The Ideological Structure of Municipal Non-Ideology

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Abstract

This paper explores the structure of elite disagreement about the ideological or nonideological character of municipal politics. I propose two possible relationships between a representative's own ideology and their beliefs about the character of municipal politics: an "ends-against-the-middle" pattern, in which ideologues on the left and right embrace an ideological vision of municipal politics, whereas moderates insist that municipal politics is not ideological; and an "asymmetric visions" pattern, in which individuals on the left endorse an ideological view of municipal politics and those on the right oppose it. I use new survey data from more than 800 mayors and councillors in Canada to assess these possible relationships. While both are supported by the data, the asymmetric visions pattern is the stronger of the two: the nonideological view of municipal politics is most firmly embraced by municipal politicians of the moderate right, while the ideological vision is most common among representatives on the left. This pattern, I argue, is in keeping with a century of municipal political history and should be incorporated into our theories of municipal elections, representation, and policy disagreement.

Keywords

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Introduction

Is municipal politics ideological? Recent political science research, equipped with large and innovative new data sources, has made important advances in clarifying the ideological structure of municipal politics. But the individuals and groups who are actively involved in municipal affairs have their *own* theories about how municipal politics works—theories that often include quite passionate views about the role of ideological disagreement in municipal politics. The frequency with which municipal political elites express these views, and the passion with which they defend them, suggests that there is something important at stake in their competing theories about the ideological or non-ideological character of municipal politics.

In this paper, I describe the structure of the municipal ideology debate among municipal political elites themselves—the extent to which municipal elected representatives embrace an ideological or nonideological vision of municipal politics and the structure of their disagreement on this issue. The persistence and passion of the debate about municipal ideology suggests, I argue, that it is linked with wider patterns of disagreement in the municipal political field; attitudes about the ideological or nonideological character of municipal politics are not evenly or randomly distributed among those who are engaged in municipal politics. Instead, political elites' theories about the role of ideology in municipal politics are likely to be related in some way to their own ideological positions.

To explore this possibility, I propose two relationships between individuals' ideological positions and their beliefs about the role of ideology in municipal politics. The first, which I call the "ends-against-the-middle" thesis, posits that committed ideologues on the left and the right share an ideological vision of municipal politics, whereas moderates defend a nonideological vision. The second relationship, which I call the "asymmetric visions" thesis, suggests instead that an ideological vision of municipal politics is more characteristic of municipal political actors on the left, while those on the right are more likely to deny that municipal politics is meaningfully ideological. In this asymmetric relationship, the shape of municipal politics—its ideological or nonideological character—is a question that is itself structured by left–right disagreement.

To assess these relationships, I use new survey data from more than 800 mayors and councillors in Canada to describe the extent to which elected municipal representatives embrace a nonideological vision of municipal politics, and then assess the ideological structure, if any, of these beliefs. I find that municipal politicians overwhelmingly endorse a nonideological vision of municipal politics. This view, however, is by no means universal, and it is structured by *both* the ends-against-the-middle relationship (ideologues

are indeed more likely to see municipal politics as ideological than their more moderate colleagues) and the asymmetric visions relationship (those on the left are more likely than those on the right to see municipal politics as ideological). Overall, I find that the asymmetric visions relationship is more strongly supported by the data. I suggest that this pattern is in keeping with more than a century of municipal political history and should be incorporated into our theories of municipal elections, representation, and policy disagreement.

The Non-Ideological Vision in Municipal Politics

In politics, individuals and groups compete not only for elected positions and policy influence, but also for the opportunity to define what is at stake in the political field. By articulating the stakes of the political game—providing what Brodie and Jenson (1991) have called a "definition of politics"—political actors strive to set the terms of political disagreement on familiar and favorable terrain. This jostling to set the terms of the debate goes by many names—framing, heresthetic, institutional entrepreneurship, and so on—and operates at many scales (Baumgartner, De Boef, and Boydstun 2008; Riker 1986; Fligstein and McAdam 2012). Whatever we choose to call it, the struggle to define the character and stakes of a particular political arena is an important dimension of political disagreement and competition.[1]

