"*Governing Cities Through Regions: Vancouver*"
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Bio
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Summary
The globalization of trade has brought an irreversible change in urban regions. For the last 20 years, they have been understood as areas of production and wealth creation, which in turn has driven a worldwide process of increased urbanization and concurrent labor migration. Although urban regions take varied forms in different countries, the literature points to similar sets of issues: the loss of natural areas, the increase of motorized transportation networks, the increase in social inequity. These challenges contribute to a debate regarding the best modes of municipal and regional government. On the one hand, some scholars point to the importance of region wide co-operation and collaboration to foster sustainable forms of social and economic growth, while others argue that region wide municipal competition serves best worldwide regional economic competitiveness.

The literature discusses the rise of urban regions as spaces of increased democracy, civil engagement and solidarity. In the specific case of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, an additional factor needs to be highlighted: the nature of the relationship between urban regions and higher levels of government, in particular, at the provincial level. In Vancouver, the distrust of the Provincial Government, as illustrated in this chapter, undermined regional attempts of coordination and collaboration in the area of transportation; this in turn allowed the province to influence fundamentally the regional governance of planning and housing. Although it led to strong protests, and the rise of regional political awareness, local policy choices and democracy were undermined at the regional scale. While citizen groups and community and municipal officials ended up having weak political clout, on the contrary, the power of key provincial political and economic players swelled despite local political protests. The findings presented in this chapter are based on a literature review as well as semi-structured elite interviews with stakeholders in the planning, public transportation and housing policy areas.

Introduction

Since the 1990s, metropolitan discussions have raised ideas of regionalisms associated with the emergence of a new wave of studies and public policy ideas, sometimes referred to as the '*new regionalism*'. These discussions emerged in the context of questioning the welfare state and its ability to meet the needs of society (Delorme, 2005, Keating, 1991, Sassen, 1996). The globalization of trade has brought an irreversible change in urban regions (Burdett and Rode 2007, 2011). For the last 20 years, they have been understood as areas of production and wealth creation, which in turn has driven a worldwide process of increased urbanization concurrent labor migration (Saunders, 2010). Although urban regions take varied forms in different countries, the literature points to similar sets of issues: the loss of natural areas, the increase of motorized transportation networks, the increase in social inequity (Hall, 2014). These challenges contribute to a debate regarding the best modes of municipal and regional government. On the one hand, some scholars point to the importance of region wide co-operation and collaboration to foster sustainable forms of social and economic growth, while others argue that region wide municipal competition serves best worldwide regional economic competitiveness (Champagne 2002).

The literature discusses the rise of urban regions as spaces of increased democracy, civil engagement and solidarity, however, in the specific case of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, there is one singular issue that needs notice: the important role of the relationship between urban[1] and provincial governments, and, the clear distrust of the superior provincial government. This is illustrated in this chapter, which, drawing on both secondary sources as well as semi-structured elite interviews with stakeholders in planning, public transportation and housing, details how over the last 15 years the distrust of the Provincial Government, has undermined local pan-regional attempts of coordination and collaboration in the area of transportation; this in turn allowed the province to influence fundamentally the regional governance of planning and housing. Although it led to strong protests, and the rise of regional political awareness, local policy choices and democracy were undermined at the regional scale. While citizen groups and community and municipal officials ended up having weak political clout, on the contrary, the power of key provincial political and economic players swelled despite local political protests.

This chapter first reviews briefly the two major schools of thoughts that influenced and preceded ideas of 'new' regional governance, namely, the *Old Regionalism (or metropolitan government) and Public choice schools*, before discussing ideas of new regionalism as applied to the Vancouver region.

Old Regionalism or Metropolitan Government

The first school of thought, the regionalism school began in the late 19th and early 20th century (Beard, 1923, Robson, 1939, Wood, 1961, Sancton, 2000, Pineault 2000). It argues institutional fragmentation is the main problem urban region and metropolitan areas face; the large number of municipalities fragments large urban regions. The context

for the development of ideas promoting regional forms of government or governance is found in the increasing need for regional service provision such as transportation, parks, and water and sewage disposal. According to Regionalists, fragmentation increases the costs of service provision, and therefore is an obstacle to the achievement of economies of scale (Dente 1990, Stephens and Wikstrom 2000, Swanstrom 2001 – Keating, 1995). In addition, Regionalists suggest that given the uneven distribution of population, production and wealth, fragmentation leads to regional inequities.

The solutions offered by Regionalists proponents are inspired by values of efficiency and effectiveness, equity and democracy (Tomas 2012, Keating, 1995, 1991). They advocate for the amalgamation of local governments across the regional or metropolitan territory. In some instances, those views have led to the establishment of a regional federation of local governments and municipalities with administrative and political power regrouping key function servicing the region – New York city is an interesting early example in this regard (Sancton, 2000).

