

Cities in History
Evidence, Quasi-Experiments, Lessons

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Health Impact of Sewage System & Clean Water Evidence from Late 1800s Boston, USA



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Very interesting setting

- ▶ Terrible *ex ante* health outcomes – life and death
- ▶ Staggered roll-out helps untangle cause and effect

Key finding

- ▶ Interaction between sewage system and clean water

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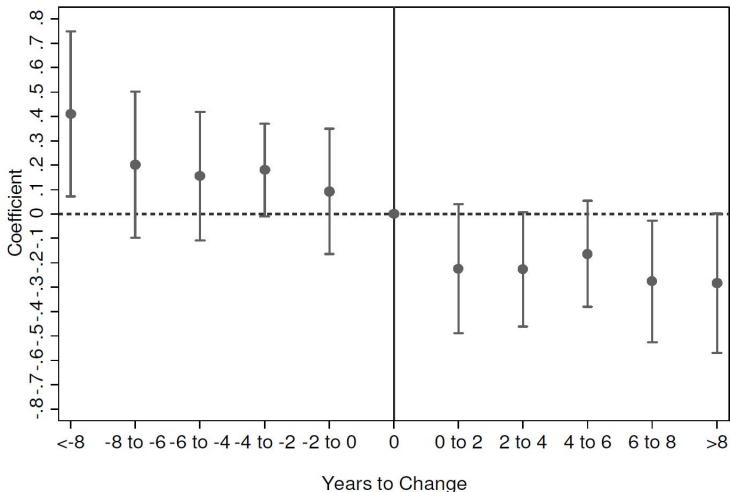
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Two big picture sets of questions

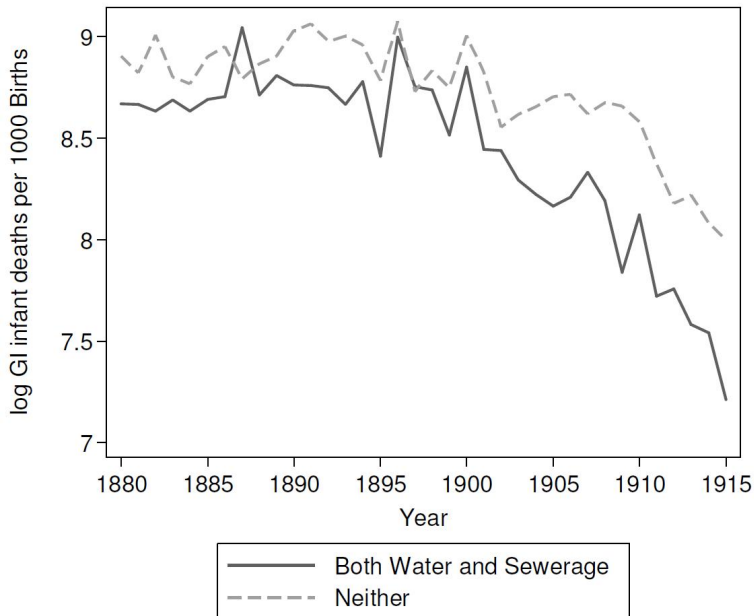
- ▶ How should we interpret the evidence? What would have happened without these innovations?
- ▶ How did this happen? The politics of public goods?

Impact of Sewage System & Clean Water Before and After Actually Introduced



Is there a trend before? (Maybe) Do we see that the decline is driven by water borne disease? (Yes) Do we know when facilities go online in year 0?

A Potentially More Complicated Comparison?



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The big question

- ▶ How do municipalities develop large fixed cost public goods infrastructure?
- ▶ How does sewage story intersect with water supply story? Same preferences? Same groups? What cost/incidence? What was the political economy? *How did this happen?*

The Bombing of London in World War II

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London in 1943 – presentation of the County of London Plan

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Laboratory to study cities, shocks, neighborhoods

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- ▶ 1+ million made homeless, post-war planning response

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Several possible motivations

- ▶ Neighbourhood effects in urban economics
- ▶ Neighbourhoods in sociology – e.g. ‘Chicago School’
- ▶ Social history literature on London communities – spirit of Jane Jacobs crossed with attention to British working class
- ▶ Major experiments in planning and social housing

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The research

- ▶ Operationalize: model and cause-and-effect story
- ▶ Key outcome: housing prices 1995-2015
- ▶ **Key finding**: *very* localized effects of bombing – real estate prices today low within 200 meters of bomb hit

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Where does the “bombing effect” live?

- ▶ More bombs hit East London: Is effect small because it is heavily effect for Whitechapel?
- ▶ Local variation in private sector vs. council rebuild?
Could you sample types of council design?
- ▶ If really homogeneous local effect \Rightarrow what does this say about planning, architecture, preferences?
- ▶ Aside: Would I be wrong to think β_{2050} might be positive?
(What is projection for real estate along Berlin wall route?)

The Bombing of London in World War II

What variation and outcomes can we study?

- ▶ Classic social science neighborhood theories on community, crime, public space
 - ▶ The bombing data are amazing – other evidence to understand how we get to prices in markets today?
 - ▶ Example: Old Bailey, Central Criminal Court pre and post? Remarkable evidence from trials...
- ▶ Bombing and/or planning?
 - ▶ Policy: large scale attempts to shift supply of quality-adjusted land to specific types of workers
 - ▶ Changes in share/nature/location of “social housing” – does this matter?
 - ▶ How are shocks transmitted through political process behind urban renewal?

Setting and data are amazing. Given the scale of public sector involvement, how planning worked or failed is first order.