Jacqueline Peterson
Jack Lucas
Andrew Klain

Cities and places in provincial policy agendas

Abstract: This article uses a new dataset of coded Alberta Throne Speeches from 1906 to 2017 to identify patterns of provincial policy attention to *place* and *urban place* across policy issues and time. We discuss three main findings. First, provincial attention to place and urban place is influenced by policy domain: place-based attention is generally absent in some policy domains, such as macroeconomic policy, and prevalent in others, such as health care. Second, place-based attention is patterned over time, with a noticeable peak in the post-war "province-building" years and distinct troughs in other periods. Finally, we discuss the related but distinct patterns of attention to *place* and *urban place* across policy domains and time.

Sommaire : En s'appuyant sur un nouvel ensemble de données tirées de discours du Trône d'Alberta codés durant la période de 1906 à 2017, cet article cherche à déterminer les pratiques de l'attention politique provinciale concernant *le lieu* et *le lieu urbain* à travers les questions de politique et le temps. Nous traitons de trois conclusions principales. Premièrement, l'attention provinciale envers *le lieu* et *le lieu urbain* dépend manifestement du secteur politique : alors que l'attention relative au lieu est généralement absente dans certains domaines politiques, tels que la politique macroéconomique, elle est prédominante dans d'autres, comme celui des soins de santé. Deuxièmement, l'attention relative au lieu suit aussi clairement des tendances dans le temps, avec un pic notable de « construction provinciale » dans les années d'après-guerre, et des fossés distincts durant d'autres périodes. Enfin, nous traitons des pratiques d'attention connexes et distinctes concernant *le lieu* et *le lieu urbain* à travers les domaines politiques et le temps.

Places are important: they are where our natural resources are, where our services are delivered, where governance happens, and where identities are shaped (Reimer and Markey 2008). For decades, Canadian provincial governments have implemented policies or programs that target specific places, recognizing that the service needs and economic potential of different geographic areas vary across their jurisdictions. Urban areas are one example of such "places," and provincial governments have long played an important role in addressing urban issues and shaping local government in Canada. But when and why do Canadian provinces turn their attention to urban

Jacqueline Peterson is a PhD Candidate, Department of Political Science, University of Toronto.
Jack Lucas is Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary.
Andrew Klain is a Policy Analyst with Natural Resources Canada.

issues? Indeed, when and why do provinces turn their attention to places at all?

To begin to answer these questions and to provide a more systematic assessment of how and when urban issues rise and fall on provincial policy agendas, this article draws on a new long-term policy dataset that traces the prevalence of urban and place-based policy attention in provincial policy agendas. Using a coded dataset of Alberta Throne Speeches from 1906 to 2017, we explore patterns of attention to place-based policy in general, and urban policy in particular, through the full sweep of Alberta's provincial history. We find that place-based policy attention is not evenly distributed across policy topics; some topics are more predominantly place-based than others. We also find that place-based attention is not evenly distributed across time, with a noticeable peak in the post-war "province-building" years and distinct troughs in other periods. Throughout, we note the important distinction between "place-based" policy attention and more specifically *urban* policy attention – a distinction, we argue, that is easily overlooked in the contemporary place-based policy literature. We find that attention to urban place is indicative of historical policy trends, highlighting the value of provincial policy agenda datasets for urban and place-based research.

Conceptualizing place-based policy

In the past 20 years, the concept of "place-based policy" has become increasingly popular among policy researchers and practitioners. The concept is typically associated with policy initiatives that seek to address the many facets of a particular problem through in-depth, site-specific policy solutions that recognize the complexity of a problem and its interrelation with other social, economic, and environmental policy issues (Barca 2009). Place-based policy recognizes the distinctiveness of a particular geographic area and seeks to develop equally distinctive policy solutions. This requires collaboration and alignment among different levels of government, as well as business, advocacy groups, and community representatives on the ground (local experts) to develop localized policy solutions for so-called "wicked" problems.

This conception of place-based policy has developed alongside "new localism," a conceptual approach that focuses on new challenges facing cities as a result of globalization, which reshapes local-global relationships and demands new policy responses (Bradford 2008). Cities are home to a number of "wicked" policy challenges that require extensive inter-jurisdictional coordination and collaboration to overcome.[1] Moreover, cities are increasingly the "places" where policy is targeted and implemented (Bradford 2005). In Canada, a number of distinct place-based programs

were initiated in the 1970s for neighbourhood improvement, waterfront revitalization and affordable housing, but it was not until Paul Martin's 2004 "New Deal for Cities and Communities" that Canada saw a significant initiative to advance place-based policy making (Bradford 2011). Martin's "New Deal" framework advanced integrated, multilevel decision making processes, based on local knowledge and local experts, with federal transfers contingent on municipalities and other local actors developing "Integrated Community Sustainability Plans" (Bradford 2011). Canada's subsequent Conservative government moved away from this so-called "deep federalism" approach toward "open federalism," which sought to more cleanly delineate the powers and responsibilities of federal and provincial governments.

Because provincial governments hold constitutional responsibility for municipalities in Canada (while also administering many of the policies that are most implicated in place-based approaches, such as health policy, education policy, and social welfare policy), the "open federalism" approach led the federal government to take a back seat on many urban issues (Young 2006; Bradford 2007). However, while emphasis has formally shifted away from "deep federalism" and place-based policymaking, Bradford (2011) has noted that the institutions formed to advance place-based policy have become resilient and continue to guide and advance place-based decisions. In addition, many Canadian cities have advanced a place-based approach to urban poverty by investing in selected communities through a "priority neighbourhoods" approach (CED 2007; Horak 2010; Sharpe 2013). For Bradford (2005), place-based approaches include and integrate both "urban" and "community" perspectives, with "urban" reflecting hard infrastructure and a city's institutional powers, and "community" denoting social infrastructure, local networks, democratic participation, and the like. In recent decades, *place-based* policy has thus become closely aligned with *urban* policy.