They also argue that a metropolitan government increases the efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery because of both economies of scale and ability to design policies that effectively serve all regional residents equally (Collin and Tomas 2004; Dente 1990 Savitch and Vogel 2000, Stephens and Wikstrom 2000, Swanstrom 2001, Keating, 2005). They also suggest that such regions improve democracy at the regional level because direct elections and the visibility of elected officials strengthen regional level accountability (Tomas 2007). Reformers insist that the nature and importance of the regional-issues also attracts quality individuals seeking regional level public offices, and gives a global vision to public policy (Keating 1995), which in turn further encourages greater citizen participation (Tomas 2007).

In Canada, those views were critical to the creation of Metro Toronto in the 1950s to the 70s, and in Quebec, to the creation of urban communities in Montreal, Quebec and Ottawa (Sancton, 2000). And to a limited extent these also participated in fostering ideas that led to the formation of regional districts in British Columbia in 1967 (UBCM, 2008, p.45-65).

Regionalists' critics and Public Choice views: when small is beautiful

In the 1970s, with the demise of the welfare state, and concurrent review of states expenditures, critics suggested first that consolidated power actually diminished democracy by increasing the gap between elected officials and citizens (Ostrom, Tiebout and Warren 1961); Second, consolidation did not entail economies of scale across all areas of policy (Ostrom, Tiebout and Warren 1961, Sancton 2000); Finally, centralization brought large regional bureaucracies that undermine efficiencies (Bish 1971).

Public Choice views date from the mid 1950s (Pineault 2000). Originally, Tiebout (1956), a student of fiscal federalism, suggested that smaller government units were more efficient. Public Choice scholars, however, systematically studied and empirically

demonstrated large-scale service production did not always result in economic gains or greater equity (Dente 1990, Keating 1995).

As a result, the public choice literature challenges the idea that fragmentation is the central problem for urban regions. They also question the notion that municipalities or urban regions should both produce and deliver services, suggesting instead, that municipalities and other local governments, and the private sector, should compete with each other to service large urban regions. Indeed, for public choice scholars what is central is that strong local democratic choices inform efficient and competitive service provisions (Bish, 1979, Tomas 2012). Hence, they believe that strengthening local and municipal governments is fundamental because competing local and municipal governments insures efficiency (Mouritzen 1989). Public choice scholars, also suggest that fragmentation encourages service diversity, which in turn benefits regional residents because they can choose their place of residence according to their needs and ability to pay. This freedom to '*vote with their feet*' would be the best democratic mechanism (Tiebout 1956).

Critics argued that public choice scholars assumed citizens were *consumers* acting across regional markets (Tomas 2012, Mintzberg 1996). Also, they underscored that the 'individualistic' value system's inherent logic ignored, and could not deal with, equity issues. Critics also underscored that choice of residential location, was not as much about freedom as it was about ability to pay. They also pointed that regional service inequities turned into social and residential barriers to mobility, which increased issues of social and spatial segregation (Rose 1999 cited in Tomas 2007). The inability to develop region-wide 'visions' for co-ordination and for region-wide infrastructures was an impediment to global economic competitiveness (Champagne 2002b). The following section further discusses ideas of 'new' regionalism and metropolitan government and governance.

'New' Regionalism

'New' regionalism ideas date from the 1990s, although they originate in much older ones on regions (Champagne 2002a). According to Wallis (1994) the school of 'new regionalism' is in its third wave of development. The current wave, however, shares some views with the former regarding the importance of the regional scale, but accommodates some of the earlier critics of regionalism and is focused on regional governance (Parks and Oakerson 2000) rather than government, implicitly recognizing that a few services should be federated regionally: it has been described as hybrid (Brunet-Jailly 2011).

Indeed, 'new' regionalism scholars suggest that both public choice and reform views have failed. They reject the proposed school reform's idea that merging all services under one metro government is best, but they also discard the public choice view that competition for service provision across a region is desirable. They argue that a regional scale is necessary for four specific reasons: 1) to create a regional cohesion to reduce intra-metropolitan competition; 2) to increase the global regional competitiveness; 3) to address issues inherent to urban growth (transportation and environmental costs or social segregation), and, 4) to reduce social disparities (Champagne 2002a).

To date, several authors have attempted to define the new regionalism. Champagne (2002a, 30) for instance, defines new regionalism as a set of urban design leading to metropolitan reforms to adapt structures to the new metropolitan context. In turn, Savitch and Vogel (1996, 2000, 158) point out that new regionalism is used to define a political program and means to implement that program. Swanstrom (2001) offers a comprehensive perspective, which includes a formal dimension, a government-like system, and an informal mechanism focusing on cooperation and collaboration between local governments. He argues: *'The new regionalism can be defined as a school of thought that advocates addressing urban problems either through new regional governments or through greater collaborations between existing governments.'* (Swanstrom, 2001, 479).

According to Swanstrom (2001), one of the weaknesses of the new regionalism ideas is that while the economic efficiency arguments are easily measurable, those related to quality of life are much more complex and therefore as a result are limited in their application. Finally, Norris (2001) argues, from the study of health services, that new regionalism is doomed to failure whereas the argument of economic competitiveness cannot counterbalance political obstacles of regional governance. He also stressed that voluntary cooperation is still a victim of lowest common denominator policy decision-making. The Nezelkewicz and Vogel (2002) study of Louisville supports these arguments. It shows that despite the presence of a neo-regionalist agenda, that takes into account the metropolitan issues, including that of urban sprawl, new regionalism in Louisville did not influence the localization of two bridges over the Ohio River.

