Capturing Structural and Functional Diversity Through Institutional Analysis: The Mayor Position in City Charters

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Abstract

City charters affect the governance of municipal systems in complex ways. Current descriptions and typologies developed to study city charter structures simplify the diverse types and configurations of institutional rules underlying charter designs. This research note demonstrates a more detailed approach for studying the design of city charters using analytical methods based on the Institutional Analysis and Development Framework. This approach is illustrated with a pilot study of institutional rules in municipal charters that define the roles and duties of mayors. The findings reveal that city charters exhibit great institutional diversity, particularly within strong mayor cities. We conclude with a research agenda that could generate a more precise and rigorous understanding of the relationship between the different configurations of institutions of city charters and the politics, governance, and performance of municipalities.

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City charters are a prevalent method for introducing variation in the organization of municipal systems. Charters can determine the structural and functional elements of city government, including those among the citizenry that are qualified to govern, the scope and nature of authority that governing positions and bodies exercise, and the relationships that exist between authorized governing entities (Frederickson, Johnson, and Wood 2004; Maser 1998). Scholars have long understood the importance of government form for city management and performance (Carr 2015; Carr and Tavares 2014); however, decades of theoretical and empirical inquiry have yet to capture the diversity displayed across contemporary municipal governance arrangements (Eskridge 2014; Frederickson, Johnson, and Wood 2004; Nelson and Svara 2010).

An established tradition in the urban and public affairs literature has effectively classified city government arrangements according to structural dichotomies such as “reformed” and “unreformed” or “strong mayor” and “weak mayor.” For some research agendas, these parsimonious depictions of city government systems are appropriate. Many studies have successfully used dichotomous codes, for example, to connect reformed or unreformed cities to various performance measures (Bae and Feiock 2013; Feiock, Jeong, and Kim 2003; Krebs and Pelissero 2010; Kwon, Berry, and Feiock 2009; Lineberry and Fowler 1967; Lubell, Feiock, and Ramirez de la Cruz 2005, 2009).

Other local government scholars contend that simple dichotomies no longer accurately reflect contemporary municipal governments, arguing that more sophisticated city government archetypes are needed (e.g., DeSantis and Renner 2002; Hansell 1999; Nelson and Svara 2010). Among such efforts, Frederickson, Johnson, and Wood’s (Frederickson and Johnson 2001; Frederickson, Johnson, and Wood 2004; Frederickson, Logan, and Wood 2003) adapted cities framework is one of the most significant contributions (Carr and Karuppusamy 2010). Using over a dozen city charter provisions, the framework classifies municipal arrangements along a single dimension ranging from political to administrative.

Although the adaptive cities framework provides a more accurate categorization strategy than past efforts for characterizing different municipal arrangements, we argue that it nonetheless necessitates a coding scheme that underrepresents the structural and functional diversity found across municipal systems. As with dichotomies, categorization along the lines of the adaptive cities framework provides sufficient complexity to allow for analytic traction for certain research questions. For other research agendas, a finer depiction of
city institutional diversity is needed, especially to answer questions involving what, when, how, and why “institutions matter” in municipal governance.

Because they are considered “constitutional” level arrangements, charters may be viewed as one way individuals collectively agree to rules that produce aggregate outcomes in diverse environments. As Nelson and Svara (2010, 2012) noted, there is an important distinction between classifying cities based on simplified models and understanding variations both across and within forms of government. In addition to establishing official government positions and the relative autonomy exercised by these positions (highlighted by the adaptive cities framework), city charters establish communication channels between government officials, they assign a variety of functional duties to government officials, and they restrict or grant decision-making authority of particular positions in designated arenas and under specified contexts. These charter elements, procedural in nature and largely ignored by efforts to categorize municipal arrangements, impact how municipal governments operate, how they respond to uncertainty and take advantage of environmental opportunities, and how they secure cooperative (or conflicting) working intergovernmental relationships (Maser 1998). The purpose of this research note is to present an analytical method to capture, conceptualize, and compare this institutional diversity of city charter structures.

