

Multilevel Governance and the Developmental City: the Case of Vancouver

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Project Context and Research Model

1. SSHRC MCRI Project: "Multilevel Governance in Canada" (Bob Young, PI: UWO)
2. SSHRC National Research Cluster: Urban Transformation in Canada (Larry Bourne and Tom Hutton)
3. SSHRC "Social Dynamics of Innovation and Creativity in the City-Region" (David Wolfe and Meric Gertler PIs: U of T)
4. The New Economy of the Inner City (Routledge 2008): production systems, labour formation, industrial restructuring and place-making in London, Singapore, San Francisco and Vancouver)

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Developmental Context: Trajectories of Urbanization and Urbanism in Vancouver, 1980s to the present

1. High growth since the deep recession of the early 1980s: pressures on the land base
2. Post-staples /postindustrial development trajectory
3. 'Urban transnationalism' as defining trajectory: sustained high levels of immigration
4. Comprehensive social change: multiculturalism and rise of a 'new middle class' of professionals, managers, entrepreneurs
5. Exemplary planning and local policy models: notably in the metropolitan core

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Factors and Forces Shaping Vancouver's Development

1. Markets: commodity markets, capital, and property markets
2. Global economic forces and industrial restructuring (including deep recessions as well as structural change)
3. Social forces: coalitions, communities, leaders, business interests – nb. MCRI finding on the latter
4. Role of the state: institutions and agencies active players in shaping Vancouver's development in the postwar period: indirectly in resource boom of 1950s-1970s; increasingly important 1980s and after

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Increasing Importance of Multilevel Governance in Vancouver's Development

Expansion of multilevel governance associated with :

1. Growing complexity of policy issues: 'stretch' the policy capacity of (especially) local government
2. Multiscalar nature of development processes: global-local interactions require policy innovation
3. Expanding importance of cities in the national life
4. Need to combine resources (financial, regulatory etc.) of two or more levels of government
5. Opportunity to bring in social forces and other NGOs/CBOs

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Vancouver as an Instructive Case Study in Multilevel Governance: Experimentation and Innovation

Vancouver's contemporary development (economic, social, cultural, physical and spatial) shaped by mix of forces, including multilevel governance

MCRI Project encompassed major policy fields including infrastructure, image-building, urban aboriginal policy, emergency preparedness, federal properties

Focus here on Infrastructure (and image-building) as salient 'world city' developmental processes

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Multilevel Governance and Urban Infrastructure

General significance for Vancouver:

1. Capital-intensive nature of public infrastructure provision ('lumpy' expenditure profiles)
2. High rates of urban-regional growth: sustained demand for services and infrastructure; primacy of growth management programs at the regional level
3. Vancouver's 'gateway functions' and world city aspirations, linked especially to Asia-Pacific linkages
4. Complex jurisdictional setting for important infrastructural investments (ports, YVR, highways)

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Multilevel Governance and Urban Infrastructure

Case study of the Gateway Project and the Canada Line

1. Major capital program for infrastructure underpinning Vancouver's 'gateway functions', notably for the Asia-Pacific
2. Multiscalar / multimodal project scope: capital improvements to port, YVR, highways, transit throughout the Western Gateway
3. Multilevel government scope of project: framing of goals at national, provincial and local-regional level has generated conflicts as well as synergy
4. Planning for the Canada Line (formerly RAV line) connecting downtown Vancouver and YVR vividly illustrates both potential advantages and more problematic features

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Multilevel Governance and Urban Infrastructure: Case Study of the Canada Line Project

1. Complex array of stakeholders and interest groups, including each level of government, YVR, business community, and coalition of transit users
2. Compare with initial fixed rail transit project ('Skytrain'), constructed in advance of Expo '86
3. Macro-level goal of enhancing both local transit service provision and efficiency of Western Gateway operation in the form of a fixed-rail link between downtown Vancouver and Vancouver International Airport
4. Importance of federal funding: 'Canada Line' designation, in support of western gateway; but also a form of regional/industrial policy

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Multilevel Governance and Urban Infrastructure: Case Study of Canada Line Project

1. Canada Line project at *strategic level* successful example of multilevel governance, in combining resources, powers and aspirations of all three levels of government in a major developmental project
2. Illustrates role of political leadership in public megaprojects (notably BC Premier and ministers, federal officials)
3. Contribution to 'image-building' dimension of multilevel governance as well as important operational goals: Canada Line scheduled to open in advance of Vancouver 2010 Olympics

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Canada Line Case Study

. . . But at finer spatial resolution of analysis, Canada Line discloses aspects of policy conflict and dissonance

1. Interview program with key officials and documentary analysis reveals important contrasts in policy goals at each level
2. Federal involvement stresses international gateway and Vancouver's emergent world city potential: 'national interest' argument
3. Provincial policy rhetoric underscores BC Government 'mega-project' mentality – a fixture of all governments since the 1950s (Siemiatycki 2006)
4. At regional level political discomfort illustrated by problems in getting gateway program and RAV/Canada Line through the regional board: concerns that fixed rail project a low regional priority, and one that displaces needed investments in buses (as well as bicycle-ways and other transportation priorities)
5. Canada Line also not highest priority for extensions of fixed-rail

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Canada Line Case Study

. . . And other localised policy / planning issues

1. Conflict with the City of Vancouver's transportation priorities of bus services, bicycles, and pedestrian movement, supported by housing policy ('eco-density', cf London example) and transit demand management (TDM)
2. Debate over preferred routes: Cambie (higher ridership) vs. Arbutus Corridor (rail right-of-way already in place)
3. Initial commitment toward bored tunneling for Canada Line compromised by escalating costs; shift to disruptive, high-externality cut-and-cover construction
4. High costs borne by individuals, businesses (nb Harvey's definition of social justice as the capacity/will to compensate)
5. Social forces: business community (excluding those along route) strongly 'on board'; broader community ambivalent

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Concluding Observations

. . . Some lessons from Vancouver . . .

1. Multilevel governance an important institutional apparatus for urban development, and more particularly world city aspirations (Expo '86, 2010 Olympics)
2. Vancouver at macro-level, strategic-scale has been a major beneficiary of multilevel government programs, investments and initiatives, especially since the 1980s
3. Canada Line represents an example of multilevel government, articulated in the high-level meshing of multiscale goals and purposes (= not otherwise feasible)

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Concluding Observations (. . . Cont.)

4. That said . . . Research program over past two years discloses inter- multi-level government policy conflicts and dissonance: relates to jurisdiction, constituencies, need to 'sell' expensive capital projects
5. Canada Line project case study also demonstrates power asymmetries in policy-making for capital projects
6. In particular, the clear differences in the roles of 'social forces' reinforce impression of strategic-level goals enunciated by senior government can lead to 'sub-optimal' outcomes at the regional and local level
7. Next stage: finalization of Vancouver paper for MCRI project

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