In Canada, the works of Andrew Sancton and Robert Young (2009) point to the 'foundational' system that forms Canadian governance: they argue that what is foundational is made up of provincial-municipal governance systems where municipalities and local governments implement provincial policies. Particularly interesting is the work of Smith and Stewart (2009) whom detail how in British Columbia the province has traditionally favored the efficiency side of the efficiency-accountability equation (as described in Peter Self's work, 1977, chapter 8) and since 2001 the provincial government has with its Community Charter (2004) and Local Government Act (2008) persisted in discouraging local democratic practices in a province that traditionally discounts democratic accountability (electoral finance controls, ward systems, result reporting and oversight) to favor structural mechanisms that favor efficiencies in governance and policy making and implementation (Berger, 2004). The view, however, that municipalities were '*democratically elected, autonomous, responsible and accountable level of government'* as it is stated in the Community Charter (2003, c.26, s.1(1)), is balanced with the view that the province cannot allow one large '*municipality to hold up the provincial interest'* (UBCM, 222).

Interestingly, however, none of these ideas highlight the importance of solidarity, and/or civic engagement at a new level of government or at new territorial scales. On the contrary, Brenner (2002, 2004), a proponent of the rescaling and re-territorialisation views, points out that examples of metropolitan regionalism show considerable

heterogeneity of institutional policies and practices and face important contradictions. Keating (2013, 45) shares this view and citing Swyngedoun (2004) argues that in Europe, we are witnessing *'a rescaling of social life as functional systems, identities, and political expressions migrate,'* and that this transformation has been clearly identified by students of economic or environmental policies but less so as a social and political phenomenon. For Keating, the new scale is a regional scale, where more than ever before, politics and a multitude of state functions are migrating both bottom-up and top-down.

Therefore the importance of the debate on rescaling or state restructuring cannot be understated: because it raises fundamental questions about the nature of the local governance that question first: (1) ideas that no-one policy actor has the ability, let alone the capacity to address local issues and concurrent views that partnerships are inevitable, yet result in 'splintered urbanism' (Graham and Marvin, 2001) or in other word uneven development, and (2) views that there is a fundamental discrepancy between territorial or functional governance (Frisken, 2007) which multilevel systems of governance also influence structurally (Heeg, 2001, 79-80). All in all, these issues raise questions about the *form regional governance takes*; a form that may be pictured along a continuum of integration that is primarily local-regional-horizontal-territorial, or, regional-vertical-intergovernmental, or both, and may also be a-territorial-but-networked and where coordination and partnerships are crucial. Clearly, both polar opposites along this continuum have important normative implications as discussed at length in the introductory chapter of this book (Allahwala and Keil).

To sum up, the first component of the new regionalism idea is that of pan-regional center periphery interdependence (Jacobs, 1961), as a mean to reduce local economic competition, but also a way to achieve economic competitiveness in the face of global competition (Champagne 2002a). It recognizes the interdependence between central city and suburbs activities, and the idea of de-concentration of those across a metro area.

The second basic idea is that greater economic competitiveness in the global context matters. Changes related to the internationalization of the economy are found to lead to a concentration of activities and wealth in cities thanks to increased concentration of job, capital and infrastructures (Florida, 2002, Sassen, 1988). Cities thus become "*the basic unit of the global production system"* (Champagne, 2002a, 137), hence the view that formal and informal structures, and mechanisms, of cooperation and collaboration across metro areas would boost economic visibility world-wide.

The third component is that given the role of cities in exacerbating urban problems, they must also contribute to the minimization of those problems (Champagne 2002a): traffic congestion and air pollution or natural disasters hinder economic efficiencies.

Clearly those issues may contribute to either much greater solidarity, or on the contrary deep and complex disagreement, across networks, across new scales, and possibly across regional or metro scales, sometimes networked scales, hence the importance of civil society in the development of this possible burgeoning tier level of government. The following sections detail the situation in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Canadian, Provincial and Regional context to Metro - Vancouver

In Metro Vancouver as is documented in this section of the chapter, region wide issues are confronted with two fundamental weaknesses: (1) the mechanism of democratic representation at the regional level is indirect, municipally elected and regionally appointed officials represent their constituencies on a regional board not a council, hence weakening the regional level, which in turn (2) undermines the political and financial capacity of the regional level. This system limits the power of the regional level in favor of the fragmented local and provincial levels asymmetrically, strengthening the influence of provincial choices over those of a structurally divided region. Following a presentation of the regional district system of British Columbia, the following two sections focus on Metro Vancouver's planning, transportation, and housing, detailing this argument.