This research note begins with a discussion of the conceptual underpinnings of the method, grounded in the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework (E. Ostrom 1986, 2005). We then present a novel approach for coding charters. Next, in a simple empirical illustration of this approach, we examine rules and duties specified for the office of mayor in the municipal charters for a pilot study of 10 Florida cities. The empirical analysis is not intended to generalize to other city charters, but rather is an illustration of, or proof of concept, regarding the approach. Although we do not argue for the external validity of the small sample, the results illustrate how the methods can enrich studies of both policy and bureaucratic behavior by capturing the complexity of institutional variation. The research note ends with a summary of the insights from the empirical illustration and a discussion of future research opportunities.

City Charters and Institutional Analysis

City charters are municipal constitutions: They establish the basic organization and conduct of municipal governments (see Maser 1998; Oakerson and Parks 1989; V. Ostrom 1976, 1982, 1991). City charters are also institutional arrangements—defined as configurations of rules that require, permit, or prohibit actions by actors in contextual situations (E. Ostrom 2005). Instead of
analyzing these institutional arrangements as single units with simple typologies, institutional analysts are interested in describing and understanding the impact of institutional complexity and diversity (E. Ostrom 1986, 2005; Siddiki et al. 2011). Accounting for municipal government variation could yield leverage over explanations for the seriousness of political commitments to sustainability, education reform, responses to fiscal stress and blight, and so on. The multiple dimensions of institutional design hold the possibility of enhancing our knowledge of how cities govern and how citizens respond and reshape their incentives.

Explaining institutional diversity requires a strategy for standardizing rules that allows for simplification without discounting variation. Our approach, which involves manual coding, draws on the IAD framework’s institutional grammar (Crawford and Ostrom 1995, 2005) and rule types (E. Ostrom 1986, 2005) to isolate and categorize the rules comprising city charters. This approach offers three advantages. First, rules can be sorted and analyzed according to the government officials and entities to which they pertain. Second, generic categorization of rule types according to the typology allows for rule comparison both within and across charters. Third, rules can be inductively coded to capture their substantive operations within a municipal system.

Our approach builds upon prior efforts to conceptualize and measure municipal government arrangements. Similar to Frederickson, Johnson, and Wood’s (2004) framework, the approach identifies positions within a city government and the autonomy and authorities associated with those positions. In addition, the approach (1) captures further responsibilities and tasks assigned to positions, (2) draws attention to prescribed information requirements and official information communication channels, and (3) isolates the inducements and sanctions that can affect official behavior within a governing arrangement. Most importantly, instead of beginning with specific charter provisions selected a priori, the approach begins with rules as written into charters, from which provisions of interest can be selected and compared, or identified inductively.

The applicability of city charter institutional analysis is demonstrated through an analysis of the institutions targeting the mayor position in a sample of strong and weak mayor city charters. The approach is not restricted to the range of powers and constraints on the mayor. Rules setting boundaries, specifying choices, providing or restricting information, and determining payoffs apply to city council or commission members, city managers and employees, and citizens. Scholars have long recognized that such rules may be inversely related to each other within and between boundaries of governance (E. Ostrom, Parks, and Whitaker 1974).
In this illustration, we focus on the mayor because the position has historically drawn the most scholarly inquiry in urban public policy and politics. Mayors have been the focal point of reform, from curbing the influence of machine politics and graft to urban cities’ return to stronger mayoral powers in the 1970s after stints with more professionalized city managers. The authority and role of the mayor as defined in a city charter is central to understanding local governing systems. The roles of the modern mayors are the product of developments in local government theory and practice over the last hundred years, as reflected in changing institutional structure of charters over time (Adrian 1987; Griffith 1974; Schiesl 1977). Institutions derived from the establishment of city charters have been linked to the diverse policy and management roles that mayors play in local government (Carr 2015; Choi, Feiock, and Bae 2013; Clingermayer and Feiock 1991). Focusing a more precise magnification of the specific institutions defining strong and weak mayors informs city charter structures and the roles of municipal mayors.\footnote{We recognize that quantifying the dimensions of rules for this single office will ultimately require coding structural variation for other players within the municipal system. The inferential value of this coding strategy can only be fully realized once larger-N samples of cities are collected and coded. The urban studies literature is rife with less-than-ideal proxy variables standing in for the true concepts scholars endeavor to explore. Once such data are collected, theories accounting for institutional influences on a range of urban phenomena—from population sorting and mobility, and racial inequality—can be put to more scientifically rigorous testing. Although the approach is illustrative and exploratory, we structure the analysis and results to illustrate the diversity of rules and duties assigned to mayors and to identify differences among mayors who are directly elected and those chosen from the council.}

