

Demanding Development: The Politics of Public Goods Provision in India's Urban Slums. By Adam Michael Auerbach.

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Slums are an intrinsic and pervasive part of urban landscapes in the Global South. However, they can vary considerably in the access they have to fundamental public goods and services such as running water, electricity, sewers, streetlights, or trash removal, even within the same city. Why are some slums able to procure more public goods and services than others? This is the central question that this book addresses in the context of India. Adam Michael Auerbach argues that this variation is explained by variation in the density of party workers across slums: slums with higher densities of party workers get more public goods. The book begins by presenting the puzzle in general and then the case of India in chapters 1 and 2. Chapters 3 and 4 present his theoretical argument, chapter 5 introduces the readers to the setting of the ethnographic studies and surveys, chapter 6 presents the quantitative evidence testing the theory, and chapter 7 addresses the earlier question of why some slums have more party worker density to begin with. Chapter 8 concludes.

Auerbach focuses his analysis on party workers found in slums. Every slum has residents who become leaders in that specific slum, because they possess characteristics such as education and boldness that enable them to help other residents in their interactions with the state and with solving local problems. Such work increases these leaders' social status and earns them income. Slum leaders are therefore motivated to increase the size of their following among fellow residents. *Some* slum leaders are selected by political parties to be party workers and are subsequently embedded in the local party organization. Being a party worker gives slum leaders increased access to party elites and to their influence, thereby improving their effectiveness and status as slum leaders. In exchange for such party benefits, slum leaders provide parties with political services in their slum that benefit the party's electoral performance. So, how does the number of party workers in a slum influence the level of public goods and services it is able to procure?

Auerbach draws on his extensive ethnographic fieldwork in eight slums located in two Indian cities—Bhopal and Jaipur—to inductively develop a theory that explains how the high *density* of party workers improves public goods provision. The number of party workers per thousand slum residents is defined as party worker density. He identifies three mechanisms that link high party worker density to higher provision of public goods and services.

First, higher party worker density means that a higher number of party workers are competing to gain a following among the same slum residents. Higher levels of competition will therefore motivate party workers to exert more effort, in turn improving their performance in procuring more local public goods for that particular slum. Second, higher party worker density in a slum makes it more politically connected to party elites. Such elite access in turn increases the public goods provided to a slum, because of its increased access to and influence over the officials who dispense public goods. Third, higher party worker density makes it easier to effectively mobilize slum residents to participate in rallies and demonstrations to demand public services, thereby increasing supply. Collectively, these three mechanisms yield better public goods in slums with higher party worker density.

Auerbach then qualifies this argument by noting that the degree of interparty competition present in a slum could also influence its ability to obtain public goods but in conflicting ways. Although higher interparty competition could motivate different parties to provide *more* public goods, the inability to claim sole credit for public goods provision, as well as party workers' incentives to undercut the efforts of rival parties, could lead to *less* public goods and services. Finally, Auerbach also finds that slums with bigger populations and more ethnic diversity have more leaders. Because parties see large slums as large vote banks, they are more motivated to appoint party workers in these locales, thereby increasing their worker density.

The author then tests his main theoretical argument by using data he collected by surveying 2,545 residents located in 111 slums in Jaipur and Bhopal—in two waves in 2012 (80 slums) and 2015 (31 slums)—and data on public goods collected via direct observation. The empirical evidence shows that, in slums with workers from a single party, higher party worker density was associated with significantly higher provision of some, but not all, public goods. In slums with workers from multiple parties, however, there was no significant relationship between party worker density and the provision of any public good. Thorny issues such as establishing causality are effectively addressed by using evidence from the historical narratives of the slums that were part of the original ethnographic research. These results therefore support the argument that higher party worker density can indeed lead to higher provision of some types of public goods but *only* in slums where a single party commands all party workers.