In few political fields is this contention over the "definition of politics" more longstanding and explicit than in municipal politics. From twentieth-century urban reformers to twenty-first-century Black Lives Matter activists, municipal governments have long been a site of explicit debate about the character and stakes of the field itself—the kinds of policy arguments, institutions, and political action that are appropriate to municipal politics. While the institutional and policy content of these debates has evolved over time, competing public visions of municipal politics persist, ranging from those who celebrate municipal politics as a shining example of nonideological pragmatism to those who champion municipal councils as progressive lifeboats in a stormy Trumpian sea.[2]

These debates are also active among political scientists, and play out in both empirical and normative registers. In one classic argument, the pressures of inter-municipal competition for businesses and residents, combined with the restrained fiscal and policy authority of municipal governments, gives municipal politics a distinctly nonideological flavor, particularly outside very large cities (Oliver 2012; Peterson 1981). Others find clear evidence of ideological structure in local voting behavior (Holman and Lay 2020; Lucas and McGregor 2020; Sances 2018) and in patterns of municipal representation and responsiveness (Benedictis-Kessner and Warshaw 2016;

Einstein and Kogan 2016; Lucas 2020a; Tausanovitch and Warshaw 2014).[3] In recent years, a gradual move toward a more ideological view of municipal politics has led to an important call by Anzia (2021) to seriously consider what is *distinctive* about municipal politics, including the structure of municipal policy attitudes and the distinctive role of interest groups and policy jurisdiction in shaping municipal politics. In short, the ideological structure and character of municipal politics is by no means resolved among political scientists, and the implications of a more or less "ideological" local politics remains a subject of discussion among normative theorists (e.g., Barber 2013; Kohn 2016).

Because the ideological or nonideological character of municipal politics is actively contested by individuals and groups *within* the municipal political field, these opinions are likely to be structured by other aspects of municipal political disagreement—in other words, it is unlikely that beliefs about the character of local politics are unrelated to other municipal political attitudes, including one's own ideological position. Perhaps the most obvious structure to these beliefs would array ideologues against moderates, with ideologues embracing an ideological vision of municipal politics and moderates insisting that ideology has no place in the municipal sphere. Research in the psychology of ideology has shown that ideologues of both the left and the right view the world in simpler, more coherent, and more ideologically organized ways than do moderates (Lammers et al. 2017; Prooijen and Krouwel 2019), and one obvious consequence of this deeper ideological commitment could be a tendency to view municipal politics "ideologically"—a firm belief that the left or right positions and identities to which ideologues are deeply committed are relevant to municipal politics. If true, this relationship—which I call the *ends-against-the-middle* thesis—would align ideologues of the left and right against centrist moderates in debates about the ideological character of municipal politics.

While this ends-against-the-middle pattern is plausible, it is not the only possible ideological structure that could arise in competing "visions" of the character of municipal politics. In fact, the historical development of urban politics in Canada and elsewhere suggests a second relationship may be even more likely—a relationship that I call the *asymmetric visions* thesis. In this relationship, commitment to a nonideological vision of municipal politics is ideologically asymmetric, with left-leaning actors advocating a more ideological view and right-leaning actors advocating a nonideological view. Unlike the "strange bedfellows" character of the ends-against-the-middle structure, which arrays ideologues of both the left and the right against moderates, the asymmetric thesis posits that debates about the character of municipal politics are *part of* more general left–right divides in municipal politics.

In other words, one of the subjects about which those on the left and right disagree is the ideological or nonideological character of municipal politics itself.[4]