**Data and Method**

**Case Selection**

City selection followed a stratified random sample strategy. To control for state-level factors, city selection was limited to Florida. To ensure diversity in the role of the mayor, Florida cities with populations between 5,000 and 500,000 were stratified according to information reported in the Florida League of Cities Database (http://www.floridaleagueofcities.com/findAPeerCity.aspx). The database identifies cities with council-strong mayor structures, with directly elected mayors, and cities with council-weak mayor structures, with mayors selected from the members of the council.
Using these two types of city classification, we randomly selected five cities within each stratum for a total of 10 city charters in Florida. The resulting sample of strong mayor case selections included West Palm Beach, Apopka, Sweetwater, Hialeah Gardens, and Tampa. Weak mayor city case selections included Valparaiso, Okeechobee, Mascotte, Crestview, and Starke.

**Coding Mayor Authority and Duty in City Charters**

The analytical approach relies on both deductive and inductive coding elements. The deductive elements employed an institutional analysis of policy designs (Basurto et al. 2010; Siddiki, Basurto, and Weible 2012; Siddiki et al. 2011), which draws on the concepts and methods from the IAD framework (E. Ostrom 2005). The inductive element identified and categorized the substantive functional duties of mayors specified by charter statements. The approach is presented in two steps, with more detailed coding guidelines provided in the appendix.

**Step 1: Coding mayoral rules.** The first step begins with identifying institutional statements within the city charter pertaining to the mayor. First, mayor references were found through text search. Next, individual mayor institutional statements were isolated, to serve as the primary units for subdividing, coding, and analyzing the charters (Basurto et al. 2010; Crawford and Ostrom 1995; Siddiki et al. 2012; Siddiki et al. 2011).

Institutional statements are identified and isolated according to one of two syntactic forms: regulatory or constitutive. First, it was determined which syntax a given statement followed, and then each statement was broken down according to the appropriate syntactic components. Regulatory statements are composed of up to five components: (1) an “attribute,” the entity that is responsible for taking action (an individual or an organization); (2) a “deontic,” a statement’s prescriptive force in the form of “must,” “may,” or “must not”; (3) an “aim,” the action word and usually the statement verb; (4) a “condition,” the spatial, temporal, and procedural circumstances under which the rule applies; and (5) an “or else,” sanctions or inducements that create incentives for compliance with the statement. Constitutive statements follow a “There shall be X” or “X is Y [under C conditions]” syntax. Examples of both syntactic forms are shown in Tables 1 and 2 (further instructions are provided in the appendix).

Following identification of mayor institutional statements, each statement was coded according to general functional purpose categories informed by the rule typology in the IAD (E. Ostrom 2005). A central indicator for coding rule types is that action referred to in an institutional statement, typically
Table 1. Examples of Regulatory Statement Syntactic Components.

| Attribute: The animate actor charged with performing an action | “The Mayor shall appoint all city department heads.” |
| Deontic: The prescriptive operator that describes whether the action is required, allowed, or forbidden | “The Mayor shall conduct investigations of any suspected misuse of city funds.” |
| aIm: Describes the action of the statement | “The Mayor shall approve all budget transfers before they are made.” |
| Condition: Specifies the spatial, temporal, and procedural circumstances under which the action is executed | “The Mayor may veto appointments made by the Council within 30 days of said appointment.” |
| Or else: The punitive sanction resulting from noncompliance with the institution | “The Mayor and City Council shall conduct an audit of any suspected misappropriations or face impeachment.” |

Note. Underlined words are the emphasized sentence elements.