The boundaries of "place-based policy"

Academic research on place-based policy trends has drawn primarily on case study analysis and in-depth qualitative research. Unsurprisingly, most analyses of place-based policy initiatives are limited to a particular place or policy domain. Research may focus on a particular domain of place-based policy, such as immigration (Leo and August 2009; Bradford and Andrew 2010), homelessness (Leo 2006) or poverty reduction (Bradford 2013), evaluating the effectiveness or potential of a place-based approach to address the policy issue. In addition to social policy research, a large amount of place-based policy research draws on the field of economic geography and focuses on regional economic development and innovation strategies ("place-based

development policy") and how certain types of investments in these areas can lead to economic growth. Bradford (2010) and Bradford and Wolfe (2010) chart the way forward for the Federal Development Agency for Southern Ontario through strategic community partnerships, while Wolfe (2011) suggests that innovation must be included in place-based economic development strategies. Place-based policy highlights the importance of different levels of government and local actors collaborating to produce integrated policy responses that advance local objectives and are tailored to local networks, assets, and resources.

While much of the literature on place-based policy provides useful and in-depth analysis of particular place-based policy initiatives, there is little research that seeks to understand, at a more general level, the role that place actually plays in policy decision-making and policy attention. One of the first problems, we argue, is the concept of *place-based policy* itself. Given the enormous diversity of the place-based policy literature and its associated terminology, the concept of place-based policy can be liable to "definitional obscurity" (Reimer and Markey 2008) and "conceptual stretching" (Sartori 1991). Urban policy researchers point to "neighbourhood" or "community investment" strategies as quintessential place-based policy. Economic geographers point to innovation clusters and regional growth strategies. Others insist that integrated and coordinated policy solutions that target "wicked" problems like poverty or climate change are central to the definition of place-based policy. In an attempt to draw boundaries around what is and is not place-based policy, Kraybill and Kilkenny (2003) argue that "location-sensitive" policies, which tailor policies to suit local conditions, should not be equated with "place-based policies," which are contingent on the needs and characteristics of the place itself. Yet how should we conceptualize policies that *do* target a particular geographic area, or "place," but may not reflect the other attributes commonly associated with place-based policies (such as those listed by Barca 2009)? For example, policies that target the spread of an invasive species in a particular waterway can be considered place-based, as they are contingent on the needs and characteristics of a specific place. The policy response, however, may not be particularly inclusive, collaborative or address deep-seated "wicked" problems. To understand and ultimately explain the relative prominence of place-based policy, we may need to step back from very specific ideas of integrated place-based policy and first ask a much more basic question: when do policymakers pay attention to specific geographic areas – specific *places* – and when do they instead simply focus on policies that are universal in scope, applying across all geographic areas?

A second important question we need to ask if we are interested in better understanding the role of place in policymaking is equally basic: what is the relationship between place-based policy and *urban* policy? While most treatments of place-based policy tend to focus their attention on cities or

urban regions, not all place-based policy is necessarily urban: it can also be applied to investments in rural areas and concentrated government efforts that focus on issues affecting rural communities (Reimer and Markey 2008; Winterton et al. 2014). There is no theoretical reason why place-based policy is confined to one or another *type* of place; the focus of the concept is instead on the diverse needs, preferences, and challenges of different places, seeking to build on these local characteristics to develop effective policy solutions. But we know very little about the kinds of places that policymakers attend to – urban, rural, regional, and so on – when they turn their attention to place. To understand how and why policymakers develop place-based policies, we need to differentiate between place-based policies in general and the more specific policies that focus on urban policy challenges, seeking to understand the dynamics of each and the relationship between the two.

A third and final question is about measurement and comparison: is it possible to identify and compare place-based policy across issue areas or jurisdictions? Given the enormous complexity of place-based policies and the challenges involved in identifying and evaluating them, it is little surprise that most research on place-based policy tends to be qualitative and case-based in character. This work, despite its clear value, teaches us little about larger policy trends and dynamics, and few studies seek to comprehensively survey attention to place-based policy across multiple policy domains or jurisdictions. Place-based policy, with its inherent contextual sensitivity and complexity, is difficult to measure and quantify. From an academic standpoint, this leaves us with little consistent, country-wide data on policy implementation and outcomes. From a practical standpoint, this has led to difficulties in effective program evaluation and little systemic analysis of the role of place in policy-making. While higher levels of government have always been involved in place-based policy making, broadly understood, researchers have been relatively selective in their analysis, focusing largely on the targeted and collaborative community investment strategies of the past 20 years. However, if we seek to better understand the role of place-based policy within a larger historical context, it is useful to better conceptualize and operationalize our understanding of place-based policy and evaluate historical data and policy trends accordingly.

Our aim in this article is to address these three questions by introducing a new historical dataset that allows us to systematically track attention to place (and specifically *urban* place) over time. We seek to broaden our understanding of what constitutes "place-based policy" to include all geographic places over all issue areas, while at the same time being rigorous and consistent in our coding criteria and collection of data. In so doing, we aim to better understand the role and prevalence of place in provincial policy and identify broad historical trends.

Data and methods

In this article, we step back from case-specific analyses of place-based policy initiatives to outline a different perspective on place-based policy, one that focuses on trajectories of place-based policy attention across policy domains and over the very long term. Inspired by research in the Comparative Policy Agendas tradition (Baumgartner, Green-Pedersen, and Jones 2006), and building on earlier work on federal policy attention to Canadian cities (Young and McCarthy 2009), we have systematically coded attention to place, as well as more specific attention to *urban* place, in every Speech from the Throne in the Province of Alberta from the time of the province's creation in 1905 up to the present. In this section, we describe our core data source - the Throne Speech - as well our strategy for coding attention to policy topics and place.

