contrary to initial expectations, changed technology and produc-
tion have not obliterated the importance of physical locations—recent dimensions of this
process have been variously dubbed “the spatial mismatch,” “the Great Divergence,” “the
Great Inversion,” and “the Big Sort,” indicating their spatial components. If anything,
place has become more important, prompting a re-evaluation of how place fortunes within
the U.S. have tracked and possibly exacerbated the dramatic urban-rural divide that has
grown wider in recent electoral cycles, contributing to national polarization and gridlock.
These changes mean that attention to political geography is more important than ever,
because as places diverge from each other the political phenomena of interest within them
are likely to diverge as well.

One central outcome of these changes has been the emergence of “global cities” that
serve as both population magnets and the de facto headquarters of the global economy.
While global cities tend to come out on fortunate side of the Great Divergence, this does
not mean that all their residents benefit from these developments or that they naturally get
along on issues. These places tend to have very high levels of inequality, and their diver-
sity, demographic churn, and generally accelerated pace of social change means that new
cleavages may open at any moment and new governance challenges never far around the
bend. Moreover, even though these places are more Democratic in their partisan leanings,
a long tradition of urban politics studies suggest that they are fairly undemocratic in terms
of policy responses.

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Wilson [1997], Moretti [2013], Ehrenhalt [2013], Gelman [2008], Rodden [2018 (Forthcoming)], Ogorzalek and Piston [2018], Ethington and McDaniel [2007], Sassen [2001], Freidmann and Wolff [1982]. Because this book adopts both domestic and comparative perspectives, different elements of the analysis use the narrower political definition of the city common in American parlance or the more inclusive and cross-nationally comparable social/economic definition of the metropolitan area.

Urban politics studies tend focus more on how or why American politics are undemocratic than whether they are. Some notable important reasons for this include federalism [Peterson [1981], special influence by development elites [Logan and Molotch [1987], class bias in local representative institutions [Bridges [1997]; successful strategic political organizations [Trounstine [2008], differential rates of participation by homeowners [Oliver [2012], and informal elite coalitions effectively insulated from real democratic contestation [Stone [1989], Hunter [1969].
On the other hand, these places have attributes that make them promising sites for 21st century democratic problem-solving to (re)take hold. Theory and experience suggest that relative to more homogeneous suburban places, diverse cities tend to have higher rates of participation. There is more at stake in these places, with both larger budgets and a broader range of policy action than in smaller, more rural places. Organizational life in these places is richer than elsewhere, providing a substrate for political action to take hold. City density makes many kinds of inequality-mitigating policies more cost-effective to provide; it also means that these places provide greater opportunity for collective action and coordination than other kinds of built environments, enhancing the ability of populations to hold elites to account. Finally, changes in the economic underpinning of these cities’ success—concentration of agglomeration industries that cannot easily depart, and increases both in real-estate values and in the importance of real estate investment in the broader economy—mean that cities may now have a place-based advantage that eases the constraints on their policymaking relative to decades ago.

All of these developments are ongoing and far from complete. To understand them better will allow us to both grasp important contemporary developments and grant a window into the likely future of a society in which work is sure to be transformed, inequality is likely to increase, and in which governance decisions made at this critical juncture will dramatically affect the average persons life conditions, for better or worse. While most clear-eyed political analyses do not take place into account, the most optimistic accounts of cities’ prospects for solving our challenges do not give enough serious consideration to the political and social divisions that have historically undermined city efforts to achieve similarly ambitious goals. This book weds both approaches by examining the shifting political terrain of America’s global cities. While these places form the basis for a metropolitan coalition that is deeply “Blue” on electoral maps, they are also changing quickly. This means that examining their politics can give us a window into the likely future of Ameri-

\[\text{Glaeser and Steinberg [2016]}\]
can democracy generally while also better understanding the possible fault lines that may undermine the metropolitan coalition.