Table 2. Examples of Constitutive Statement Syntax.

| There is X. | “There shall be a Mayor.” |
| X is Y. | “The Mayor shall be the Chief Executive Officer of the city.” |
| X is Y under [specified conditions]. | “The President of the Commission shall become the acting Mayor [during absences of the Mayor].” |

through the statement aim. The general classification of the rule typology includes the following coding procedures (further instructions are provided in the appendix):

1. Rules that establish positions that the mayor holds

City charters specify the positions to be held in city governments, to assign duties and authorities to those positions. Institutional statements specify whether an individual holding one position, by definition, simultaneously holds another position. For example, an individual holding the mayor position simultaneously holds the position of “chief executive officer” if the charter has the position rule “The mayor of the city shall be the chief executive officer.” Therefore, institutional statements in the city charter specifying
additional positions for individuals occupying the mayor position were coded as “position rules.”

2. Rules that structure information transmission to or from the mayor

Many institutional statements specify the actions and choices that positions are required to make, may make, or are prohibited from making. Some institutional statements specify channels of communication, for example, “The mayor must report annually to the council regarding the financial status of the city.” Such statements that stipulate channels of communication, and require, allow, or prohibit the transmission of information, were coded as “information rules.” As discussed below, these information rules can be further coded according to the different substantive functions of the mayor.

3. Rules that target choices of the mayor

Other institutional statements target the actions or choices of mayors specific to their different positions. These institutional statements were coded as “choice rules.” As with information rules, choice rules also can be coded according to functional duties of the mayor.

4. Incentive statements, or payoffs, directed toward the mayor position

Some institutional statements relate to incentives in the form of inducements and sanctions that assign benefits and costs to the mayor. Benefits are generally, though not exclusively monetary in nature, and largely consist of rules indicating the mayor receives a salary for service. Cost statements are either institutions that contain the “or else” syntactic component found in regulatory statements, or indicate other sanctions directed at the mayor such as impeachment. Inducement and sanctioning statements were coded as “payoff rules.”

Step 2: Coding mayoral duties. The second coding step inductively determined the functional duties of the mayor assigned in city charters. These duties can be found in the previously identified choice and information rules. Mayoral duties can be considered responsibilities assigned to the mayor position but are also associated with increased authority, as the more duties the mayor has, the greater the mayor’s opportunities to influence the workings of the city government. Examples of these duties include appointing department heads, preparing budgets, and conducting investigations.
To develop a mayoral duty code list inductively, first we compiled the information and choice rules previously identified from across all charters and then combined them into a single list. Second, as some statements are the same across charters, we removed duplicate or repetitive charter statements from the list. Third, we removed statements that were not relevant to mayor duties or in which mayor duty is minimal. An example of such a statement is a rule specifying the specific oath of office the mayor is to take upon election to office. The result was 38 codes representing the substantive functional duties of the mayors across the 10 selected charters. This third step of coding was completed by coding whether the charters contained institutional statements relative to each of the 38 substantive functional duties.

### Results

Table 3 summarizes the number of mayoral institutional statements and the total number of pages in the respective charters. The results demonstrate substantial differences. West Palm Beach had the most institutional statements with 81 and Tampa had 80, while Starke had just 9. Table 3 also compares cities by population size. Population size is related to the number of mayor statements, but it is not determinative, as some of the smaller cities have substantial numbers of mayoral charter statements.

Table 4 summarizes the number and proportions of statements for position, information, choice, and payoff rules according to the total number of
institutional statements that were coded in the city charters. Choice rules were further subcoded into rules associated with making appointments, budget authority, influence on a council/commission, veto and enforcement authority, and other miscellaneous duties/authorities.

As an example of how the coding can be applied, we assessed whether the institutional arrangements of strong mayor cities with directly elected mayors are different from cities when the mayor is selected from the commission. We offer visualizations of coded statements according to mayor positions, duties, and communication flows in Figures 1 and 2. In the figures, the weak mayor cities are listed on the top left and the strong mayor cities are listed on the bottom left. Rather than focus on the individual linkages between city and mayor duties, positions, or communication flows, the figures are meant to indicate the diversity of linkages across this small sample of charters and the overlap between the dichotomous characterization of “strong” and “weak” mayor cities, as evidenced by the overlap found in the middle of each figure.