Metro Vancouver in 2014:
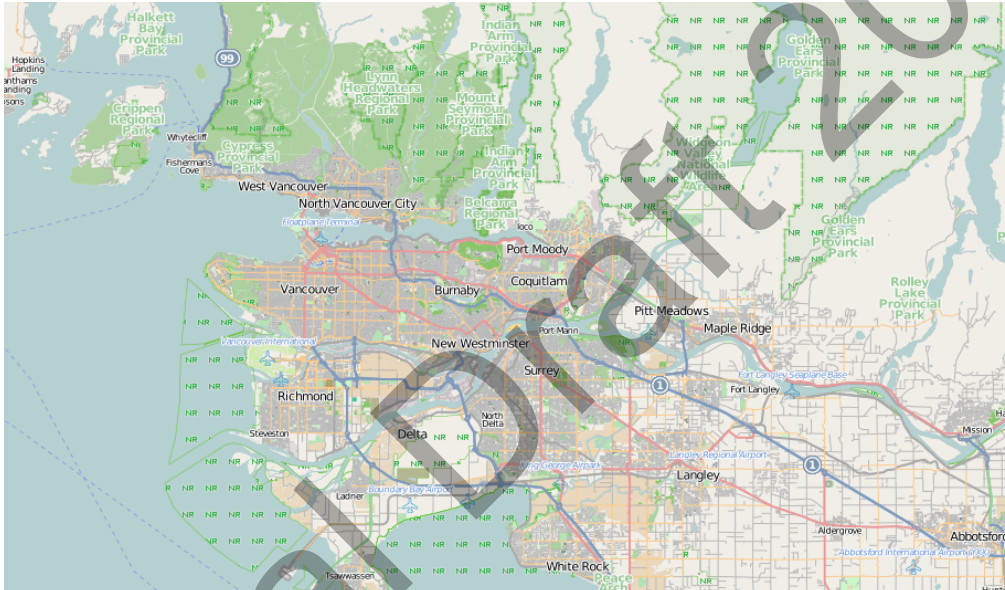
Source: Open Street map, accessed April 2013.

The province of British Columbia, in Canada, is one of 10 provinces (and three territories) that have exclusive authority regarding the organization of their local government systems. Today, the federal level of government has great interest in local government affairs and has been active, in particular over the last 20 years in areas such as local environmental, energy, sustainability and transportation issues that affect cities and rural communities. However, the federal government does not have *direct* constitutional authority, provinces do.

Despite this constitutional fragmentation of federal authority, however, a broad overview across Canadian provinces and territories indicates that municipalities, in particular, provide similar core services to their communities. These vary marginally but most municipalities provide services such as policing, fire protection, planning and building regulation, and waste collection and water distribution. They also fund transportation

services. All in all there are few exceptions in those areas but in some provinces municipal services include health, social and education services. For instance, in Ontario, municipalities administer health services and manage social housing.

In British Columbia, a province of about 4.5 million people, 160 municipalities provide the bulk of local services, and interestingly in many instances, since 1967 have federated themselves into Regional Districts (RDs) – a form of regional government that is at the core of this chapter. However, those Regional Districts have not been designed by provincial edicts. Indeed, municipalities in British Columbia have been provided by what Brian Walisser (2010, 20), a Provincial official, calls an '*empty vessel.*'

These 'empty vessels' were de-facto legal frameworks, but originally nothing stated who should partner with whom, and did not decide which services the resulting bottom-up federated regional government would provide. The primary characteristic of all 'empty vessels' or Regional Districts (RDs) was that their size and functions would result from negotiations between neighboring municipalities. These had to decide collectively to work together across the territories of their municipal boundaries, and according to a variable geometry of functions or services that were also negotiated and varied according to local needs. These two fundamental axes of negotiations organized both territorial and service partnerships across federated municipal systems.

Today all the 27 RDs result from such federations of municipalities. The RDs provide (1) the structure for mechanisms of inter-municipal service provisions. They also offer (2) a forum where rising issues can be discussed on a region-wide basis, and (3) in the least populated areas they provide democratic forms of representation – local elections. These are areas with no formally established municipalities. Those districts vary greatly in size, population and function: The smallest one is less than 2000 square kilometers in size, whereas the largest one is, 120,000 kilometer square (i.e. four times the size of Belgium). Similarly, the largest in population serves 2.4 million people, while the ten smallest ones in population serve no more than 40,000 people in all. Yet, all in all, these 27 federated urban and rural regions administer altogether well over 3000 municipal service agreements.

It is because of this rather singular background that the Vancouver region is particularly interesting: it is the most populous of all those federated agreements and it has been in place for nearly a half century. It is large enough to overshadow provincial politics when issues pertaining to the region of Vancouver are front-and-center in the media. The latest such example would be the 2010 Olympic Games that grew from being a local initiative to being a provincial affair (Brunet-Jailly, 2014).

Yet, it is also a complex system of governance where municipally elected and appointed officials meet to discuss region-wide issues: Regional District officials are not directly or even indirectly elected, but chosen to represent their municipalities according to the issue at stake onto the RD board. Indeed for Walisser, Paget and Dann, Regional Districts are *an ideal* mechanism to '*cope with complex, divisive issues at a regional scale*' where mutual interests conflict with particular interests, and where scale is also never set

because it varies and is in 'flux' depending on interests and functions or services at stake (transportation or water provision having vastly different scales than police or health service provisions for instance). And, because most traditional forms of government or governance simply do not match the reality of urban and rural regions, RDs are according to Walisser et al. the best possible answer because they marry successfully scale and efficiency of service delivery, hence providing the best level of services at the lowest possibly price, while also providing regional communities with effective forms of political representations. For instance, they point to the Vancouver region, also called the *Low Mainland* of British Columbia, as a typical example where there are '75 relatively autonomous bodies contributing to the governance of two regions'[2] and thus suggest the Regional Districts are the best system of regional governance world-wide.