Throne speeches and policy attention

Within Westminster-style parliamentary systems, every parliamentary session begins with a "Speech from the Throne" (or "Queen's Speech") that describes the government's legislative agenda in the session to come. For well over a century, the Throne Speech has been a crucial moment in a government's policy calendar; the speech receives careful scrutiny from news media and extended, in-depth debate within the legislature. Much more than a mere "laundry list" of forthcoming bills, the Throne Speech describes the government's legislative priorities, explains what the government hopes to accomplish in the session, and serves as an opportunity to frame policy debates around the government party's own policy and political priorities.

The value of the Throne Speech as a systematic data source for students of public policy attention has been recognized for many years. In Britain, a group of researchers led by Will Jennings, Shaun Bevan, and Peter John (2011) has systematically coded every sentence in British Queen's Speeches from 1911 to 2008, identifying the specific policy topic and subtopic of each sentence as well as a range of contextual variables (such as year, government in power, Prime Minister in power, and so on). In Canada, a team of political scientists has built an extraordinary comparative dataset of coded throne speeches from 1960 to the present in each of Canada's ten provinces as well as the federal government.[2] In both cases, researchers have used the coding manual for the Comparative Policy Agendas project, which identifies a set of policy topics and subtopics for systematic coding, to enable comparisons of policy attention across jurisdictions.

Following these recent efforts, our own interest was to systematically identify place-based policy attention in the Province of Alberta, Canada, from the province's creation in 1905 up to the present. We chose this case as our "pilot" study for two reasons. First, responsibility for municipal

government, as well as a wide range of policy domains with obvious place-based dimensions (such as health, education, and social policy) are constitutionally assigned to the provinces in Canada. While federal place-based initiatives are important, the provincial level is the obvious place to begin a systematic analysis of place-based policy attention in the Canadian context. Second, we chose to focus specifically on the Province of Alberta because our research team has substantive expertise on the province, allowing us to interpret our findings in light of the province's larger historical and political development. Our goal is for this project to demonstrate the promise of large-scale studies of place-based policy, stimulating extensions of this work to other provincial and national contexts. In the meantime, however, we believe that the Province of Alberta is an interesting and useful place to begin.

Having chosen Alberta as our case province, our first step was to code the policy topics mentioned by the provincial government in each Speech from the Throne. We chose to use the Comparative Policy Agendas codebook to identify these topics, not least because the fully coded Throne Speeches for 1960-2014 were generously provided to us by Jean-Philippe Gauvin of the Canadian CPA research team. We also felt that the CPA approach, whatever its idiosyncrasies or limitations, would allow for comparability across jurisdictions and time. We thus began by digitizing every Alberta Throne Speech from 1905-1959 and coded every sentence or quasi-sentence in each Throne Speech by policy topic and subtopic. We also digitized and coded Throne Speeches from 2014 to 2017 to bring the dataset up to the present. This coding process involved detailed training for research assistants, frequent inter-coder reliability tests, and careful comparison of our coding in the 1950-1959 period to the already coded speeches in the 1960-1965 period to ensure that policy topic and subtopic codes were consistent and reliable. Even in the absence of the place-based codes described below, this dataset constitutes a very valuable data source for policy scholars; it is, to our knowledge, the first ever subnational long-term source of policy attention data using the Comparative Policy Agendas codebook.[3]

Place-based policy attention

Having finished our complete sentence-by-sentence policy coding of the Alberta Throne Speeches, we then turned to the question of more specifically *place-based* policy attention. We began by simply reading a selection of the Throne Speeches alongside the place-based policy literature described above. We experimented with a variety of possible coding strategies for capturing explicit attention to "place" in the data. Our primary goal was to develop a coding strategy that would be consistent and replicable across time and across political jurisdictions. We thus ultimately settled on a very

simple coding approach, coding each of the 14,193 quasi-sentences in the dataset by two dichotomous variables:

- Attention to a geographic *portion* of the province that is smaller than the boundaries of the province as a whole. For instance, sentences mentioning irrigation districts in Southern Alberta, a new water reservoir near Canmore, or a new policy related to resource extraction near Fort McMurray were coded as (1). Any sentences that did not explicitly mention a distinct geographic sub-region of the province were coded as (0).
- Attention to *local government*. In some cases, provincial throne speeches made reference to changes to local government without referencing a specific portion of the province. Since these sentences are nevertheless about local places, we added a second local government variable to capture attention to this aspect of place-based policy. For example, a sentence that mentions that the government will be creating new regional health districts across the province would be coded as (1) in this variable. Sentences that do not make reference to local government institutions (municipalities, school boards, health districts, or other local government bodies) are coded as (0) in this scheme.[4]

We consider any sentence in the dataset that is coded (1) in *either* of the two variables above as an instance of provincial attention to "place." This variable therefore captures every instance in which the provincial government made reference to a distinct geographic region in the province of Alberta, as well as every instance in which the provincial government made reference to a distinct local government in the province of Alberta. About 13 percent of the policy-relevant sentences in the dataset – 1,624 of 12,500 sentences – contain place-based policy attention.[5]

Urban places

The final step in our coding strategy was to identify the subset of place-based sentences in the dataset that attend specifically to *urban* places in Alberta. This distinction is important because, as noted above, it is valuable to be able to distinguish between place-based policy in broad terms and more specifically urban policy attention. As with our place-based coding above, we need a coding strategy that is durable across political jurisdictions – to enable the extension of this approach to other jurisdictions in future research – and also permits consistent coding across time. Following recent practice in the study of comparative urban political development, we have adopted a strategy of defining as "urban" those places that are above a threshold of 0.1 percent of Canada's national population at each census period (Lieberman 2009; Ogorzalek 2018). While this approach may

seem crude, it has the advantage of being exceptionally durable across time, while also generating lists of urban places with remarkably good face validity.

Thus, to code the urban sentences in the dataset, we used census data on every municipality in Alberta from 1901-2011 to identify urban places using the definition above. We then went through each of the 1,624 place-based sentences again, coding as "urban" any sentence that made explicit reference to an urban municipality. For instance, sentences that mentioned a new city charter in Calgary, plans for hospital construction in Edmonton, or discussion of a recent outbreak of contagious disease in Lethbridge would be coded as (1) on our urban variable. Any sentences that do not make explicit reference to urban places in Alberta are coded as (0).