Figure 1 shows the links from the cities to choice rules including those involving appointments, budgets, veto and enforcement powers, relationship with the city council/commission, and the other category. Figure 2 shows the links for the information and position rules.

Figure 1 illustrates a tremendous range of duties/authorities assigned to municipal mayors. This exploratory analysis reveals that strong and weak mayor cities vary considerably in the functions assigned to the mayor in terms of authority to enforce laws and ordinances, vote on the commission/council at all times, and other ways. Nevertheless, there is substantial overlap, suggesting a complex configuration of assignments within charters.

### Table 4. Institutional Diversity of Cities by Functional Categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Statements</th>
<th>Percentage of Statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Position rules</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payoff rules</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice rules: Role on council/commission</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice rules: Appointments</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice rules: Budgets</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice rules: Veto and enforcement</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice rules: Other</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information rules</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Figure 1. Comparing and contrasting duties from choice rules for strong and weak mayor city charters.

Note. Letters and numbers in parentheses indicate the number of cities associated with a particular duty; for example, (W0, S1) indicate zero weak mayor cities, and one strong mayor city is associated with a given duty.
Figure 2. Comparing and contrasting information and position rules.
Note. Letters and numbers in parentheses indicate the number of cities associated with a particular duty; for example, (W0, S1) indicate zero weak mayor cities, and one strong mayor city is associated with a given duty.
Figure 2 compares city charters by their information requirements. Most city charters have rules requiring mayors to make reports to the councils. Some charters permit mayors to report violations or neglect of duty to the council, and one charter calls for the mayor to issue an election proclamation.

Position rules assigned to the mayor are also displayed in Figure 2. Position rules often assigned to mayors include ceremonial head, member of the council/commission, and chief executive officer. There do not appear to be any unique positions assigned to mayors who are selected from the council. Strong mayors are associated with several unique positions including administrative head and member of an audit committee. Overall, Figure 2 shows the limitations of the weak/strong mayor classification and suggests governance structure is best characterized as having overlapping bundles of institutions.

**Conclusion**

This research note explores the structure of municipal governance via analysis of parts of city charters that emphasize the mayors, with the intent of informing discussions of how to best categorize and describe city charter designs. Coding institutional statements in a sample of city charters that relate to the mayor position suggests that classifications, such as strong and weak mayors, not only have some validity but also miss components of the overall institutional configurations that define the mayor position. We report great diversity in institutional structures even within a small sample, and especially across strong mayor cities.

We are constrained in our ability to draw inferences from these data because we randomly sampled a small number of cities in one state. However, our goal was not to present rigorous analysis of a large, representative sample of city charters. Instead, we offer a different approach to examining city charters. This approach understanding and coding local government structure introduces more complexity, and it also has several advantages over conventional schemes. First, it can capture a much broader scope of institutional rules. Even in the example here that was limited to the mayor, complex configurations of institutions proved salient.

Second, it will allow scholars to better capture multiple dimensions underlying municipal structure. Most of the existing work assumes a single one-dimensional scale (Frederickson, Johnson, and Wood 2004) and relies on dichotomies or additive indices. In contrast, the institutional analysis of city charters can contribute to efforts aimed at describing the multiple dimensions of city charters as pointed out by Teodoro (2013) who uncovered at least three somewhat independent dimensions related to executive authority,
legislative representation systems, and provision for direct democracy (Lubell et al. 2005; Maser 1998; Teodoro 2013).

Third, this approach provides stronger links to political science, and institutional analysis more generally, because it builds from the IAD framework concepts and methods and E. Ostrom's (2005) institutional grammar. The use of the IAD framework, for example, offers a language and methodology not previously applied to the study of city charters. Such an application provides a different lens on city charters and, hence, the potential for different insights that we hope will generate new and innovative research efforts.

Perhaps the greatest potential contribution is to provide a set of measures to replace the simplistic dichotomous or one-dimensional measures of structure in studies that investigate the policy consequences of municipal institutions. Constructing such measures will require collecting information on a broad set of rules for a large number of charters. Large-N analysis of institutional arrangements of city charters is possible because the coding strategy allows for comparable units of analysis between forms of city government. The approach is also portable to other states where the classification of city government form may not vary but institutional structures do. Although such efforts will be extremely resource intensive, they promise to provide stronger and more robust answers to big institutional questions that the field has grappled with for decades. In addition, this approach opens up a broad innovative agenda. We highlight some of the possibilities below.