Evidence for the plausibility of the asymmetric thesis runs deep in urban political history. In Canadian cities, electoral competition in municipal elections typically involved substantial competition between left and right parties in the early twentieth century; this competition typically began with the arrival of an explicitly class-oriented labour party, such as the Dominion Labour Party (in Calgary) or the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (in Vancouver), to which local business elites and their allies then responded with a party of their own. What is notable about this history for our purposes, however, is that the conservative response to labour's "invasion" of municipal politics was not to create an explicitly conservative competitor, but instead to create a party whose name and identity rejected the very *relevance* of ideological platforms in the municipal arena. These "alphabet" parties—such as the Civic Government Association (Calgary), the Citizens' Committee (Winnipeg), and, in Vancouver, the especially revealingly named Non Partisan Association—sought to define ideology and partisanship out of municipal politics even as they advocated for recognizably conservative policies in areas ranging from the municipal franchise to social welfare spending (Bright 1998; Epp-Koop 2015; Lucas 2020b). "The C.G.A., representing citizens of all shades of politics and numbering in its membership many wage earning citizens," declared one such party, in a characteristic statement of this view, "objects to political party rule in municipal affairs." In the very same election, however, that same party, the C.G.A., had proposed an explicitly antilabour platform of fiscal restraint, reduced taxes, and a shift to work-for-welfare social relief.[5]

This historical development of party competition in Canadian cities—which has parallels in several American cities (Bridges and Kronick 1999)—continues to resonate in municipal politics today. Left-leaning municipal election candidates often find themselves opposed by candidates whose platforms respond to progressive proposals not so much with explicitly conservative alternatives, but instead with appeals to "pragmatic" and "non-ideological" local policies (Laschinger 2016; see also Weaver 2018, 2021). These experiences suggest that debates about the ideological character of municipal politics may indeed be asymmetric not only in the distant history of urban political development but also in contemporary city politics—elected representatives on the left articulating a more ideological vision of the municipal arena, and elected representatives on the right insisting that ideology has no place in municipal politics.

We thus have at least two plausible relationships between elite ideology and non-ideological visions in contemporary municipal politics: the ends-
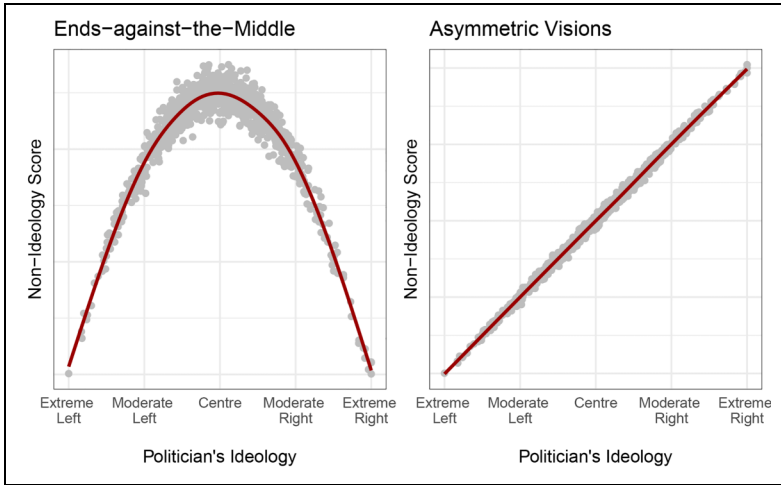
Figure 1. Ideal-typical relationships between politician ideology and municipal non-ideology scores.

against-the-middle thesis and the asymmetric visions thesis. To clarify these relationships, Figure 1 visualizes an ideal-typical case of each. In the left panel, the ends-against-the-middle relationship is symmetrical and quadratic, with extreme ideologues at one end of the "non-ideological vision" distribution (low "non-ideology" scores, indicating a more ideological view of local politics), and moderates at the peak of the distribution (high "non-ideology" scores). In the right panel, the asymmetric visions relationship is simply linear, with those on the left embracing a more ideological vision of local politics, and those on the right endorsing the nonideological vision. My goal in the empirical analysis below is to assess whether, and to what extent, each of these possible relationships is visible in the views of Canadian municipal elected representatives.