Planning and housing policies across the Vancouver region has been contentious for many years. It has been particularly contentious over the last 10 years thanks to tensions between provincial and municipal levels of government that have greatly affected local transportation choices, as detailed in the second part of this chapter, and are now affecting greatly relationships between municipalities across the Vancouver region and lower main land, and with the Provincial government. Local commentators have argued Metro had to submit to provincial choices through the usage of transportation policy choices to bend local/municipal choices to both provincial and business preferences (Shaw, 2008, Murphy, 2009, 2010).

Metro Vancouver, which used to be called the Greater Vancouver or "*Greater Vancouver Regional District*" (GVRD) is a service provider district. Historically, it took care of major policy issues such as the drainage of the *Fraser rivers* to prevent flooding in the lower part of the *Fraser valley*. In Vancouver, districts were in charge of a few clear policy areas on behalf of a few municipalities that had agreed to federate their resources to address issues larger than they could not handle alone.
Today, Metro Vancouver (officially since 2007) federates three districts and one corporation: the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD created in 1967), the Greater Vancouver Sewerage & Drainage District (GVS&DD set in 1914), the Greater Vancouver Water District (GVWD founded in 1924) and the Metro Vancouver Housing Corporation (MVHC). These are actually also managed by their specific boards. There are other similar districts in the region, for instance, the Lower Mainland Region, the Westminster Land District and the Fraser Valley Health Authority that manages large health infrastructures. School districts, although distinct, manage the primary, middle and high schools.

It is in charge of a much larger number of policy arenas: water, liquid waste, and solid waste remain but newer responsibilities are taking more political importance. These include housing, regional planning; air quality, Regional Park and the district corporation. In all, it is a large area spanning nearly 2800 square kilometers (1120 square miles) that is the most densely populated in British Columbia and the third largest urban region in Canada. Ultimately, Metro Vancouver is a federation of municipal-district-utilities and their constituent municipalities. The role of the federal level therefor is to see that the regional level produces and distributes the services necessary across all member

municipalities – its history is important in this regards because without inundations and other waste issues the existence of the districts could be in question. The GVRD charter sets a few key roles such as to ensure the financial sustainability, to align local and regional priorities and to be particularly inclusive by increasing region wide citizen 'awareness' about the services provided by Metro but also to lobby all other governments likely to partner with Metro, hence to communicate effectively.

In 2014, the decision-making authority of Metro, still legally called the *Greater Vancouver Regional District*, is a board of 40 representative members representing 24 local authorities (22 local municipalities, one township, and one first nation) but each member's power is proportional to the population they are representing. The formula is one vote per 20,000 inhabitants up to 5 votes. In all, the board shares 136 votes to work together and to provide a number of services, and also provide park services for a 25th local government, the municipality of Abbotsford.

The municipality of Vancouver remains the largest of all with about 610,000 inhabitants, while both Burnaby (250,000) and Surrey (470,000) are also important. The smallest are the villages of Lions Bay and Belcarra, and the First Nation of Tsawwassen. The fastest growing may be Richmond in the Greater Vancouver Airport area, with a population of nearly 200,000. Interestingly, there are seventeen first nations, or about 7600 First-people that are within the district boundaries but do not take part in the district policies, yet are likely to be affected by its decisions. There are a few areas that are not part of Metro Vancouver but work with the district tourism promotion policies despite being part of the Fraser Valley district: Abbotsford, Chilliwack, Mission.

Metro Vancouver is a relatively small bureaucracy, located in Burnaby, of about 1300 staff headed by a chief administrative officer. It spends 84% of its resources on water, liquid and solid waste. But in all Metro Vancouver has eight key departments today that develop policy in the following areas: Communication and external outreach, human resources, corporate services, finance and housing, liquid waste and solid services, water services and planning, policy and environment. These also include managing the emergency service 9-1-1 across the region and to manage the Electoral area as well. In brief, Metro provides region wide services, and also a number of local services in specific areas of the region that are not incorporated into municipalities.

Regarding water, Metro Vancouver controls the Cleveland dam and manages the Capilano, the Seymour and Coquitlam reservoirs and is able to deliver efficient, sustainable drinking, water to a 2600-kilometer square area. Regarding wastes, Metro Vancouver administers the sewers and pump stations that drain refuse waters from around the region as well as all the solid wastes, which go to the Ashcroft Manor Ranch landfill. Another more recent but very important part of its activities includes managing the Vancouver Housing Corporation, which goals are to develop policy to address housing issues in the region, in particular for homeless and low income individuals.