There are some theoretical and empirical points on which readers are left puzzled. First, the mean number of slum leaders (10.54; p. 100) is significantly higher than the mean number of party brokers (fewer than 2; p. 112). Given the valuable rewards associated with being a party worker, does the competition to become and stay a worker in the same party influence slum leaders to collaborate,

thus increasing public goods provision, or does it motivate them instead to undermine each other, thus reducing provision? Because the results are based on using the *total* number of party workers, we cannot answer this question. Second, the level of political competition is frequently significant in the results on public goods provision and the number of party workers selected. Do parties select slum leaders with similar qualities in highly and less competitive slums? Or do party loyalty and political skills, rather than service effectiveness, influence a party's choice of workers in highly politically competitive slums? If so, this could also explain why high party worker density does not translate into higher provision of public goods in more politically competitive slums.

In addition, Auerbach argues persuasively against selecting major metropolises as cases but does not explain how representative Jaipur and Bhopal are of second-tier Indian cities. This makes it harder to judge the scope of these findings even within India, particularly because both the theory and evidence are based on the same two cities. Finally, the timing of the surveys, completed in two rounds in 2012 and 2015, is both a challenge and an opportunity. Both states held state elections in 2014. In Rajasthan, in which Jaipur is located, the BJP government lost to the Indian National Congress. In Madhya Pradesh, the state in which Bhopal is located, the BJP won its *third* consecutive term. The influence of state elections is dealt with by including a 2015-year dummy variable in the analysis, whose effect turns out to be statistically and substantively significant in most specifications. The author's arguments about effective brokerage by party workers rely on the ability of parties in and out of power to access officials on behalf of constituents. Are such access and influence comparable in states where the same party is winning consecutive elections and in another with persistent turnover in the recent past? An opportunity to examine this dynamic is alas wasted, because there is no further attempt to explain why the 2015 dummy variable was so significant in so many of the analyses.

Despite these quibbles, this book is a valuable addition to an important emerging literature on the politics of public goods provision in marginalized communities, political brokerage, clientelism, and Indian politics. The empirical results identify an intriguing phenomenon: political representation only yields benefits in the most politically secure slums, not the most competitive ones. This poses some interesting challenges to research on clientelism, welfare, and policy outcomes, because it shows that swing voters are not the ones gaining valuable benefits. The combination of ethnographic and survey methods nicely demonstrates the theoretical and empirical leverage provided by using such mixed-methods research designs. And, as effective research does, it raises new, interesting questions for future scholarship to tackle.

From Pews to Politics: Religious Sermons and Political Participation in Africa. By Gwyneth H. McClendon and Rachel Beatty Riedl. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

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From Pews to Politics exemplifies comparative politics scholarship at its best. Through a rare combination of conceptual acuity, methodological dexterity, and conscientious contextual grounding, the authors develop powerful insights into an old question: To what extent do religious *ideas* influence the content, mode, and degree of individuals' political engagement? In other words, do religious teachings exert an independent influence on individual behavior, as Weber suggested in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, or does the content of religious teaching reflect rather than drive individual or group-level affinities, as in Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*? This question is important, as Gwyneth H. McClendon and Rachel Beatty Riedl remind us, because we "live in a time when religion—in all of its forms, practices, experiences and content—is highly salient to most people in the world" (p. 231). Yet, this question is also vexing. Studying the *causal* effects of religious ideas is difficult because individuals may be predisposed to opt into particular religious traditions.

To address these challenges, McClendon and Riedl combine localized descriptive research with experiments, survey data analysis, focus groups, analysis of an original newspaper database, and brief case studies. They also wisely delimit the scope of their analysis to one of several component parts of the lived experience of religion, namely *exposure to religious content delivered through sermons*. This is distinct from other mechanisms through which religion may influence individual attitudes and behaviors, such as social networks, opportunities for skill-building, elite-level advocacy, or social service provision. Sermons, in particular, merit close attention because they convey "metaphysical instructions" to their listeners. By answering "deep questions about the causes of problems of this world, the possibilities for change, and the nature of human agency," sermons plausibly inform citizens' evaluations of their political context *and* their capacity to influence it (p. 5). Although sermons are not the only way in which religious content is conveyed, they are indeed central to the diffusion of religious ideas in Christianity, Islam, and Judaism.

This book offers a valuable template for research on the influence of sermons across diverse contexts but focuses empirically on variation in Christian religious content in sub-Saharan Africa. This allows the authors to advance descriptive understanding of Pentecostalism and other