Data and Methods

My data are drawn from the Canadian Municipal Barometer (CMB), a partnership that undertakes an annual survey of elected mayors and councillors in more than 400 municipalities across Canada (every municipality above 9,000 population).[6] In 2021, a total of 804 elected representatives completed the annual survey, for an overall response rate of 22%—comparable to high-quality surveys of political elites in other countries and at other levels of government.[7] CMB municipalities are ideologically diverse, ranging

from left-leaning urban cores to very conservative towns in rural Canada (Lucas and Armstrong 2021); in the Supplemental Material, I show that results reported below are substantively identical in ideologically left, center, and right-leaning subsamples of the data. The 2021 CMB survey contained three questions about the role of ideology in municipal politics, the exact wordings of which are available in Table 1 below. These questions measured respondents' views about the role of ideology in municipal politics on three inter-related dimensions: a policy dimension, asking about the relevance of ideology to waste removal, a "bread and butter" municipal policy issue in Canada (Lucas and Smith 2019); a factual statement about the ideological or nonideological character of municipal policy making and a more normative statement about the appropriate role of ideology in municipal politics.

In my analyses below, I combine responses to these three questions into an overall measure of each respondent's "non-ideological vision," with lower values indicating *opposition* to that vision (i.e., an *ideological* vision of local politics), and higher values indicating *support* for the non-ideological vision. I recoded "don't know" responses to a neutral position equidistant

Table 1. Overview of Canadian Municipal Barometer (CMB) Responses to Municipal Ideology Questions.

Question	Strongly disagree, %	Somewhat disagree, %	Somewhat agree, %	Strongly agree, %	Don't know, %
There is a lot of truth to the saying, "there's no left-wing or right-wing way to pick up the garbage."	6	13	32	43	6
Municipal policy making is about pragmatic decisions, not about ideological disagreement.	3	12	33	50	3
Ideological debates between "left," "center," and "right" just don't belong in municipal politics.	6	18	26	48	2

between "somewhat agree" and "somewhat disagree," rescaled each variable with mean = 0 and standard deviation = 1, and then summed the three variables to produce an overall "non-ideological vision" measure. Responses to the three questions in this index are strongly correlated ($\alpha = 0.76$), and in the Supplemental Material (8.5), I show that my results are substantively identical when "don't know" responses are excluded from the analysis.

To explore the possible ideological structure of political elites' scores on this "non-ideological vision" index, I measure politicians' own ideological positions in two ways. The first is their simple left–right self-placement; this question asks respondents to place themselves on an ideological spectrum ranging from 0 (left) to 10 (right). The second is a latent measure of politicians' policy attitudes, measured from a battery of fourteen municipal policy issue questions included in the 2020 and 2021 CMB annual surveys.[8] Some of these questions are drawn directly from past studies of elites' policy attitudes at the municipal level (Bucchianeri 2020), and others are new; they cover a wide array of local policy issues, from active transportation to policing to climate change, and all are phrased as tradeoffs to increase their realism and accuracy as measures of policy attitudes (Einstein and Glick 2018). I use a Bayesian factor analysis model to measure each respondent's latent left–right position from these municipal policy questions. I provide the complete wording for these municipal policy items, along with more detail about my measurement model for this policy ideology measure, in the Supplemental Material (8.1).

In some studies, left–right self-placement questions are understood to capture a more "symbolic" or identity-oriented dimension of ideology, while latent measures from policy attitude questions capture a respondent's operational or "policy" ideology (Jessee 2012; Stimson 2004; Tausanovitch and Warshaw 2013). While this conceptual distinction is valuable, the two measures are strongly correlated in my data ($r = 0.62$) and I have no theoretical reason to expect that the ends-against-the-middle or asymmetric relationships would behave differently under the two ideology measures. I thus report results from both measures throughout the analysis, using two measures rather than one to illustrate the robustness of my findings to alternative conceptualizations of political elites' ideological positions.

Estimation and Analysis

As Figure 1 suggested, the two possible theses I am exploring—ends-against-the-middle and asymmetry—imply distinct empirical relationships between a politician's ideological position and their position on the municipal nonideology index. To explore the presence and strength of each of these relationships in my empirical data, I thus estimate a model containing

both a linear and a quadratic term:

$$y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 x_i + \beta_2 x_i^2 + \epsilon_i$$

In this model, x is each individual i's ideological self-placement or policy ideology value. In some specifications, I also add a vector of control variables to the model to adjust the estimates for other factors known to be associated with ideological sophistication; however, adding these variables does nothing to alter my substantive conclusions, and I have therefore reported these models in the Supplemental Material (8.4).