**Examining Granting and Constraining Authority**

An avenue for future research includes the possibility of in-depth coding regarding whether rules grant or constrain authority to the mayor or other positions within municipal governments. Figures 1 and 2 largely point to authorities and duties granted to the mayor, but many granting authorities are accompanied by constraining restrictions. For example, a mayor may be granted authority to appoint department directors, but such appointments maybe constrained by requiring the approval of the city council or commission. Understanding how institutions grant and constrain authority will require definitional concept refinement and the development of additional coding procedures.

**Examining Differences Across Forms of Government**

Questions of local government institutions and structure have been central to the study of urban politics and administration. Existing work has examined institutional differences among cities based on dichotomies or single-dimensional
classifications such as the “adapted cities” construct (Frederickson and Johnson 2001; Frederickson, Johnson, and Wood 2004). As argued in this research note, a finer depiction of the institutional diversity of city charters can enhance our understanding the role of mayors within council-manager versus mayor-council forms of government and the diverse configurations of institutions that shape city government more generally. Future efforts can expand such analysis beyond the role of the mayor to include other influential municipal actors such as council members and city managers.

**Linking Institutional Arrangements to City Performance**

A potential application of this city charter coding is determining whether certain institutional arrangements perform better—perhaps the most important next step. Are the dichotomous measures sufficient, or is a more detailed description of the institutional arrangements defining a city charter necessary to capture the essence of city government structure? And what institutional arrangements influence that performance?

**Examining City Charter Structures over Time**

City charters change over time, and yet descriptions of this change rely upon basic classifications rather than detailed accounts of how the institutions change. Our approach provides a foundation for understanding the evolution of city charters over time.

**Understanding the Politics of City Charter Designs**

City charters are the translations of the interests and values of their designers. An ambitious project would seek to understand the sources of city charter institutional statements to understand who, why, and how such statements became part of the city charters. Did statements diffuse from existing city charters? Were interest groups more influential than typical citizens?

**Analyzing City Charters to Assess the Quality of Citizen Participation**

An advancement of this descriptive effort would be to code city charter institutional statements related to citizen participation. The management literature on citizen participation considers whether public input into decision making is “authentic” or symbolic (King, Feltey, and Susel 1998; Yang and
Pandey 2011). How can citizens have appropriate avenues to provide meaningful input into decision making? Are those avenues inverse to the concentration of decision making in the hands of public officials? Studying the relationship between the constitutional statements as “relational contracts” with citizens—and how such arrangements coexist with centralization of authority and decision making with mayors—could provide a richer method for answering these questions.

A next step is to code statements pertaining to the powers of the mayor and citizens for a larger sample of strong and weak mayor cities and identify whether, for example, choice rules on the part of mayors are correlated with aggregation rules on the part of citizens. Aggregation rules are checks on the power of formal positions in government. It is possible that the greater the choice rules and discretion vested in governmental positions such as the mayor, the greater the aggregation rules that will evolve over time to provide a check on that power. Of course, a countervailing theoretical assumption might be that more aggregation rules in city charters will be negatively correlated with formal methods for citizens to access and influence governmental actions. Either way, this level of institutional analysis has not been empirically explored at the level of detail envisioned by this research agenda.

More generally, the institutional analysis of charter rules underscores the value of studying city charters as compilations of institutions, as institutions combine to structure the form of the municipal government. A research agenda that focuses on city charter institutions offers more precise language rooted in reliable procedures for specifying positions, choice and authority, channels of communication, and various inducements and sanctions. The approach can inform comparisons of city charters toward more systematic understandings and explanations of politics and performance. The goal of such an effort is a more rigorous understanding of how institutions matter in city governance.