2 Significance and Scholarly Contribution

For about three decades, scholars in the interdisciplinary field of urban studies have developed and refined theories of “global cities,” distinctive places that serve as command centers of the global economy. Despite the clear importance of these places, the term has appeared only twice in the *American Political Science Review*, the top journal in political science. Those who wish to understand contemporary events in an age of concentrating wealth, increasing urbanicity, and transnational capital flows need to understand the dynamics of these important sites in the global political economy. Nearly a decade ago, Trounstine [2009] observed that political scientists had many good reasons to turn their analytic lens on the city in order to better understand American politics more broadly: the amount of governing they do, the immediacy of their policies for peoples’ well-being, their leverage-providing large-N and the availability of new data. In the intervening years, there have been many important contributions in these directions, but political scientists have not engaged core questions of the global city: How does their inequality affect local or national democracy? Are communities composed increasingly of shallowly-rooted new arrivals (of both elite and extremely marginal status) conducive to self-government? Are these new arrivals the basis for cohesive political coalitions, or are their pre-political differences likely to undermine cooperation in governance? And has the development of the modern metropolis, built around a new kind of service economy, changed the dynamics of metropolitan governance from the previous industrial age? Previous, sanguine suggestions

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12 In urban studies, conversely, the global city has achieve a status akin to a “master narrative,” a concept that must be included in any urban analysis and that informs a wide variety of important phenomena. Smith [2006]

13 Sassen [2001], Freidmann and Wolff [1982]
for a revival of city centrality in global and national governance have focused almost entirely on policy proposals and elite action, without considering the democratic dynamics of these places; these technocratic suggestions are simultaneously dissatisfying for democrats and too naive for political realists.\textsuperscript{14}

This study builds on my previous book, updating the analysis to provide answers to some of these questions while building a framework for further investigations of others. Joining a number of recent works that argue that place matters for politics, \textit{Working Families, Global Cities} examines the political dynamics of the distinctive places at the top of the American city system. Using new data and original analyses at three levels–the neighborhood, the city, and the metropolitan area–it is nearly unique in political science in its specific focus on the distinctive, rapidly changing areas of the global city; to analyze how those changes aggregate up to shape city and metropolitan politics; and to directly examine the national electoral consequences of such ongoing changes.

Individual chapters of \textit{Working Families, Global Cities} also make other significant contributions that will be more apparent to the reader familiar with the relevant literatures. American cities are rarely considered in political cross-national electoral comparisons, despite their clear similarities to these communities abroad (and despite the fact that); I am aware of no study that directly considers the national electoral coalition dynamics of global cities in this way. Similarly, gentrification has been the object of many sociological and ethnographic studies, but no study has focused on the electoral and opinion dynamics of these growing areas at the frontier of city change. The chapter on gentrification also includes a meta-analysis of gentrification measures generated by previous social science research, providing clearer edges to this relatively fuzzy concept. The book also includes data from the Chicago Metropolitan Area Neighborhood Study, an original public opinion survey conducted for this project by the author to measure opinion in rapidly changing areas and to learn more about policy preferences across a metropolitan area.

\textsuperscript{14}Barber [2013], Katz and Nowak [2018]; though Schragger [2016] is more nuanced in his treatment of institutional politics.
Elsewhere, the book makes creative use of existing surveys, and the chapters on gentrification and nascent political organizations also make innovative use of place-based social media data, analyzing how the online world maps onto our neighborhoods. In sum, this book links contemporary political science to contemporary urban studies in a theoretically informed, empirically original way.

3 Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 introduces the American global city with twinned vignettes of Chicagoland that signify its new political dynamics. Within the city, the gentrifying areas between the Loop and O’Hare have become destinations for visitors and new Chicagoans; they have also become hotbeds for political contestation between the gentrifying new arrivals and long-term residents.

In the suburbs, residents of a previously reliable Republican and once overwhelmingly white district northwest of the city headed to the ballot box for primary elections in 2017 and electors of both parties nominated Indian-born immigrants in the race for Congress, the first time that has occurred.

While each of these areas is distinctive within the wider metropolitan area, they are also provide glimpses of how changing communities are likely to shape American politics and local governance. The rest of the chapter briefly outlines the book’s argument and significance.