I implement the above model in a Bayesian framework, using diffuse priors in all models, because the Bayesian setup enables easier calculations of several postestimation quantities; as we will see below, these quantities are helpful for assessing the character of the relationship we will uncover. I implement the model in Stan (via rstanarm) and all models show strong evidence of convergence (see SM 8.3 for more detail). I emphasize, however, that my results are substantively identical under a variety of alternative models and specifications; I provide these alternatives, including conventional OLS models with and without controls, Bayesian models with and without controls, and multilevel models with varying municipal intercepts, in the Supplemental Material (SM 8.3).[9]

Results

Most Canadian municipal politicians embrace a nonideological vision of municipal politics. Table 1 summarizes responses to each question in the CMB nonideology index. At least three quarters of respondents agree with each of the statements, and in the case of the second statement—that municipal policy is about pragmatic decisions rather than ideological disagreement—the number rises to nearly 85%. Still, despite overwhelming support for the nonideological vision, the view is not universal: about one in six disagree with the first statement, one in seven disagree with the second statement, and nearly one in four disagree with the third statement. Despite overall support for the nonideological vision, a substantial minority of elected mayors and councillors resist the nonideological view of municipal politics.

Figure 2 summarizes the ideological structure of these attitudes, with politicians' ideological self-placement in the left panel and policy ideology in the right panel. Each panel summarizes expected values on the municipal nonideology index as we move through the ideological spectrum from left to right. Again, because the nonideology index captures the strength of an individual's support for a nonideological vision of municipal politics, higher expected values on the *y*-axis indicate a *less* ideological vision of municipal
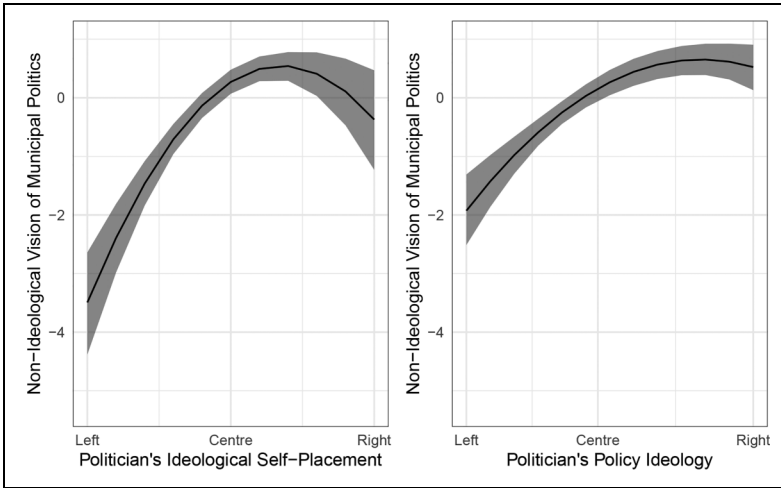
Figure 2. Politician ideology and municipal nonideology index scores.

politics. In both panels, the black line captures point estimates and the gray-shaded regions are 95% probability intervals. Coefficients for both the linear (β_1) and quadratic (β_2) terms in both models are statistically significant, and full tables are available in the Supplemental Material (SM 8.3).[10]

Across both panels of Figure 2, we see a similar story—one that provides at least some support for *both* of the possible relationships described above. The curved shape of both lines, reflecting the statistically significant quadratic term in both models, suggests that those at the ideological extremes *are* more likely than their moderate colleagues to see municipal politics as ideological. The more striking curvature of the line in the left panel, capturing ideological self-placement, suggests that selecting an extreme point at either end of the ideological self-placement scale likely reflects, in part, a self-identity as a deeply committed ideologue, and hence a more ideological vision of the political world. These patterns support the ends-against-the-middle thesis.

