
Civic Engagement and Civic Governance in Toronto's Future

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PROGRIS

Case Study of Toronto

- Part of a larger examination of the social dynamics of economic performance in Canadian city-regions
- Is Toronto developing governance mechanisms to shape its economic future ?
 - Does Toronto exhibit features of a resilient region?

Institutional Underpinnings of Resilience

- Resilience is the result of more than just market forces – involves interaction of three sectors
 - Private (firms)
 - Public (governments)
 - Civic (networks and associations – governance)
- Local governments and governance are central
 - Resilient city-regions have markets & local institutional structures that adapt to changing environmental conditions continuously
 - Including changes in the policy environment introduced by senior levels of government (WTO)

Civic Engagement and New Forms of Governance

- Beyond government to governance
 - Recognize that outcomes depend on interaction among a broad range of social actors
 - Power is dispersed among a wider range of actors
 - Includes market forces, state institutions and civic associations
- Signifies a broadening and extension of the meaning of 'government'
 - Boundaries are blurring between public and private actors and across different levels of government

Strategic Planning in City-Regions

- Drivers of economic change demand response from city-regions
 - Strategic planning for cities and regions
 - Enhance factors of production that cannot be transferred from one city to another at low cost
- Draws upon 'civic capital' created by collaborative institutions
 - Interpersonal networks & solidarity within a community based on a shared identity, expectations or goals and *tied to a specific region or locality*
 - Engage local partners in 'talk' to create set of shared understandings & expectations

Dimensions of Civic Governance

- Scale
 - What are the real geographic boundaries of the city-region?
 - How closely do they coincide with administrative boundaries?
 - How well are fiscal resources and administrative responsibilities aligned?
- Scope
 - Refers to the number, type and range of issues that find their way on to urban governance agendas

Dimensions of Civic Governance II

- Who exercises power in the city-region?
 - How fragmented or diffused is the exercise of power?
 - To what extent is it dominated by narrow groups?
 - Traditional 'growth machine'
- City-region 'development coalitions' shaped by three factors:
 - Culture – strong civic engagement or laissez-faire?
 - Institutions – jurisdictional turf wars or boundary spanning bridge builders?
 - Leadership – conventional political leaders or dynamic civic entrepreneurs?

Civic Governance: Competitive or Collaborative?

- Role and nature of local civic associations
 - How integrated?
 - How inclusive?
- Relations with formal government bodies or agencies
 - Complementary or competitive?
 - Do associational activities support or compete with government initiatives?
- Effectiveness of strategic planning efforts
 - Do they successfully mobilize key local players?
 - Do planning activities lead to concrete initiatives?

Key Toronto Region Economic Challenges

- Regional competitiveness:
 - Loss of traditional manufacturing base
 - Slow recovery from recession – rising unemployment
 - Mismatch between jobs and labour demand
 - Sprawl/transportation congestion (OECD report)
 - Strong research base – weak commercialization record
- Fiscal imbalance between needs and resources
- Infrastructure demands and utilization

Different Perspectives on Toronto

- The Neo-liberal City
 - Amalgamation as neo-liberal project to draw investment
- Focus on 'boosterism' and prestigious events
 - To promote Toronto as investment platform
 - Olympic Bids and Pan Am Games
 - G20 Meetings
 - Large-scale cultural projects – ROM, AGO, Ballet/Opera
- Bottom-up civic governance via civic engagement
 - Decade of collaborative economic, social, environmental, cultural initiatives, but
 - Fragmented government gaps at regional scale and lack of multi-level governance across three scales

Scale: Weak Regional Ties in GTA

- Amalgamation in 1998 covered only a small portion of the regional economy
 - No regional brand – TO, GTA, GTA+H, GGH
 - Difficult to craft a compelling story like Waterloo
- Fragmented political structure lacks institutional supports needed to coordinate economic development strategies:
 - Failure of Greater Toronto Services Board
 - Joint efforts to market the region (GTMA) are weak - OITC, TRRA, Invest Toronto
 - Efforts at regional transit (Metrolinx) face major collaborative challenges
 - GTA Regional Summit – limited follow-up

Scope: Policy Silos or Boundary-Spanning Civic Governance?