Appendix

Coding Procedures

This appendix describes the method for identifying and coding charter statements. The description of these procedures is critical for overcoming some of the previous challenges in the literature for uncovering mayor authority and responsibility in city charters; yet, much of the details of the procedures are not provided in given space constraints. The coding procedure is based on the concepts and methods in IAD framework (Crawford and Ostrom 1995, 2005) and represents an expansion of the institutional grammar tool by including constitutive statements (Basurto et al. 2010; Siddiki et al. 2011). Coding the
city charters followed a four-phase procedure that is summarized briefly within the first step in the main text.

1. **Identify mayor mentions in the charter.** Copy and paste the entire city charter into a Microsoft Word (or similar software) and use the search function to identify all explicit mentions of the mayor. Each sentence that mentions the mayor is a coding starting point. Survey the next five statements following explicit mention of the mayor, to determine if any of them have statements that implicitly refer to the mayor (e.g., by using “he/she”).

2. **Code each statement with explicit or implicit mention of the mayor according to the appropriate syntax, which** comes in one of two forms: regulatory or constitutive. This phase is essential for identifying rule type in the next phase.
   i. Regulatory statements will contain all or most of the following components and should be coded according to the regulatory ADICO syntax: Attribute, Deontic, Aim, Condition, and Or else. Definitions and examples can be found in Table 1. Generally, regulatory statements will take one of three syntactic forms: ADICO, ADIC, or AIC. Any sentence-based statement that contains two aims should be divided into the appropriate number of statements, relative to the other syntactic components. For example, the statement “The Mayor shall appoint department heads and the Council shall approve them” can be broken into two statements: “The Mayor shall appoint department heads” and “The Council shall approve department heads appointed by the Mayor.”
   ii. Constitutive statements define or establish the basic “rules of the game” (D’Andrade 1984; Searle 1969) such as positions and the scope of authority assigned to those positions. Constitutive statements will generally, but not always, contain an attribute, a description or label for the attribute (or an inanimate object), and possibly will have conditions under which the description or label applies. Examples can be found in Table 2. Constitutive statements will take one of three syntactic forms: “There shall be X,” “X is Y,” and “X is Y under [specified conditions].”

3. **Code all possible mayor statements as one of four rule types—in** form, choice, payoff, or position.
   i. **Information rules** are generally characterized by aim verbs that fall into the generic aim verb categories “send” or “receive.” These statements regulate the transmission of information either to or from the mayor.
ii. *Choice rules* are generally characterized by action aim verbs. These statements regulate specific actions and decisions by the mayor.

iii. *Payoff rules* are generally characterized by aim verbs “pay” and “receive.” These statements regulate the payment or assignment of benefits to the mayor, and sanctioning mayor misbehaviors. An additional indicator of these statements is the presence of the “or else” syntactic component.

iv. *Position rules* generally take one of the constitutive syntactic forms and assign additional positions to the mayor.

4. *Multiple coders for intercoder reliability.* Multiple coders should code shared documents to ensure that the data collected through the coding process are reliable. Coding methods should be revised based on the coding experiences of the coders until an agreed upon percentage of coding similarity is reached.

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**Notes**

1. In addition to rules, institutions can include norms and strategies (Crawford and Ostrom 1995). For the purposes of this research note, we focus on “rules” rather than norms and strategies. We also note that the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) recognizes that rules can be “in-use,” which are those rules that people consistently and collectively observe and enforce; they can also be “in-form,” which are the written rules that may or may not be reflected by “in-use” rules. As our focus is on city charters, we are obviously interested in the “in-form” rules.

2. As much of the cited scholarly work indicates, a mayor’s position in municipal governance can vary as a product of the form of government in question.
(e.g.: mayor-council, council-manager). The intent put forth in this analysis is to provide a method for understanding variation in municipal systems both across and within government forms, to present both differences and similarities in city charters, regardless of government form.

3. In addition to identifying explicit references to the mayor, the five sentences following explicit mention of the mayor were assessed for implicit reference to the mayor. For example, some statements following explicit mention of the mayor use the pronouns “he” and “she” to reference the mayor. Such statements were included as mayor’s statements.

4. Our search focused only on the statements in the charters that explicitly mentioned the mayor. However, mayors fill multiple positions such as the chief executive officer. This study did not examine the rule statements assigned to these other positions.

References


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