
Civic Capital and Governance in the Waterloo Region

Jen Nelles

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

Presented to the ONRIS Annual meeting
November 15, 2007

Program on Globalization and Regional Innovation Systems



The Waterloo Region



Three Periods of Civic Capital Intensification in the Waterloo Region

- Canada's Technology Triangle (1987)
- Communitech (1997)
- The Prosperity Council (2003)

New Initiatives

- Citizens for Better Governance (CBG)
- Waterloo Region Tourism Marketing Alliance
- Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network (WRIEN)

Competing Conceptions of Social Capital

- **Coleman (1988):** Social capital consists of “a variety of entities that all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors – whether persons or corporate actors – within the structure” (98).
- **Putnam (2000):** Social capital refers to “connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (19).
- **Ostrom and Ahn (2001):** define social capital as “an attribute of individuals and of their relationships that enhance their ability to solve collective-action problems” (17).
- **Woolcock (2001):** Social capital is the norms and networks that facilitate collective action.
- **Glaeser (2001):** “a set of social attributes possessed by an individual – including charisma, contacts and linguistic skill – that increase the returns to that individual in his or her dealings with others”

The Problem with the Concept of Social Capital

“Social capital in the form of trust, it is argued, is created as a by-product of other collective endeavours such as participation in civic associations, but these activities are themselves public goods, and are also identified as social capital, leaving us with the problematic conceptual task of distinguishing between the sources of social capital [and] the benefits derived from them” (Woolcock, 1998)

Civic Capital

Civic capital consists interpersonal networks and solidarity within a community based on a shared identity, expectations or goals and *tied to a specific region or locality*. It is comprised of formal or informal networks between individual community members, between communities, or between community and the state. Civic capital acknowledges the critical role of local leaders in intensifying and formalizing collaborative networks within and between communities.