Chapter 2 (“Inequality, Governance Challenges, and the Global City”) theorizes the local political economy of global cities, the headquarters of the global economy. Social scientists have become aware of the inequality-heightening processes engendered by the secular shift toward the global city: gentrification, displacement of the poor, diminution of the public
These analyses generally either do not consider the possibility that democracy may be used to mitigate these inequalities, or do not carefully consider the characteristics of the city itself that are likely to foster or hinder policies to help alleviate inequality and poverty. This chapter more clearly outlines these theoretical relationships, stating hypotheses that are investigated in the ensuing chapters.

While the 20th century city was considered a suboptimal site for implementing inequality-mitigating policy, several important factors have shifted the parameters for global city democracy. First, the 20th century’s real estate finance regime, which distorted spatial land markets to privilege new construction in undeveloped, homogeneously populated areas, is gone. With the elimination of such redlining, the fairly natural association between population centrality and land values is re-emerging in global cities, creating both opportunities for reinvestment and significant affordability crises. Second, the reorganization of the American economy around services and knowledge has led to an uneven spatial terrain; while some firms can still locate wherever they choose, and operate under the logic of interjurisdictional competition, the sectors that drive global city status and connections are paradoxically more tied to place—their profitability is derived from a pool of highly skilled professional workers and proximity to headquarters locations more than from driving down the costs of production factors. Third, advances in technology have also provided new ways to more efficiently and effectively provide many services and public goods, from transportation to public safety, easing some scarcity concerns that made the mid-century urban crisis worse.

These temporal-spatial developments represent resources that cities can draw upon to help manage some of their significant challenges—but they also create new challenges themselves. These global cities have become more diverse and unequal, social factors that...
present hurdles toward effective responsiveness or political coordination. Though scholars disagree about whether diversity inevitably undermines certain governance outcomes believed to be beneficial to society, few believe that it makes things much easier. And though median voter-based theory predicts that inequality will generate greater demand for redistributive policy, that same inequality (along with specific institutional factors) may distort responsive institutions and inhibit redistribution.

Three major questions structure this investigation and are threaded through the books chapters. First, under what conditions does demography undermine democracy, leading to intergroup conflict and disagreement over policy? Second, what is the relationship between broader metropolitan governance and political affinity? Third, are metropolitan political and institutional coordination likely to help overcome the limits to local policymaking? The following chapters engage with these questions by looking closely at the potential strengths and weaknesses of American global cities in our current age.

Chapter 3 (“Refreshed Diversity, Renewed Democracy”) plots the parallel developments of city demography and local party organizations in Chicago and New York. Both cities, since the beginning of the 20th century, have gone down similar paths. Mass immigration from abroad and elsewhere in the U.S. and rapid growth of the industrial sector for the first decades; gradual and then more precipitous decline, and globalization-driven rebound in recent decades. On the party side, each city’s electorate has gone from merely safely Democratic to overwhelmingly Democratic since the 1930s. For the second half of the 20th century, each city was dominated by local Democrats. This chapter also provides a complex description of politically-relevant demographic patterns at the neighborhood, city, and metropolitan scale.

\[^{18}\text{Alesina et al. [1999], Alesina and Glaeser [2004], Putnam [2007], and Habyarimana et al. [2009] are pessimistic, Trounstine and Rugh [2011], Hopkins [2011], Abascal and Baldassarri [2015] less so.}\]
\[^{19}\text{Meltzer and Richard [1981], Romer and Rosenthal [1979], Acemoglu et al. [2015], Page and Gilens [2017], Kriekhaus et al. [2014]}\]

\[^{20}\text{Though New Yorks mayoralty was frequently won by Republicans, very few city council seats were, and the city’s five counties have been overwhelmingly Democratic in congressional and presidential elections.}\]
Chapter 4 (Playgrounds for Everyone?) considers the much-lauded renaissance of these two cities, including the resurgence of the real estate values that underpin the local tax base. While these changes bode well for the cities, their effects have been unevenly felt among the city-zens. The political dynamics of gentrification are particularly salient in global cities because they attract highly paid professionals wealthy enough to transform local real estate markets and neighborhoods. This development embodies a kind “reverse” group threat context, in which the newcomers to an area are higher status than long-time residents, yet represent a threat to valued elements of community life and continuity.