However, the shape of the lines in both panels of Figure 2 is far from symmetric, with the lowest expected values at the leftmost end of the distribution and the highest values not in the middle of the distribution, as the ends-against-the-middle thesis would suggest, but instead among those on the moderate right. In fact, the more we dig into the results in Figure 2, the more support we find for the asymmetric visions thesis. In Figure 3, I plot the probability that each point across the ideological spectrum represents the peak value of nonideological vision; in other words, the figure summarizes the points along the ideological spectrum where
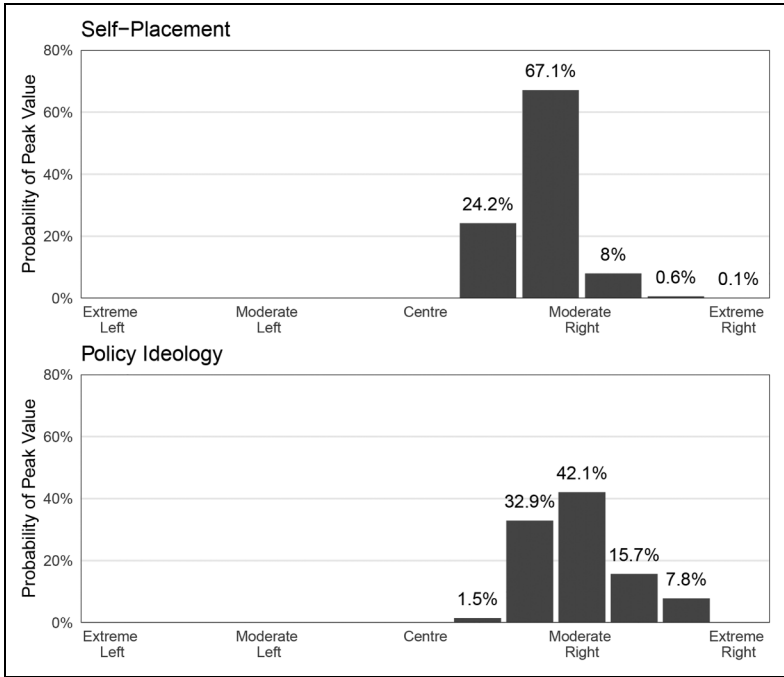
Figure 3. Probability that ideological position is peak value of nonideology index.

commitment to a nonideological vision of municipal politics is likely to be highest.[11] In a perfectly symmetric ends-against-the-middle relationship, this peak would rest in the center of the distribution, with probabilities declining symmetrically on each side. In fact, however, the results in both panels of Figure 3 indicate that the individuals who are most committed to the nonideological vision are moderate conservatives. This finding strongly supports the asymmetric visions thesis—with the important caveat that individuals at the extreme rightward end of the ideological spectrum *do* move back in the direction of a slightly more ideological vision of local politics, though still one that remains considerably less ideological than those on the extreme left.[12]

Discussion

Municipal political elites in Canada embrace a nonideological vision of local politics. They overwhelmingly agree that municipal politics is not and should not be structured by disagreement among "left," "center," and "right" positions. This view, however, is not universal; a substantial minority

of municipal representatives believes that municipal politics *is* meaningfully ideological, and an even larger minority insists that municipal policy making *should* be informed by ideological debates.

These attitudes about the ideological character of municipal politics are themselves meaningfully shaped by political elites' ideological positions. In keeping with the ends-against-the-middle thesis, individuals at the ideological extremes are more likely than more moderate representatives to endorse an ideological vision of municipal politics. However, this ends-against-the-middle pattern is much weaker than the asymmetric left–right relationship: elected representatives on the left are substantially more likely than those on the right to see municipal politics as ideological, and the most passionate torch-bearers for the non-ideological vision of municipal politics are moderate conservatives.