Other areas of policy include (1) the promotion of a regional agricultural strategy to produce sustainable and affordable food in the region; (2) the implementation of a

regional *Ecological Heath Action Plan*; (3) to improve air quality in the region, to limit the region's contribution to climate change in particular with the implementation of the *Integrated Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Management Plan*; (4) the preservation and conservation of 22 parks and nature reserves that primarily focuses on maintaining their native plant population and the original ecosystems found, for instance, in regional rainforests and blogs. (5) Finally, Metro Vancouver is also implementing a Corporate Climate Action Plan which ultimate goal is 'carbon neutrality' and 'resiliency' across all its infrastructures by increasing usage of renewable energy and lowering energy consumption (Metro Vancouver 2011a).

Metro Vancouver also has expertise in regional planning. As such, it is responsible for developing the regional growth strategy (Regional Growth Strategy) a function that has developed progressively since 1914, was prominent in the 1970s, was partially lost in the 1980s, and reasserted in the 1990s when the GVRD managed the emergence of a '*Livable Region Plan*' called '*Choosing our Future.*' At the time it was perceived as a '*real achievement to have reached such a regional 'policy consensus'* (Oberlander and Smith, 1993, 365). The latest version is nearing region-wide adoption, a process that started with rolling ten-year plans in 2009, and continued yearly since then. Today, Langley Township is the only RD member that does not have agreement for it '*Regional Context Statement,*' a requirement to get its '*Official Community Plan*' and then '*Zoning Bylaw Development Permits*' approved. A courts ruling in favor of Langley Township argued that Metro did not have the right to dictate land use to a municipality, but Metro appealed. It seems the regional growth strategy process has been burdened with legal reservations because a lot of landowners and other stakeholders are concerned by some of predicted outcomes.

The regional plan assumes a population growth of 600,000 and concurrently about 550,000 new homes, but Metro Vancouver's strategy is seeking to limit sprawl regionally with the implementation of urban containment boundaries and a goal to have 55% of region-wide residents living within walking-distance to transit.

Indeed, the current exercise is controversial but includes interesting key elements: develop a compact urban area, sustainable transportation system and regional economy while developing complete communities, and, environmental and climate change policies.

Historically, this is the most ambitious planning exercise and regional growth strategy: its goal being to coordinate all its members' plans, and to replace the '*Livable Region Strategic Plan*' with a "*Metro Vancouver 2040 – Regional Growth Strategy*' and a '*Transport 2040: A Transportation Strategy for Metro Vancouver – Now and in the Future.*' The coupling of both plan drew criticisms because the imbalanced relationship these imply at a time when Metro Municipalities have lost control over *TransLink*, the body that plans and implements public transportation across the region.

Some of the criticisms include: (1) both plans were drafted in parallel but with transportation heavily influenced by the Provincial view that transportation should be

funded by private sector real estate investments – following Hong Kong's model. (2) The role of Metro regarding green zones would be lessened. (3) Metro would have historically higher levels of control over municipal Official Community Plans. (4) But concurrently, TransLink would also see its influence over land use increase through its review of (a) the Regional Growth Strategy and Regional Context Statements, and, its primary role in Frequent Transit Development Corridors. (5) Translink mandate to funnel real estate development funds. (6) The 'Renewable Energy Generation' is deemed unsustainable. (Murphy, 2010).

All in all, it is clear that there are backlashes in Vancouver in areas that would be the most affected by the plan: Grandview-Woodland, Downtown Eastside, or Marpole, and across some municipalities such as Burnaby, Coquitlam, Delta, Langley Township, or Surrey but very few groups were able to dent a process that is primarily driven by provincial views of what Metro Vancouver should look like as our review of Metro transportation planning demonstrates.

Public transportation planning in Metro Vancouver

For the last 20 years, a central goal of Metro Vancouver has been to insure development and transportation while favoring car reduction. One public policy instrument for the management of all transportation networks was Translink, a multimodal agency that managed flows across the Metro region thanks to a comprehensive strategy (TransLink 2008). Recently, as detailed below, the local-regional-provincial partnership that sustained Translink, however, resulted in the seizure of the mass transit project by the Provincial government. Indeed, it is the *South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority* (SCBCTA,) also known as *TransLink* that provides public transportation services to the region. Founded in 1999, it is a regional body that covers the territory of the Metro Vancouver. Regional plans must be established over twenty years, and have to be renewed every ten years. TransLink implement a multimodal transportation strategy because it has the responsibility to plan and manage all modes of public transportation: The transportation system 'core' is a light rail, called *SkyTrain*, a technology developed by Bombardier. Besides this service, there is a large network of buses, a commuter train is also serving the metropolitan area, as well as a sea shuttle service, called *SeaBus*, that crosses the Burrard Inlet and connects the downtown Vancouver with its North Shores.

Across the Metro Vancouver, the coordination between land use and planning of public transportation takes a *Transit-Oriented Development* (TOD) planning forms along the corridors and around SkyTrain stations. Indeed, it is enough to ride the *SkyTrain* to witness how much the implementation of the rapid light rail system has impacted the location of new office, housing and business projects. Several projects of high-density residential towers are located along and around *SkyTrain* stations, some are underway, and despite a significant supply, demand does not seem to be over for now. And it is notable that these efforts seem to have started to reduce car usage, in particular when looking at home to job commutes. Indeed, according to one interviewee, since 2007, an increase in the occupancy rate of office space along the *SkyTrain* corridor is clear, while areas less well served by public transportation have slower growth rates.