The analyses in this chapter address core questions about this new dynamic. Do newcomers and long-time residents interact at all? Do they live in the community for similar reasons, and do they feel the same way about neighborhood changes? Are they similar in their voting and robust participatory behavior? And which policy areas are most likely to drive tensions or unity across these groups? Drawing on a range of original data from the 2018 Chicagoland Metropolitan Area Neighborhood Study, the Chicago Democracy Project database, place-based social media groups, and interviews with local elites, this chapter examines how the stark social differences between global city residents play out on the ground and at the ballot box.

Chapter 5 (The World in the City) Examines a similar question about race relations, examining rapidly changing immigrant-enclave areas at the metropolitan periphery. Today, as most new Americans arrive in suburban contexts, it is unclear how these places will respond politically. Suburban areas that were not long ago almost entirely white are rapidly becoming much more diverse. For the first time, entire congressional districts are becoming majority-minority without support from the Voting Right Act-related institutions that

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21 Studies of racial “threat” and “contact” from the middle of the 20th century rooted their theories in white Americans' reaction to “encroachment” by poorer racial and ethnic minorities.

22 This context is almost analogous to the 20th century, when white homeowners in central cities reacted to demographic neighborhood changes with some mixture of fight and flight.
have ensured minority representation in national politics for more than a generation. History and theory suggest that we might expect significant racial backlash in these areas. Three important factors are different from the white flight era, however. First, the nature of ethnoracial group balance in these areas is different than it was in the past; as new suburbanites arrive from both central cities and abroad, the typical polarized pattern of American racial conflict (in which two large groups approach relative parity in size) is being supplanted in some areas by a new fractionalized pattern (with more than two groups). This pattern means that no single group is likely to constitute a majority by itself, so new (and unpredictable) patterns of coalition-building are likely required to build a majority. Under conditions of fractionalized group demography, intergroup conflicts are likely to be more frequent, but less intense, and even a conservative backlash by the largest groups (in this case, whites) may prove democratically insufficient to develop cross-group coalitions. Second, the local political terrain on which these changes are taking place is different; while “the suburbs” are incorporating new groups, it is less clear that every suburb is, or that the integration is particularly visible for most white suburbanites. If white flight was an effort to balance social integration with political separation, the status quo may already achieve that goal for many suburbanites, allowing for political coordination across group and municipal borders. Third, the forces that pushed affluent Americans to the urban periphery have weakened or reversed, limiting the exit option and forcing Americans to engage in a common polis to some extent. Different suburbs likely have different dynamics, and the visibility and scale of local demographic change are very likely to shape political outcomes. The analyses in this chapter draw upon similar sources to Chapter 3 to examine this question of intergroup comity and coalition development.

Chapter 6 (Working Families, Global Cities) turns from analysis of individuals preferences...
and behavior to the mezzo level of politics: the party organization. In American politics, recent decades have seen a deepening of a partisan urban-rural divide. This geographical divide has divided the nation fairly closely, but particular places have become more one-sided in their partisan balance. In particular, large cities are often overwhelmingly Democratic, with more than 80 percent of voters choosing that party in recent cycles. Duvergers Law predicts that this is not an equilibrium outcome, however—an electoral rival should emerge against a locally dominant party as big-city Republicans disappear. Indeed, this process is underway in both Chicago and New York, where the powerful citywide traditional organizations have begun to face challenges from ideologically-driven local organizations advocating for more assertive inequality-mitigation policies. In New York, the Working Families Party has leveraged New York’s distinctive electoral rules to develop as a party-within-the-party since the 1990s. WFP-supported candidates increased their numbers gradually in very local elections over the last two decades and now constitute a majority of the city council, as well as several city-wide positions. In Chicago, an emergent Progressive Caucus has arisen from the weakening of the local Democratic machine after Mayor Richard M. Daley’s retirement in 2008. They now constitute a quasi-opposition party with about one quarter of the seats in city council and other city-wide electoral victories.