Both of these findings—general support for a non-ideological vision of municipal politics, as well as the asymmetric structure of attitudes about municipal ideology—have important implications for our understanding of municipal politics in Canada and elsewhere. One important priority must be to understand how overwhelming support for a non-ideological vision, which I have uncovered here, align with an increasing body of evidence that municipal policy attitudes are ideologically structured, municipal politicians tend to represent the ideology of their constituents, and municipal policy outputs generally reflect the overall ideological complexion of local residents (Einstein and Kogan 2016; Lucas 2020a; Tausanovitch and Warshaw 2014). How can it be that a group of elected representatives who embrace a non-ideological vision of local politics are also, it would appear, quite responsive to the ideological character of their constituents? While answering this question fully will require additional research, one important component of the answer will probably be the nonpartisan or weakly partisan structure of many municipal councils In her work on ideological voting in the U.S. Congress, Frances Lee (2009) found that just 40% of the bills she examined were recognizably ideological in character—the remainder concerned matters of allocation and "good government" that were unlikely to divide left and right—suggesting that a considerable proportion of what looks like ideological voting in Congress actually originates in mere partisan cohesion. Remove the political parties, Lee argues, and the ideological structure of legislative roll calls becomes considerably less apparent—a conjecture that is supported in work by Bucchianeri (2020) on roll call voting in 151 American municipalities. If only a small fraction of municipal bylaws and other council votes divide councillors on ideological lines, and in the absence of strong political party apparatuses to mobilize cohesive voting for other reasons, municipal politics may appear non-ideological even as municipal councils produce policies that, in the

aggregate, reflect the ideological positions of municipal politicians and the constituents who elect them.

My findings are also important for our understanding of contemporary municipal politics. This structure is likely to have visible effects across multiple domains of municipal politics. In municipal elections, we are likely to see asymmetric patterns of campaign rhetoric and mobilization, with those on the left seeking to mobilize voters on the basis of explicitly ideological appeals, while those on the right (particularly the moderate right) deny the relevance of such appeals and construct their campaigns on the basis of a non-ideological, developmental, "pragmatic" policy agenda. This is a pattern that many municipal observers have no doubt observed in their own cities—one that often frustrates left-of-center candidates who run explicitly progressive municipal campaigns.

Municipal policy debates are also likely to be shaped by the asymmetric structure of attitudes toward municipal non-ideology. When defending their policy proposals, we are likely to see important discursive differences between representatives on the right and left; not only will "non-ideological" arguments be more likely to come from right-leaning representatives, but those representatives will also be more likely to deny the very *relevance* of ideological arguments in municipal policy debates—to seek to define ideological arguments "out of" municipal politics. Put somewhat differently, the asymmetric structure of non-ideology attitudes suggests that we need to more seriously consider what might be called a *behavioral* theory of city limits: representatives on the ideological right insisting that policy issues are "developmental" in character, with no ideological content, and representatives on the ideological left claiming that this "developmental" framing obscures the meaningfully ideological character of many local policy debates.

Conclusion

In this paper, my goal has been to begin to reconstruct municipal political elites' implicit theories of the structure and character of municipal politics. Much work remains to be done. One valuable next step will be to extend my analysis to elected representatives across multiple levels of government. While the "non-ideological vision" may be especially prominent in municipal politics (Peterson 1981), political elites at all levels may tend to endorse a less ideological vision of politics. Comparing these responses across levels will help to clarify the mechanisms that structure the asymmetric relationship I have uncovered here; for example, if the asymmetric relationship is equally apparent among state/provincial and national representatives, this would provide us with valuable information about the sources of the "non-ideological vision" in contemporary politics and the distinctiveness of the

municipal political field. Perhaps it is the case, as Noël and Therien (2008) have surmised, that those on the right are more inclined to view ideological debates as "passé," while those on the left continue to embrace ideological politics.[13] Multilevel comparisons of elite attitudes will allow us to clarify this possibility, and to better understand how different institutional and policy contexts shape the ways elites understand their political environments.

Extending the analysis to the general public would also be valuable. If public attitudes on municipal ideology are asymmetric, we might begin to think about the municipal nonideology debate as simply another source of left–right disagreement in the municipal sphere, one that shapes the way politicians frame policy issues and build coalitions of electoral support. If, on the other hand, public attitudes incline more toward an ends-against-the-middle pattern—a plausible hypothesis, given the positive salience of nonpartisan, "independent" thinking among the general public (Klar and Krupnikov 2016)—this too would have important effects on municipal competition and policy making, creating a serious challenge for left-leaning representatives, who would be compelled to build a coalition of support for their candidacies and policy proposals while also minimizing their reliance on explicitly ideological appeals. Collecting data on public attitudes on this issue, perhaps in combination with more in-depth studies of municipal political rhetoric, will help to clarify the consequences of this asymmetric structure for municipal politics.