TransLink has also created a division dedicated to improving the linkages between planning and transportation. Because municipal planning is required to acknowledge Metro's *Regional Growth Strategy,* TransLink produced a good practice guide outlining principles of Transit Oriented Communities (TOC), a variant of the TOD. The zoning plans of municipalities are subjected to their recommendations as outlined in the guide (TransLink 2011).

Interviews suggest that the limited number of stakeholders in development planning and planning of public transportation facilitates the coordination of development and transportation policies across Metro. For example in public transportation matters, the limited number of organizations facilitates the standardization of user fees across the region. In addition, the multimodal responsibility of TransLink promotes a holistic approach to the mobility of people and goods across the region. And, the small number of organizations reduces issues of overlapping jurisdictions, such as those found between TransLink and BC Transit, the agency responsible for public transit in British Columbia outside the Metro area. If relations between the players at the metropolitan level appear to facilitate a local-regional-territorial integration of development and transportation processes, relations between the metropolitan level and the provincial level transportation however, have not been simple in recent years.

One illustration of this difficulty is found in the conflict that arose before and during the construction of the Canada-line, the most recent SkyTrain line, which connects the city of Richmond, the Vancouver International Airport, and the City of Vancouver (RAV). This project began in the early 2000s.

In a context of increased traffic congestion, and development of environmental awareness, and the competitive bid to hold the 2010 Winter Olympic Games, Vancouver Mayor Larry Campbell put forward in his campaign platform to strengthen transit between the municipalities of Vancouver and Richmond. At that time, several projects to improve the network were being looked at by TransLink; such as the "*Broadway Corridor*" or the "*Coquitlam line*". However, the RAV line took priority thanks to specific funding sources. Indeed, the project, estimated at $1,9 billon, was made possible through a partnership between the federal government, the provincial government, the Greater Vancouver Regional District, and the Vancouver International Airport. These stakeholders, however, bypassed local-municipal and pan-regional views in this process.

The project divided municipal officials within Metro. On the one hand, several elected officials considered that other SkyTrain extension projects were much more important and profitable. For instance, according to an analysis based on potential traffic, the Coquitlam (a suburb east of the city Vancouver) was deemed more profitable. Others suggested that the increasing role of the private sector in public transportation was affecting Translink's decision making, and feared its interference in TransLink affairs. Also, other elected officials, encouraged the use of public-private partnerships and suggested that TransLink be managed '*like a business*' (Siemiatycki 2005). The '*pros RAV*' and '*against RAV*' then engaged in a struggle, which confronted political

municipal, provincial and federal officials, or private sector and technical/engineering point of views. For instance, some underscored that the conditions set by the private-sector-contractor guided the entire project toward a SkyTrain technology, while other options, less expensive, had already been the subjected to TransLink reviews were not successful (Siemiatycki 2006).

Following months of negotiations on the role and responsibilities of the parties involved, the project was finally submitted to Metro Vancouver – the GVRD Board in May 2003. After the longest and most heated council meeting in 37 years of existence, the project was approved by a single vote (Siemiatycki 2005). The RAV was then submitted again for funding approval to TransLink's board. The board, made up of the mayors of municipalities, rejected the project 7 votes against 5.

Transportation Minister Kevin Falcon, the most ardent defender of the RAV line, then agreed to increase the funding responsibility of both the province and the private sector. The project was then submitted less than a month later for a second time to TransLink again, which rejected it again, because elected officials considered the project too expensive. Kevin Falcon, furious against the directors of TransLink, nevertheless agreed to raise again the provincial contribution to 65 million dollars. '*The final offer*' of the RAV project was then submitted for a third time to the board of TransLink in December 2004, and accepted by a majority of 8 against 4.

The debate about the RAV line considerably weakened the image and greatly damaged relations between TransLink managers and the Ministry of Transportation. In March 2006, Minister Falcon punished TransLink with the implementation of a '*TransLink Governance Review Panel*.' This was a hardly veiled response to TransLink's second negative vote. Indeed, Falcon had then declared that the directors of TransLink should have to live with the consequences of their actions (Mickleburgh 2004).

Composed of three persons, the TransLink Governance Review Panel was to undertake a review of the governance model of TransLink. More specifically, the group was to consider in detail: 1) the division of responsibility and control between the province and TransLink transportation issues in the metropolitan region; 2) the size, composition and appointment process to the Board of TransLink; 3) the responsibilities, the authority and powers of the GVRD within the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Act; 4) the responsibilities, authorities and powers of TransLink to set up income levels for all service provision and capital usage; and, 5) how to ensure that the government would effectively contribute to the oversight of TransLink in case decisions affect provincial interests.