Comparing the platforms of these new organizations, their electoral bases, and their institutional-historical trajectories, this chapter examines how new grassroots coalitions have shifted politics in these large cities—and how they have not. Using the insights from the previous chapters, I also assess the possibilities that this kind of organization can spread beyond the city framework in which it was born to provide a basis for both electoral mobilization and policy coordination across a metropolitan area.

Chapter 7 takes the analysis up one more level to consider the electoral politics of New
York and Chicago alongside other global cities: London, and Paris. Despite very different institutional and national contexts, each of these areas is characterized by a strong urban-rural partisan divide. Each place, moreover shares a privileged place in the international political economy among the top tier of global cities. Recently, both Paris and London created regional institutions (the Greater London Authority and Grand Paris) that will serve to integrate policymaking across a broader geographical region; such regional institutions have long been promoted as a way to rationalize policy implementation and mitigate inequality, although they have been employed unevenly in the U.S. and not at all in New York or Chicago. Nearly all extant analyses have examined the governance changes associated with such metropolitan institutional shifts; electoral changes have gone unexamined. Leveraging the temporal variation in the presence or absence of these metropolitan governments, this chapter gauges the effects these boundary changes have on national electoral politics, and compares them to the U.S. cases presented earlier, which have no such regional/metropolitan general purpose governmental structures. These analyses indicate that such regional governance structures may not only improve the provision of local services by better matching, but also build political support for such policies at higher levels of government.

Chapter 8 (Less Imaginary Communities) summarizes the policy implications of the foregoing analyses. In particular, the chapter suggests a typology of issue areas and institutional innovations that might reduce inequality without fatally undermining the political coalitions that support them. Following on Bell and de Shalit [2011], the chapter also recommends an active city-building project, centered on public goods and inclusive common life, that can help cities both sustain themselves and promote the general welfare of their city-zens.

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Dreier et al. [2004]. Although see Kubler et al. [2013] for a comparative analysis of the limits of such institutions in a European context.
4 Table of Contents

1. Chapter 1. Introduction.

2. Chapter 2. Inequality, Governance Challenges, and the Global City.
   (a) Theoretical framing of the study of U.S. global cities in context, and discussion of relevant previous research.

   (a) History of parties and newcomers in Chicago and New York.

4. Chapter 4. Playgrounds for Everyone?
   (a) Analysis of gentrification-generating processes and mass political dynamics of highly unequal, rapidly changing neighborhoods in New York and Chicago.

5. Chapter 5. The World in the City.
   (a) Analysis of suburban demographic change and ethnic fractionalization in the American metropolitan periphery.

   (a) Analysis of new party growth and progressive agenda change in New York and Chicago


   (a) Summary of previous analyses

   (a) Chicago Metropolitan Area Neighborhood Study methodological summary.

10. Appendix 2.
   (a) Meta-analysis of gentrification and suburban ethnic fractionalization areas behind analyses in Chapters 4 and 5.
Research for this book has been generously supported by the Northwestern University department of political science, a Weinberg College “W” grant, the Center for European Studies at Sciences Politique, and the Center for the Study of Democratic Politics at Princeton University’s Woodrow Wilson School for International and Public Affairs.

5 Audience and Technical Details

This text is principally written for an academic audience, and includes several significant new analyses aimed toward readers familiar with ongoing debates about city politics, global cities, race and ethnic politics, policy feedback, and contemporary public opinion polarization. It also includes several quantitative empirical chapters with technically sophisticated details. However, many scholarly texts that have analyzed different aspects of recent urban changes have been successful with broader popular audiences, including Sassen [2001] and Florida [2004]. This book combines the strengths of engaging in that compelling contemporary conversation with an approach that will appeal to those interested in cities in and of themselves—including the not-insubstantial groups interested in New York and Chicago specifically. Finally, the piece of the argument that suggests political solutions to current challenges will be of interested in American politics generally.

On the university side, the book will be appropriate for assignment in undergraduate or graduate courses in American politics, federalism, race and ethnicity, urban politics, legislative politics, and American Political Development—principally in political science courses, but also in sociology, history, urban studies, African American Studies, and American studies.

The manuscript will be approximately 100,000 words in length, with many graphical Figures, Maps, and Tables.
Select Bibliography & Works Referenced