Summary

Developing a systematic approach to place-based policy attention across multiple policy domains and more than a century of policymaking involves obvious tradeoffs. Our operational definitions of place-based policy and urban place-based policy are "hyper-minimalist" when compared to the much richer definitions offered by most recent scholars of place-based policy. From the perspective of the place-based policy literature, our focus here – on a minimal definition of place- based policy attention – is little more than a necessary ingredient for *actual* place-based policy to emerge. But this tradeoff comes with substantial benefits as well: an opportunity to systematically outline broad patterns of place-based policy attention in a manner that is comparable over the very long term, and to move in the direction of an explanation of those broad patterns. We believe that this is an important next step for students of place-based policy, and we believe that our approach, inspired by the Comparative Policy Agendas project, successfully meets this need.

Place-based policy attention in Alberta

As we mentioned above, the Alberta Throne Speech dataset contains 14,175 sentences or quasi-sentences, 88 percent of which (12,504) are policy-relevant. Each policy-relevant sentence is coded into one of twenty-seven major topic codes and one of more than 200 distinct subtopic codes. Each sentence is also coded with a dichotomous "place-based attention" variable and a more specific "urban place-based attention" variable. In this section, we outline and describe the broad patterns that this approach has uncovered, beginning with a pooled approach to the full dataset, and then moving to a description of patterns of policy attention through time.

Pooled patterns

As a first look at the Alberta Throne Speech place data, Figure 1 provides an overview in which each of the 12,504 policy-relevant sentences are pooled into a single basic figure containing twenty of the major topic codes in the dataset (we have excluded the remaining seven topic codes from the figure, all of which receive very little attention). For each major policy topic, the green bar displays the proportion of all policy-relevant sentences in the dataset occupied by the topic; the orange bar displays the proportion of all place-based policy sentences occupied by the topic; and the purple bar displays the proportion of all *urban* place-based policy sentences occupied by the topic. The figure thus allows us to understand the relative prominence of each policy topic within each of the three categories of analysis. If a place-based or urban policy attention is distributed evenly across policy topics, the height of the orange and purple bars should roughly match that of the green bars.

We can begin by comparing the green overall bars to the orange place-based bars beside them. In a number of cases, the height of the two bars is very similar, indicating that the topic receives place-based attention in rough proportion to the overall attention that the topic receives. This is true in the case of health, agriculture and forestry, education, environment, and a number of less prominent topics. In other cases, however, we can see clear differences between the bars. Macroeconomic policy, a topic that occupies well over one in ten sentences in the entire Throne Speech dataset, is distinctly *not* an area of place-based policy attention. When governments raise the subject of macroeconomic policy in Alberta, they rarely do so in reference to geographically distinct places. For example:

- "The growth of trade and commerce in the Province during the past year has been very rapid, and with increased growth comes new responsibilities" (1907)
- "Within our own province during this session, my Government will present for your consideration a comprehensive program designed to ensure continued economic development" (1957)

The opposite is true in the case of public lands and water - unsurprising, given that the topic itself is focused on the use and/or protection of particular pieces of public land or waterways in the province. For example:

- "New provincial parks will be established to offer improved recreational facilities to Albertans and visitors to Alberta" (1975)
- "The grazing reserve development program, funded from the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, will continue to develop needed pasture land in the gray-wooded soil zone of the province" (1981)

Figure 1. *Overall, Place, and Urban Policy Attention by Topic [Colour figure can be viewed at twileyonlinelibrary.com]*
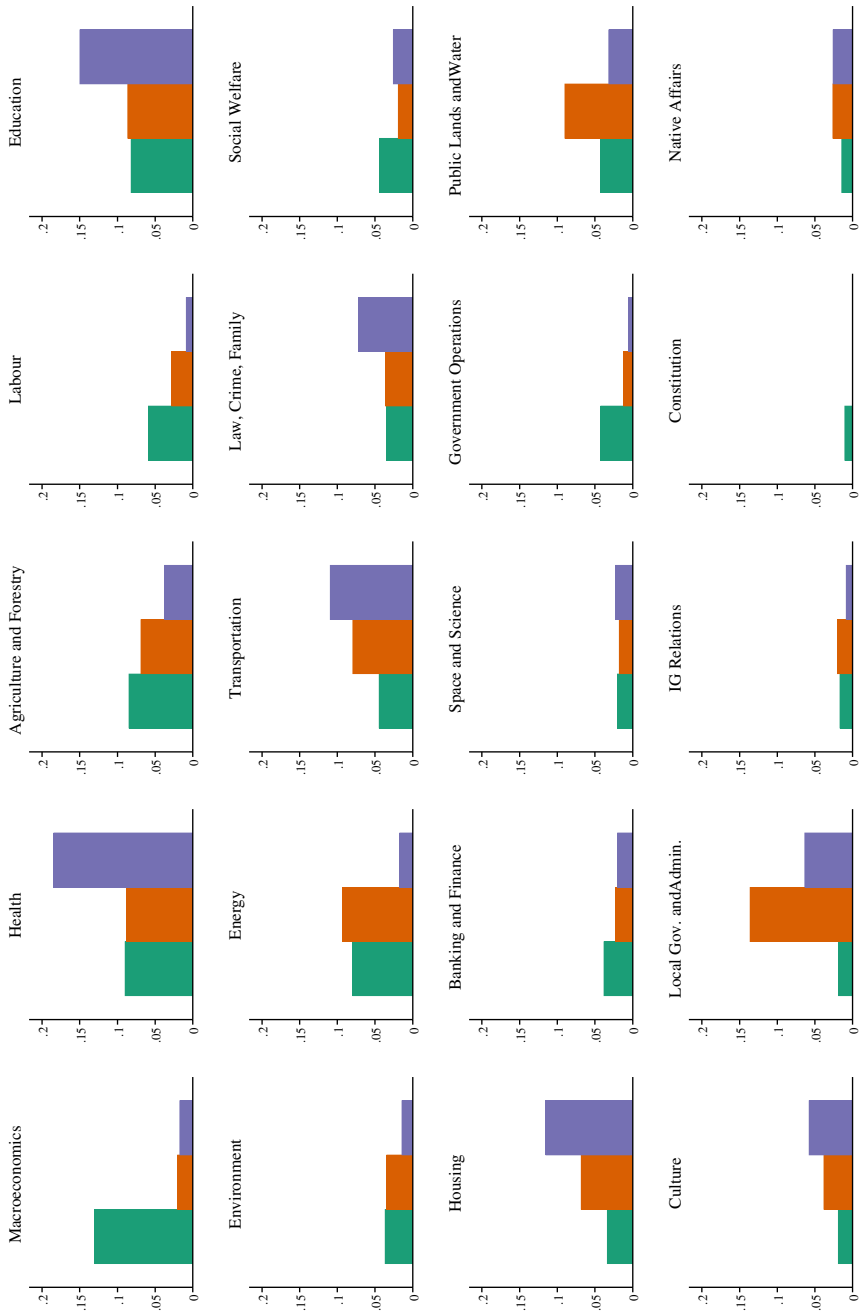
Energy policy is also somewhat more likely to contain place-based attention than we would expect from the overall distributions; energy policy in Alberta has often been focused on the identification and encouragement of opportunities for oil extraction at specific locations. References to the oil-sands, for instance, are coded as place-based:

- "As never before, it will provide an opportunity for virtually all Albertans to invest in major energy resource projects such as the Alberta oil sands and Suffield natural gas" (1973)
- "The Oil Sands Technology and Research Authority will be implementing, jointly with industry, several major experimental schemes for the development of deeper oil sands deposits in the Peace River, Fort McMurray" (1977)

When we compare across all three bars in the figure, it becomes clear that many distinctively place-based policy topics are in fact driven by urban policy attention. First of all, a number of policy topics stand out as distinctively not related to urban place-based attention, including agriculture and forestry, environment, energy, and – perhaps more surprisingly – labour and social welfare. In other cases, however, policy topics appear to be distinctively urban in character: this is especially true in the areas of health, education, transportation, housing policy, and culture. Many health, post-secondary education, and cultural facilities, for example, are often housed in urban centres:

- "A diagnostic cancer clinic has been established in Edmonton, and a similar service will be established in Calgary as soon as the facilities can be made available for this purpose" (1941)
- "Your approval will be sought for the construction during the ensuing year of essential public works, including an Institute of Technology at Edmonton, an Education Building and new Library on the University of Alberta campus at Edmonton, and a new Library on the University campus at Calgary" (1962)

Furthermore, Edmonton and Calgary arguably have more complex transportation needs requiring individualized investments, drawing remarks such as:

- "The Urban Transportation Act will be introduced in this Session" and "Its acceptance will spur the development of ultra-modern transportation systems in our cities" (1970)
- "Major sections of the Edmonton and Calgary ring roads will open in the next two years" (2006)

For scholars who are interested in the dynamics of urban place-based policy in Canadian policy, these topics are clearly the "bread and butter" of urban policy attention.

Taken together, then, a look at the pooled data reveals several interesting patterns. First, place-based policy is moderately important in Alberta, occupying nearly thirteen percent of all policy-relevant sentences in the dataset. When provincial governments talk about their policy agenda in a high-profile setting in Alberta – the Provincial Throne Speech – they regularly do so by making explicit reference to place. About thirty percent of the place-based sentences in the dataset are more specifically about *urban* places, meaning that just three percent of the overall dataset attends to urban policy in place-based terms. Thus, while place-based policy in general appears to be somewhat important in Alberta policy discourse, still the overwhelming majority of policy sentences in the Throne Speech dataset do not make reference to place, and even fewer make reference to specifically urban places.

A more specific finding in the pooled data is that patterns of place-based policy attention do not simply mirror overall patterns of policy attention by topic. Some topics are more likely to be *about* place than others. Some topics (like macroeconomics) are unlikely to be discussed in place-based terms, while others (like public lands and water) are disproportionately discussed with reference to place. These issue areas and their associated attention to (urban) place may vary between provinces; energy policy in Alberta may be more place-based, for example, than energy policy in other jurisdictions. Still, these findings indicate that place-based policy attention will likely be influenced by underlying attention to specific policy topics. When macro-economic policy dominates the agenda, for example, place-based policy will likely fade into the background.

Finally, our pooled data reveals important differences between place-based policy attention and more specifically *urban* place-based policy attention. Urban place-based policy is especially prominent in four policy areas – health, education, transportation, and housing – while place-based policy is spread across a much larger range of topics. Once again, underlying attention to policy topics will tend to influence not only *whether* a higher-level government attends to place, but also what *kind* of place is the focus of the government's policy attention. In terms of policy topics, at least, the dynamics of urban policy attention and broader place-based policy attention appear to be distinct. As we will see below, however, this may not be the case when we turn from the pooled policy-topic-oriented perspective to a more time-sensitive longitudinal perspective.

Patterns across time

We now turn to patterns of place-based policy and urban-place-based policy over time. Figure 2 provides an overview of place-based policy attention on the left and urban policy attention on the right. In both cases, each grey circle represents the proportion of "place" or "urban" sentences in the Throne Speech of a given year, and the coloured lines use a locally weighted regression to produce a smoothed picture of the long-term trends.

