

BOOK REVIEW

Sellers, J.M., Kübler, D., Walter-Rogg, M. and Walks, R.A. eds. (2013). *The Political Ecology of the Metropolis: Metropolitan Sources of Electoral Behaviour in Eleven Countries*, Colchester, UK: ECPR Press. 534pp. \$73.56, Hardback ISBN: 978-1-907301-37-7 / Paperback ISBN: 978-1-907301-44-5.

Reviewed by Austin Mitchell, University at Buffalo, Email: ammitche@buffalo.edu

In *The Political Ecology of the Metropolis: Metropolitan Sources of Electoral Behaviour in Eleven Countries*, editors Sellers, Kübler, Walter-Rogg, and Walks provide a thorough statistical analysis of the political divides within cities. While the book is a massive statistical undertaking, it is also an inductive work which is more concerned with describing political divisions than it is explaining them. With that in mind, this book provides in-depth insight into contemporary urban politics.

The rural-urban divide is a major topic of analysis in classical comparative studies. From Moore's *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* in which rural peasants and urban capitalists determine political regimes, to studies of modern electoral politics within democratic states, the rural-urban divide has been an important focus of political analysis. However, in post-industrial development, cities within developed states are continuing to grow at the expense of the rural countryside. This growth is not just within the city cores, but also in outlying suburbia. The effect of this growth, the authors assert, is the replacement of the urban-rural divide with metropolitan divisions. This is the central thesis to this edited book. Urban and suburban places, their demographic composition, and the political affairs at the local level determine not only metropolitan politics but also national political divisions.

This project is an immense comparative work, with eleven chapters devoted entirely to studies of individual states across North America, Europe, and Israel, and a final chapter of comparative analysis. The chapter on the US describes metropolitan politics as especially divisive, based on local community ties. The US chapter emphasizes that these battles are playing out within suburbs. The Chapter on Canada describes how its regional politics have become reinforced while urbanization is shifting city and suburb politics towards consumption preferences and away from class based politics. In contrast, the chapter on the UK argues that ideology within the metros has not shifted but party mobilization has changed electoral outcomes. The chapter on France describes how its rural areas that were traditionally supportive of the political right, are losing people and land to metropolitan sprawl but rural politics are gaining allies in suburbs. Though, in France, marginalization and high recent immigration threatens suburbs with conservative extremism. The next seven chapters review metro politics in Switzerland, Germany, Spain, Sweden, Poland, the

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Czech Republic, and Israel. Unfortunately there is no Benelux coverage, but western liberal democracy is well represented which includes Scandinavia and Central Europe. ¹

The concluding chapter utilizes hierarchical models, as do the state chapters, in studying metropolitan electoral turnout and partisanship. Findings generalizable to the states analyzed include that large populations decrease municipal voter turnout, low density suburbs have higher turnout for municipal voting, and smaller communities have much higher turnout. However, select metros with greater size, density, and affluence also have greater turnout. While effect sizes differ, national voter turnout of metros mirror municipal turnout. Partisanship, on a division between neoliberal and welfare state politics, hinges on population density and affluence. Lower density, smaller populations, and homeowners prefer neoliberal politics. Poor suburbs support social welfare policies. Affluence in general correlates with pro market policies. Partisanship also increases with metro size.

While this book contains a multitude of statistical information which can aid the researcher interested in either comparative metropolitan politics or studying an individual state, it does not establish theory, does not conduct historical comparisons, and argues for geographic relationships which are essentially socio-economic. First, the introductory chapter discusses conceptual lenses in electoral politics but does not attempt to ground the analysis within any new or existing theory. The book is quintessentially a statistical index with some interpretation and context. When judged as such, it is an excellent source of analysis and could be of great aid to the comparative or domestic political researcher. Second, though the book argues that the metro has overcome the rural-urban divide, this premise is unsubstantiated within the analyses. The focus is entirely on contemporary politics, mostly since the 1990s. Lastly, although the authors suggest that metropolitan politics are place-based, the variation across metro units is largely explainable by socio-economic status rather than geography. These three criticisms are the sole opinion of this reviewer, and they do not negate the utility of this work: a comprehensive, well organized, comparative statistical analysis of contemporary politics in urban democracies.

¹ A previous posting of this review stated that there was no Scandinavian coverage. The reviewer apologizes for this misstatement.