
The Waterloo Myth? Governance in the Clouds

Jen Nelles and David A Wolfe

Program on Globalization and Regional Innovation Systems
Centre for International Studies, University of Toronto

Presented to the 11th Annual Meeting of the
Innovation Systems Research Network
Halifax, Nova Scotia
May 1, 2009



Strategic Planning in City Regions

- Regional response to globalization is emergence of strategic management policy
 - Not for firms, but for regions
 - Development and enhancement of factors of production that cannot be transferred from one city/region to another at low cost
- Strategic planning exercises draw upon civic capital created by collaborative institutions
 - Generate trust by engaging key social partners in 'talk' – builds set of shared understandings and expectations



Competitive or Collaborative?

- Role and nature of local civic associations
 - How constituted?
 - How inclusive?
- Relations with formal government bodies or agencies
 - Do associational activities complement government initiatives?
- Inter-organizational dynamics
 - Competitive or collaborative?
 - Degree of involvement of key actors
- How effective are the results of strategic planning efforts
 - Have they successfully mobilized the local community?
 - Do concrete initiatives results from the planning activities?
 - Impact?



A Waterloo Way?

"Kitchener-Waterloo operates on a **consensus** that growth need not run roughshod over environmental or community goals and that successful business people are not pariahs, but can be heroes. The community is also **action-oriented** -- it actually does things, rather than engage in endless debates about change."

- 'Manufacturing Change: Towards a Smarter Economy' *Globe and Mail: ROB*, 25/04/06

"[The founding of the new media convergence centre] is another example of **community barn-building**"

- Tom Jenkins, quoted in 'Meet our post-industrial Waterloo', *Toronto Star*, 21/03/09

"It's a tale of a region [...] we look for opportunities and strive ahead. We have a **culture of collaboration.**"

- Mayor Brenda Halloran, City of Waterloo – on *The Agenda with Steve Paikin*, 30/03/09

"There's no doubt in my mind that none of this would have been possible without an **extraordinary level of collaboration and co-operation** between ourselves, our municipal partners and the community"

- David Johnston, President of UW, quoted in 'Recipe for Success', *Windsor Star*, 29/03/09



Waterloo Regional Initiatives

- Local Civic Associations build 'civic' capital
 - Canada's Technology Triangle (1987)
 - Communitech Technology Association(1997)
 - The Prosperity Council (2003)
 - Highly networked and inclusive set of community-based organizations
- University of Waterloo key institutional player
 - University of Waterloo Research and Technology Park
 - Drawing on Federal and Provincial resources
 - Designed to house high tech industries in the region and promote partnership between university and local industry
- Local business leaders fund major research institutes
 - Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics
 - Centre for International Governance Innovation



Recent Cases of Collaboration

- Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network (WRIEN) – 2006
- Manufacturing Innovation Network (MIN) – 2007
- The Corridor for Advancing Canadian Digital Media (CACDM) - 2009



Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network (WRIEN) 2006



Goals: To better attract immigrant talent and ensure that immigrants are much more visible and successful within recruitment and selection processes undertaken by employers in Waterloo Region.

"The creation of WRIEN is a local strategy to help ensure that the skills of immigrants are more optimally used to the benefit of immigrants and their families, our economy and the community as a whole." WRIEN website, April 2009

Scope: Region (KWC + townships)

Stakeholders: Region, KW Community Foundation, Greater KW Chamber of Commerce, Centre for Community-Based Research, Cambridge Chamber of Commerce, Communitech, CTT Inc., KW United Way, United Way of Cambridge and North Dumfries, Foundations (Trillium, Bridgeway, Lyle S Hallman), RIM, McDonald-Green (HR consulting). Represented on steering committee: Conestoga College, firms, KW YMCA, Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre, The Working Centre, Immigrant leadership, Social Planning Council of Cambridge and North Dumfries. Employment initiative work group includes: City of Kitchener, Waterloo Wellington Training and Adjustment Board, Waterloo Region Small Business Centre, International Credential Assessment Service of Canada, Waterloo Region District School Board.



Manufacturing Innovation Network (MIN) 2009



Goals: To be a central place for local manufacturers in the Waterloo region to (1) Build Awareness; (2) Network; and (3) Trade.

"MIN is intended to help manufacturers become more innovative by building awareness and innovation throughout the Waterloo Region and beyond. This can only be accomplished by improving the connections between people, information and expertise."

- MIN website, April 2009

Scope: Region (KWC + townships)

Stakeholders: Cities, Excellence in Manufacturing Consortium (EMC), University of Waterloo, Contestoga College, CTT Inc., Communitech, Greater KW Chamber of Commerce, Cambridge Chamber of Commerce, Firms



The Corridor for Advancing Canadian Digital Media (CACDM) 2009

Goals: To provide a common space for the corporate and academic communities to come together around digital media

"The Digital Media Convergence Centre (Kitchener) will bring together the Waterloo Region's expertise in digital media and mobile technology. It will generate new digital media products and applications and businesses [...] The University of Waterloo's Stratford Institute is a forward-looking research, education and convergence centre that will drive the next generation of digital media applications and content models. The institute will draw leading researchers, businesses and entrepreneurs to create, examine and commercialize opportunities in the digital media field in a global economy. It will quickly become a centerpiece for collaboration, learning and sharing through conferences and workshops."

- Networks of Centres of Excellence website
April 2009

Scope: Region + Stratford =====> Southwestern Ontario

Stakeholders: University of Waterloo, Conestoga College, Firms*, Communitech, Stratford, Kitchener, Ontario, CTT Inc, C3 Network, M@rs, OCRI.



Collaborative Clouds: The Waterloo Way?

- There is relatively strong evidence of cross-sectoral collaborative governance – that has intensified over time.
- Governance by “clouds” rather than in silos
- Collaboration and competition co-exist...the region isn't perfect!

Thinking critically:

- What are the implications of the central core of consistently engaged actors? (CTT Inc, Communitech, the Chambers, the Prosperity Council)
- Despite cross-sectoral activity, is there still a bias towards economic development?
- Are strong interpersonal networks closed?
- How will “regional expansionism” affect or change governance focus?