- Policy networks across the region are fragmented and be siloed
- Variable networks within the City of Toronto
 - More integrated in cultural and social spheres
- Evidence of 'bottom-up', socially inclusive collaborative *civic* governance
 - Civic Action Alliance - community connector or 'hub' that provides forum for community leaders to develop actionable projects
 - Strong civic leadership – especially on income security and cultural issues

Toronto CivicAction Alliance

- Meta-governance through CivicAction Alliance:
 - Not-for-profit non partisan group founded in 2002 to address Toronto region's economic and social future
- Private and community sector driven collaboration (more than 50 civic leaders)
 - Emerged from Mayor's summit on the future of the city
 - *Enough Talk: An Action Plan for the Toronto Region* (2003)
- Role of CivicAction Alliance
 - "convenes leaders of all different sectors to identify key areas that need attention and then identifies actions that can undertaken very quickly"
- Over 8000 people involved with CivicAction initiatives
 - Lobbies senior levels of government to get them involved
 - Greater Toronto Summit, 2011 – over 700 participants

Power: Who Speaks for Toronto?

- Concerns about lack of 'strategic vision' and leadership at the municipal/mayoral level
 - Policy capacity of city level, but lack of resources
 - Lack of unified voice for GTA(+H)
- CivicAction Alliance filled a void of civic engagement
 - Successful projects on social and cultural side
- Weak linkages between the municipal government & CivicAction Alliance
- Competing summits in other parts of the region
 - Mississauga, Hamilton, etc.

Regional Development Strategies for Toronto

- Province of Ontario
 - Greenbelt Plan (2005) & Places to Grow (2006)
 - Metrolinx – The Big Move (2008)
- Toronto Board of Trade
 - Regional Economic Summit, 2009 stresses need for regional wide strategy and policy coordination
- City of Toronto – Economic Strategy
 - Toronto Competes and Agenda for Prosperity
 - Cluster strategies, TFSA, Invest & Build Toronto
 - Transit City Plan
- OECD Report (2009)
 - “ The production of strategy plans has become a growth industry – the challenge is implementation”

Agenda for Prosperity

- Mayor's Advisory Committee
 - composed of 25 representatives from business, labour and education
 - Limited consultation - no links with CivicAction
 - Not a regional strategy
- Facilitate investment
 - Concierge service for jobs-related applications
- Promote innovation
 - Innovation infrastructure eg. MaRs, incubators
- Support sectors and cluster
 - Film and television
 - design,
 - ICT,
 - Toronto Financial Services Alliance

Governance Culture and Development Coalition

- Toronto's civic culture
 - Laissez-faire tradition in promoting regional economy
 - Created a 'culture of passivity' on part of government
 - Reliance on senior levels of government
 - Legacy of the Auto Pact
 - Strong 'neighbourhoods' inhibit development of a region wide perspective
 - Long tradition of civic engagement from 'Stop Spadina' to CivicAction Alliance
 - Problem may be too many competing groups, especially at sector and cluster level

Governance Institutions and Development Coalition

- Institutions
 - Lack of regional government encompassing GTA
 - No economic coordinating body
 - Inhibits policy initiatives and strategic planning for economic development on regional scale
 - Intermunicipal competition for investment
 - Uneven fiscal burden across regional municipalities
 - Board of Trade call for regional coordinating body and Investment Promotion Agency
 - Cluster strategies beyond the city

Civic Leadership and Economic Planning

- Perception of CivicAction Alliance as civic 'champions' who could 'get things done'
 - Strong track record on series of successful projects
- But limited involvement with strategic planning efforts for economic development
 - No overlap with Mayor's advisory committee
 - Board of Trade expanding its role and scale
- Sectoral strategies have varied leadership
 - Strong in financial services and aerospace
 - Fragmented in ICT, biotech and fashion
- Regional stewards lack integration & cohesion

Multi-Level Governance in Toronto

- Toronto has special policy issues and needs but lacks the power to address them and fiscal resources
- Works more closer with the province – but still ‘policy-takers’ rather than policy-makers
- Some evidence of informal multi-level collaboration but
 - Tends to be issue-focused
 - Varies across sectors
 - financial services and culture versus aerospace
 - Lack institutional structures – one off

Regional Challenges for Toronto

- **Scale** – little evidence of regional collaboration
- **Scope** – municipal government tends to be siloed BUT boundary-spanning activity in *civic* governance networks on social and cultural issues
- **Power** – competition between elected politicians and civic leaders over who speaks for Toronto
- **MLG?** Not formal and not really...

Conclusion

- Ongoing issues:
 - Lack of coordinating body at regional level
 - Limited fiscal resources at local/regional level and variable cooperation with provincial government
 - Need better links between civic initiatives and government ones
 - But where is the federal government?
- What's working:
 - Strong basis of civic engagement
 - Needs better integration across social, cultural and economic sectors!
 - Some involvement of senior governments across jurisdictions
 - Growing recognition of the region as the appropriate scale for economic development strategy