A number of interesting patterns are visible in the figure. From the Province's establishment in 1905 to approximately 1960, attention to place grew. Severe drought in the 1920s and early 1930s directed attention to rural areas, the agricultural industry, and government assistance to these areas. These developments are echoed in the province's Throne Speeches during this time. For example:

- "It is indeed a source of gratification that Southern Alberta has practically recovered from the adverse conditions of a few years ago, while good crop yields were obtained in the northern and newer districts" (1930)
- "The problem of the drought afflicted areas is receiving the earnest consideration of my Government; and in concert with the Governments of the Provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan which have problems of a like nature, efforts are being made to devise measures calculated

Figure 2. *Place and Urban Policy Attention as Proportion of Throne Speech [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]*
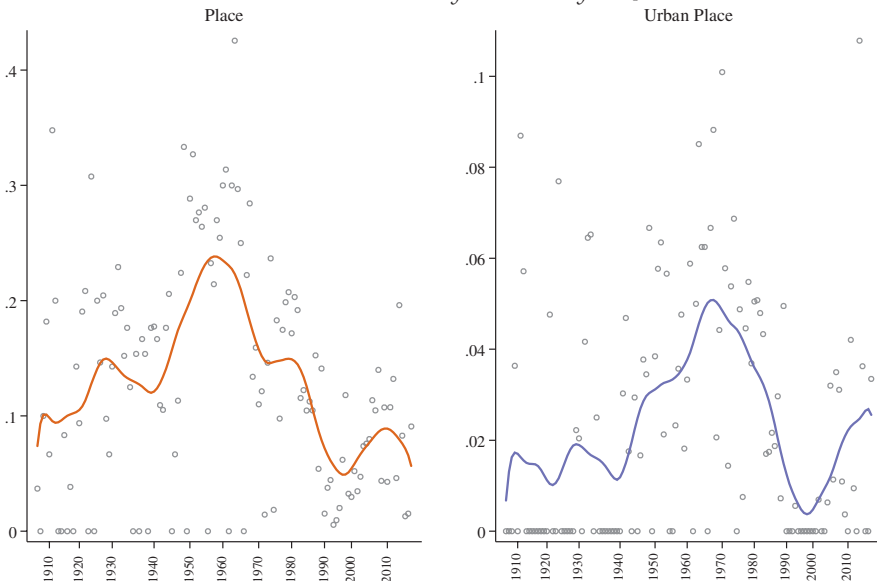
> to lessen damage by drought, where that is possible, and to bring about the profitable use of lands too dry for successful cultivation" (1935)

Following this brief spike in place-based policy around 1930, attention to place declined in the 1940s as attention turned towards wartime issues, only to spike again through the 1950s and 60s.

Our data suggest that the post-war era, from about 1950 to 1970, represented a "golden era" of place-based policy attention in Alberta with place-based attention regularly occupying well over a quarter of the sentences in the Throne Speech. Attention to place-based policy during these years was quite literally focused on 'province building,' with major infrastructure projects a central objective of the government during this era. Projects ranged from public health infrastructure to irrigation infrastructure:

- "You will be asked to approve substantial appropriations to complete the construction of the Aberhart Memorial Sanatorium and a tuberculosis hospital unit at the Provincial Mental Institute at Oliver" (1950)
- "To assist in stabilizing our agricultural industry you will be asked to appropriate substantial sums for the further extensive development of irrigation in southern Alberta" (1950)

Major infrastructure projects also included a heavy emphasis on rural electrification:

- "In the matter of rural electrification, you will be asked to provide additional financial assistance to the Rural Electrification Co-operative Associations to assist in bringing the benefits of electrification to the largest possible number of farms" (1953)

By the 1960s these topics continued to receive attention, but also included telecommunications infrastructure, oil sands infrastructure, and provincial park infrastructure. For example:

- "While continuing dial conversion program to all centres, the department will place an emphasis on the improvement of services to farm communities by stimulating the growth of Mutual Telephone Companies" (1961)
- "The first commercial development of the Fort McMurray oil sands will give substantial impetus to northern industrial growth during the ensuing year with total expenditures in excess of two hundred million dollars being committed for the construction of plant, bridges, town site and other auxiliary development" (1965)
- "Continued support for the significant public interest in outdoor recreation will be supplied through further provincial park development" (1964)

After the 1970s, however, place-based attention began a long, steep decline, bottoming out in the 1990s when Progressive Conservative Premier Ralph Klein focused relentlessly on macroeconomic policy, provincial spending, and taxes:

- "My government's first commitment is to balance our provincial budget within four years and to take the steps necessary to ensure that my government will live within its means" (1993)

In more recent years, however, it appears that place-based policy attention is once again on the rise. For example:

- "Maintaining the viability of farms and rural communities continues to be a priority for this government" (2001)
- "Government will also review the unique housing pressures in remote and northern communities" (2002)

In the urban figure on the right, the scattered character of the grey circles indicate a much more variable story, but the smoothed lowess line is nevertheless able to pick up the trend through time. Here too, the postwar era was a period of considerable attention to urban places. For example:

- You will be asked to provide finds for the construction of necessary new public buildings at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, and to accommodate increased apprenticeship training at the Technical Institute of Calgary" (1952)
- "You will be asked to provide funds to complete the construction of homes for senior citizens in Edmonton and Calgary" (1962),
- "In keeping with our concern for the development of youth, we propose, in co-operation with other agencies, to establish Youth Services Centres in the cities of Calgary and Edmonton" (1969)

Furthermore, the 1990s marked a period in which urban policy attention was distinctly less common than attention to place-based issues, as shown by comparing the figures on the right (urban) and left (place). For a period of several years, Throne Speeches regularly lacked even a single sentence containing reference to urban places. On one hand, the Klein government extended the previous Getty government's initiatives to disengage with municipal issues and loosen the province's "regulatory grip" over municipalities (LeSage and McMillan 2009: 423). The 1993 MGA reforms at once gave new freedoms to cities, while also reducing provincial guidance to municipalities and municipal capacity building programs (LeSage and McMillan 2009). At the same time, the lack of provincial attention to urban issues reflected,

in large part, Alberta's economic slump in the 1990s and associated shifts in government priorities. In the early 1990s, "reduced federal government support, inflationary pressures, increased demand on services, and fluctuating commodity prices [influenced] Alberta's fiscal position" (1991). By 1993 the Klein government was primarily interested in "initiating fundamental change in the way it manages the public purse because there is no other choice" (1993). Cities were duly impacted by Premier Klein's commitments to government reform and balancing the budget, as evidenced by municipal amalgamation directives and cuts to municipal transfers. Between 1988 and 1996, for example, intergovernmental transfers to Alberta's municipalities dropped from 22 per cent of municipalities' revenue to 12.6 per cent (LeSage and McMillan 2009: 401).