According to their report submitted in January 2007, the Working Group believed that the current governance of TransLink did not exceed the vision of local elected officials (TransLink Governance Review Panel 2007). It thus made three main recommendations: First, the group recommended the transfer of day-to-day management of TransLink to a board of directors composed of non-elected members. Second, it recommended the creation of a council of mayors. This council would be responsible for approving the

budget, for selecting the members of the Board of Directors, and to approve the transportation plan. Third, the working group recommended the establishment of an independent commissioner to review TransLink business conduct. The independent commissioner was to be appointed by the Council of Mayors, and to have the responsibility to approve fee increases, and to ensure the transparency of the organization to the public.

An informal appropriation of public transit by the provincial government followed. The new form of governance, as proposed by the Working Group received provincial approval in the form of bill 43. Since the review and implementation of the Act 43, stakeholders have raised concerns arguing the law marked a steep increase in the influence of the private sector in transportation and was a major blow to democracy (Luba 2007 Kadota 2010, Brunet-Jailly 2014). In fact, Act 43 breaks both accountability and transparency linkages that elected officials provided. As one interviewee told us:

'This means that we now have a situation where we have local and regional legislation and no representation ... the link to the people that we elect and the way the money is being spent has been broken ... it is clearly taxation without representation.'

The majority of stakeholders interviewed argued that TransLink decisions were now made behind closed doors. Indeed, local officials have little control over how money is spent by TransLink, but they must comply. For example, they are forced to accept increase in property taxes to fund TransLink projects.

As a result of the review of TransLink, technical coordination between TransLink and municipalities has become much more difficult. Traditionally, coordination was partly provided by the Major Road and Transportation Committee, a metro scale committee of municipal engineers that met monthly. This committee used to make recommendations on decisions before they were presented to the board of directors of TransLink. However, since the implementation of the new governance the Major Road and Transportation Committee has received clear instructions to the effect that now it is to be informed of decisions to provide feedbacks that are thought to have little impact on the final decisions.

To sum up, in the Greater Vancouver area there was a will to ensure the integration of both development and transportation mechanisms that would favor the reduction of car usage. Because of the relatively small number of organizations involved in the area, coordination seemed effective. And, during the late 1990s, an important success factor was the establishment of TransLink, a multimodal agency aimed at providing the metropolitan area with a strong body able to significantly improve the transportation flows thanks to a comprehensive strategy bringing together both planning and transportation requirements for the Metro region (TransLink 2008). Elected mayors sat on the TransLink board and brokered integrated planning and transportation decisions regionally. However, a major difference between local municipal and provincial officials about the pre-2010 Olympic Grames construction of the Canada Line (RAV) resulted in an informal appropriation by the province of the mass transit project.

Conclusion

The metropolitan experience in the lower mainland of British Columbia documents how Metro Vancouver struggles with provincial distrust. The provincial government's balanced policies of recognition of the role of municipalities in the intergovernmental architecture of Canada do not extend to being able to work with the municipalities of the Vancouver region and Metro Vancouver. This distrust goes as far as being too well aware of the political cost the city of Vancouver and the Metro region holds for the provincial politics. It results a weakened metropolitan scale (Kübler and Tomas 2010), which has important negative effect on regional democracy and region wide planning, housing and transportation coordination.

Although, there is a clear sense that pan-regional coordination is strong and reduces intra-regional economic competition while also increasing environmental and sustainable concerns. But for the provincial government, policies that are seen as critical and as driving economic competitiveness also dictate urban transportation and planning decisions. Because cities are the basic unit of the global production system, in British Columbia, the provincial government has become the regulatory hand that leads the way along with the private sector.

Metro-Vancouver is a striking example of North American urban regions where network governance and coordination has not transformed into a space of increased democracy, civic engagement and solidarity, but remains a space where the regional scale is organized to provide a forum of collaboration for municipalities struggling with issues and wherever working across the region adds value and is cost effective.

To come back to our governance conundrum regarding the form *regional governance takes in Vancouver*; what our study underscores is that in British Columbia, the continuum of integration is *not* local-regional-horizontal and territorial, *but is* regional-vertical-intergovernmental, and, networked. The Provincial government regulatory superiority strengthens both a weakly *territorial-but-networked* form of governance, where coordination and partnerships are intergovernmental and networked with a strong presence of the private sector – which is crucial in strengthening the financial and technical views of primary investors.

Elite interviews were conducted with the following organizations:

- Simon Fraser University
- University of British Columbia
- Translink
- City of Surrey
- City of Burnaby
- Better Environmentally Sound Transportation
- MetroVancouver
- Concert Properties

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[1] This paper differentiates urban from local and municipal governments. Urban refers to what is not rural. A local government is a generic term that defines an organization servicing an area or territory. Local governments include municipalities and districts. Municipalities are incorporated and elected bodies that democratically represents and provides a multitude of services to that population and territory. Districts are not elected bodies – they are understood as utilities or functional local governments often providing one, at most two, services to their members. In British Columbia districts federate municipalities that agree to share a service.

[2] Walisser et al. cite 30 municipalities, 12 first nation governments, 3 regional districts, and 36 functional regional and subregional entities such as hospitals, economic development bodies, school districts, and others.