"The sociologist who defines what 'art' is," writes Martin (2015), "is not studying the field, but playing a role in it." Much the same is true, I believe, of the study of ideology in municipal politics. Political scientists need not abandon their analyses of the role of ideology in municipal policy disagreement and behavior—indeed, these measures have been central to my own analysis here—nor should we cease to explore the structure, ideological or otherwise, of elite and mass attitudes on municipal policy issues (Anzia 2021; Cann 2018; Tausanovitch and Warshaw 2014). We must also remember, however, that the ideological character of municipal politics—the extent to which municipal politics "is" ideological—is not only a matter of academic debate, but also an important source of conflict *within* the municipal political field. This has been so for more than a century.[14] Understanding the structure and sources of this longstanding disagreement, the individuals and groups who have chosen to invest resources in advocating for particular "definitions of politics" in the municipal sphere, and the consequences of these debates for municipal institutions, policy, and representation is a vital task for students of urban political development and contemporary urban politics.

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Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Notes

1. See also Noël and Therien (2008), who ground their treatment of left and right in global politics in a constructivist approach akin to the idea of "definitions of politics" I cite above.
2. For public-facing examples of the former, see (Applebaum 2021; Florida 2019). For examples of the latter, see (Gerken et al. 2016; Milman et al. 2017; Sisson 2016).
3. Schaffner, Rhodes, and La Raja (2020) uncover similar patterns and then go on to explore important patterns of representational bias in American municipalities.
4. Past research has uncovered other important right-left asymmetries in areas, such as, issue salience and issue centrality; see, for example, (Cochrane 2013 2015). For a contrasting approach to ideological asymmetry, focused primarily on ideological sophistication rather than policy ideology, see Grossman and Hopkins (2016).
5. This was the 1934 election in Calgary, though many other examples could also be given. The quotation is from Calgary *Albertan*, October 27, 1934. See also *Albertan* October 15, 1934. These clippings are available in the Calgary Public Library Local History Clippings Files (Calgary - Elections - 1930–1939).
6. Canadian municipalities are characterized by "weak mayor" council structures and are broadly similar to those in other Anglo-American democracies in their policy responsibilities and revenue sources. For an overview, see Sancton (2015).

7. Balance tests available in the Supplemental Material (8.6) suggest that the sample resembles the population of Canadian municipal politicians on observable characteristics including gender, population size, and region, with the exception of slight under-representation in the Province of Quebec. I provide regional subsample analyses in the Supplemental Material (8.6) to confirm that my results are not sensitive to this Quebec underrepresentation.

8. Because 380 individuals completed the municipal policy questions for both the 2020 and 2021 surveys, I am able to use the 2020 questions as well as the 2021 questions in my measure, adding more information to the latent measure and enabling a more precise estimate of each politician's policy ideology.

9. The control variables are age, gender, and education, and (in the multilevel model) municipal population size.

10. More precisely, the coefficients are statistically significant in the alternative models in SM 8.4; in the Bayesian models, more than 99% of the posterior draws for the β_1 coefficient in both the self-placement and policy ideology models are to the right of zero, and more than 99% of the posterior draws for the β_2 coefficient in both the self-placement and policy ideology models are to the left of zero.

11. For the left panel, each category is a point on the 0–10 left–right self-placement scale. For the right panel, each category is one of thirteen equally spaced positions on the latent policy ideology scale, running from -1.5 to 1.5 in increments of 0.25.

12. In the Supplemental Material, I provide a more formal test of the probability that the distributions in Figures 2 and 3 are in fact centered at the median value of the ideology measures, as the ends-against-the-middle thesis would suggest. As is already visually apparent in the figures, the data suggest that the probability that the relationship is symmetric is <0.001 for both ideology measures.

13. Or it could be, as Grossman and Hopkins (2016) suggest, the asymmetry looks very different at the level of national politics. Note, however, that opposite asymmetries in perceptions of the ideological *character* of politics and the ideological *sophistication* of political arguments are at least logically possible.

14. The meaning of the "poles" of ideological conflict is also a source of ongoing contention (Lewis 2019).

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