To compare the two trend lines more directly, Figure 3 plots two locally weighted regression lines atop one another: the first, in orange, is the smoothed line for all *non-urban* placed-based attention, and the second, in purple, is the smoothed line for all *urban* place-based attention. The relationship between the two lines is obvious. In each case, we see a small surge around 1910 and again in 1930, a significant surge in the post-war period, and a substantial drop in the 1990s. The post-war urban surge appears to

Figure 3. *Non-urban and Urban Place Attention as Proportion of Throne Speech [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]*
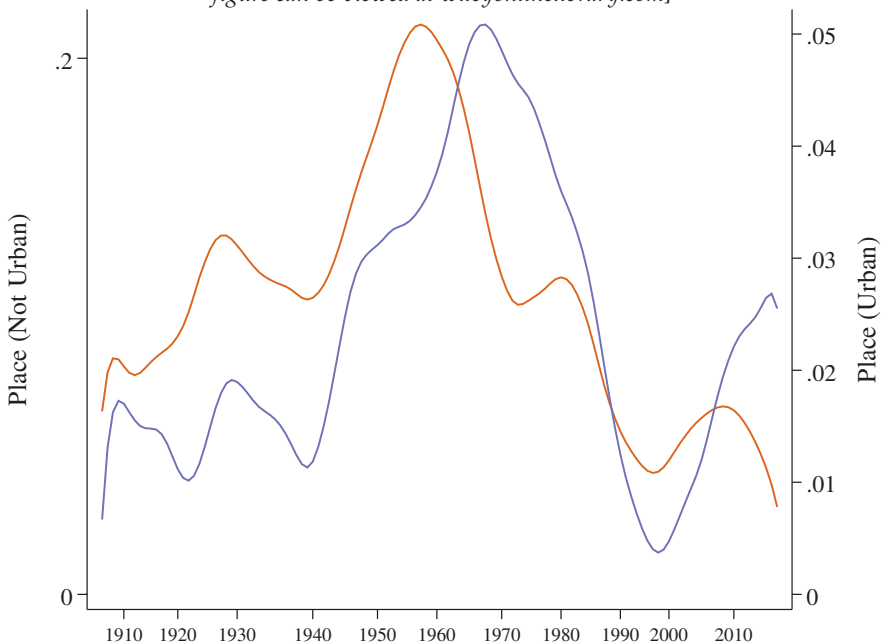
arrive later than the place-based surge; this may reflect the replacement of the longstanding Social Credit government, whose support base was deeply rural, with Peter Lougheed's Progressive Conservatives in 1971. This surge was likely a result of Premier Lougheed's interest in "building and maintaining good municipal relationships" after "Social Credit's neglect of rural municipalities had contributed to its defeat [in 1971]" (Masson 1994: 33-34). Furthermore, Lougheed sought to strengthen and modernize key provincial institutions, such as hospitals and universities, which necessitated provincial engagement with local authorities (LeSage and McMillan 2009: 422). In recent years, the place and urban trend lines also appear to diverge somewhat, and this too may have a basis in demographics (and subsequent political competition), as Alberta's rapidly growing urban areas – most notably Calgary and Edmonton – became key battlegrounds for political competition in the province:

- "Your government has pledged to work closely with municipalities to identify and address the unique needs of urban centres in an era of dramatic growth" (2008)
- "Your government, the City of Edmonton and the City of Calgary will also continue to work together to create city charters, with a view toward building stronger, more vibrant cities that attract trade, investment and jobs" (2017)

While place-based and urban policy attention share many broad historical trends and patterns, this data nonetheless highlights that place-based policy is not *necessarily* urban in nature. By identifying the differences between attention to place and urban place in provincial policy agendas, we are better able to understand the nature of "province building" in Alberta over the past century. The Province made a large number of investments in cities from the 1950s-1970s, for instance, which differed from the largely rural and agricultural place-based developments of the decades prior.

Conclusion

The study of "place-based" policy has become increasingly prominent in recent years, particularly among researchers who are interested in complex urban policy challenges such as homelessness, immigration, economic development, or climate change. Our purpose in this article has been to illustrate a means by which this scholarship might be expanded and placed into a longer-term comparative context. Using a new dataset of Throne Speeches for the Province of Alberta from 1906-2017, coded both by policy topic and by attention to place, we have identified a number of broad patterns in place-based policy across policy topics and across time. To undertake this

analysis has necessitated a much broader interpretation of "place-based policy" than has become typical in the literature. While this approach is necessarily coarse-grained when compared to the richly detailed case studies that dominate the place-based policy literature, the loss of detail has come with the advantage of systematic comparability and the opportunity to identify large-scale and long-term patterns.

This article highlights three key findings on the role of place (and urban place) in provincial policy agendas. First, place-based attention and urban attention are patterned by policy domain. Part of the story of place-based attention is simply a function of the *domain* that a government is attending to. Some policy domains (such as macroeconomics or labour policy) are less likely to feature attention to place than other policy domains (such as health or housing). Second, place-based attention and urban attention are subject to broad longitudinal trends. While there's plenty of variation from year to year, we nevertheless see broad *periods* in which place and urban attention are very high or very low. Finally, we argue that while place-based attention and urban attention are clearly related, they are nevertheless distinct phenomena. Place-based and urban attention are frequently sorted into different policy topics (it's common for energy policies to be place-based but not urban, for instance) and they're subject to slightly different (though related) temporal patterns.

The descriptive analyses that we have undertaken above are just the beginning of the possible questions one might ask about place-based policy attention. New datasets in other jurisdictions could reveal if long-term patterns of place-based policy follow distinct trajectories by jurisdiction or are shaped by larger demographic, economic, and cultural forces. Careful analysis of place-based and urban policy attention alongside political variables – such as measures of urban representation in provincial legislatures and governments – will clarify the role of political incentives in attention to place. In-depth case studies of key "peaks" and "troughs" might help us understand the rise and fall of place-based policy attention. And comparisons across policy topics will clarify the institutional and ideational reasons for variation in place-based attention. The empirical approach that we have outlined here offers the beginning, we argue, to a means by which to grapple with these important questions.

Notes

1 Leo (2006) calls for "deep federalism," wherein different levels of government work together in an extremely integrated fashion to advance local communities as part of broader national strategies. Bradford (2007) echoes the need for this integrated, intergovernmental approach, which he refers to as "multi-level joined-up governance" (p. 10).

2 See https://www.comparativeagendas.net/canada. Young and McCarthy (2009) also make use of Throne Speeches in their analysis of federal attention to municipal issues, but do not base their analysis on the systematic coding approach that we use here.

3 The complete dataset and replication files are available here: https://dataverse.scholarsportal.info/dataverse/jacklucas.

4 In some cases, the Throne Speeches made reference to agencies or units whose status as local governments was unclear. We resolved these cases by researching the details of the agencies involved using the available secondary literature and the relevant statutes.

5 A policy-relevant sentence is one that attends to a policy topic in the CPA codebook. This excludes greetings at the beginnings of speeches, general statements of prayer and/or blessing, "in memoriam" statements, and other non-policy-related statements.

References

Barca, Fabrizio. 2009. *An Agenda for a Reformed Cohesion Policy*. Brussels: European Commission.

Baumgartner, Frank R., Christoffer Green-Pedersen, and Bryan D. Jones.2006. "Comparative studies of policy agendas." *Journal of European Public Policy* 13 (7): 959–974.

Bradford, Neil. 2005. *Place-based public policy: towards a new urban and community agenda for Canada*. Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks.

———. 2007. *Whither the Federal Urban Agenda? A New Deal in Transition*. Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks.

———. 2008. *Canadian Social Policy in the 2000s: Bringing Place Back In*. Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks.

———. 2010. *Regional Economic Development Agencies in Canada: Lessons for Southern Ontario*. Toronto: Mowat Centre for Policy Innovation, School of Public Policy & Governance, University of Toronto.

———. 2011. "Public policy in Canada: Bringing place in?" In *Investing in Better Places: International Perspectives*. London: The Smith Institute, pp. 21–34.

———. 2013. "Neighbourhood revitalization in Canada: Towards place-based policy solutions." In *Neighbourhood Effects or Neighbourhood Based Problems?*, edited by D. Manley, M. van Ham, N. Bailey, L. Simpson, and D. Maclennan. Dordrecht: Springer.

Bradford, Neil, and Caroline Andrew. 2010. *Local Immigration Partnership Councils: A Promising Canadian Innovation*. London: Welcoming Communities Initiative.

Bradford, Neil, and David Wolfe. 2010. *Toward a Transformative Agenda for FedDev Ontario*. Toronto: Mowat Centre for Policy Innovation.

CED. 2007. *Place-based poverty reduction literature review*. Victoria, BC: Canadian CED Network.

Horak, Martin. 2010. *Understanding Neighbourhood Revitalization in Toronto*. Montreal: Canadian Political Science Association.

Jennings, Will, Shaun Bevan, and Peter John. 2011. "The agenda of British government: The speech from the throne, 1911–2008." *Policy Sciences* 59 (1): 74–98.

Kraybill, David, and Kilkenny, Maureen. 2003. "Economic rationales for and against place-based policies." Paper presented for AAEA-RSS Annual Meeting, 27 July – 30 July. Montreal, Canada.

Leo, Christopher. 2006. "Deep federalism: Respecting community difference in national policy." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 39 (3): 481–506.

Leo, Christopher, and Martine August. 2009. "The multilevel governance of immigration and settlement: Making deep federalism work." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 42 (2): 491–510.

LeSage, Jr, Edward C., and Melville L. McMillan. 2009. "Alberta." In *Foundations of governance municipal government in Canada's provinces*, edited by A. Sancton and R. A. Young. University of Toronto Press.

Lieberman, Robert C. 2009. "The city and exceptionalism in American political development." In *The City in American Political Development*, edited by Richardson Dilworth. New York: Routledge. pp. 17–43.

Masson, Jack. 1994. *Alberta's Local Governments: Politics and Democracy*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press.

Ogorzalek, Thomas. 2018. *The Cities on the Hill: How Urban Institutions Transform National Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Reimer, Bill, and Sean Markey. 2008. *Place-based policy: a rural perspective*. Ottawa: Human Resources and Social Development Canada.

Sartori, Giovani. 1991. "Comparing and miscomparing." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 3 (3): 243–257.

Sharpe, Erin K. 2013. "Targeted neighbourhood social policy: A critical analysis." *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events* 5 (2): 158–171.

Winterton, Rachel, Alana Hume Chambers, Jane Farmer, and Sarah-Anne Muniz. 2014. "Considering the implications of place-based approaches for improving rural community wellbeing: The value of a relational lens." *Rural Society* 23 (3): 283–295.

Wolfe, David. 2011. *Regional Resilience and Place-based Development Policy*. Waterloo, Ontario: Paper presented for Canadian Political Science Association Annual Meeting.

Young, Robert. 2006. "Open federalism and Canadian municipalities." In *Open Federalism: Interpretations, Significance*, edited by G. Keith, Institute of Intergovernmental Relations: Banting. Kingston. pp. 7–24.

Young, Robert, and Kelly McCarthy. 2009. "Why do municipal issues rise on the federal policy agenda in Canada?" *Canadian Public Administration* 52 (3): 347–370.