

How to Develop Good Governance at the City Level

Presentation to the PECC Seminar Environmental sustainability in Urban Centres

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What This Presentation Will Cover

- ▶ Understanding good governance: how might we recognise it?
- ▶ Context - the changing environment.
- ▶ Developing good governance.
- ▶ Designing regional (mega-city) level governance.
- ▶ Have we solved the regional level design problem?
- ▶ Local or neighbourhood governance.
- ▶ Concluding comments.

Understanding Good Governance

- ▶ The OECD characteristics.
- ▶ Government versus governance (Hambleton).
- ▶ Theory supports inclusiveness but governments prefer efficiency – amalgamation to reduce costs.
- ▶ Two themes: The ability to take and implement decisions which promote efficient resource use, and collaboration in planning and delivery; and
- ▶ Inclusiveness - reaching well out beyond the council to bring a range of interests into decision-making - with due regard for the representative and political aspects of local government .

How Might We Recognise Good Governance?

- ▶ Good governance is the ability to take and implement decisions about the community's desired future.
- ▶ It requires a combination of technical and organisational capability with community engagement and legitimacy.

The right kind of citistate governance must be developed in a consultative "bottom-up" process involving a wide range of civic players, neighbourhood leaders up to the level of corporate leadership. Mutual trust needs to be built amongst the parties. It would be an error for a state government to impose a regional government without broad consultation with the local community. GTA Task force 1996.

Context

- ▶ The governance of cities has become immeasurably more complex.
- ▶ The great issues confronting local government – climate change, energy efficiency, transport, water – all require behaviour change if they are to be dealt with.
- ▶ Consider the findings of a research project on public attitudes to using recycled water.
- ▶ We cannot regulate for behavioural outcomes, and we cannot get a mandate solely from representational democracy.
- ▶ The need is to engage rather than persuade the community – to develop partnerships, and build the ‘community conversation’. The implications for governance are profound.

Developing Good Governance

- ▶ A challenging and not always successful endeavour.
- ▶ Good governance needs to be effective at two different levels: regional to address major regionwide issues; local or neighbourhood as a means of building the connections and legitimacy essential for local government's 'licence to operate'.
- ▶ We need to understand the nature of what is pejoratively termed 'parochialism', why local government electoral processes magnify this and how to manage it.

Designing Regional (Mega-City) Local Governance: Examples (1)

- ▶ The need for structures which support effective decisions on major region wide issues.
- ▶ Recognising the potential for conflict with higher tiers of government.
- ▶ **London.** The Tony Blair vision. Directly elected mayors and cabinet style government for local government generally, and a strong mayor for London to make region-wide decisions.
- ▶ At what point does the elected executive Mayor model, at least in Westminster tradition countries, cross a boundary between a unitary and a federal state?

Designing Regional (Mega-City) Local Governance: Examples (2)

- ▶ **Toronto and Ottawa.** Both result from enforced amalgamations by a provincial government focused on efficiency and cost reduction. Both are ward-based with relatively weak mayor models. Both have been widely regarded as dysfunctional as a result.
- ▶ Essentially a design fault. No suitable checks and balances were put in place to mitigate against parochialism.
- ▶ **Vancouver (The Greater Vancouver Regional District).** 23 municipalities within a single regional governance structure which is essentially voluntaristic – municipalities can choose whether and which service sharing arrangements they will join.

Designing Regional (Mega-City) Local Governance: Examples (3)

- ▶ “The genius of the Regional-District system in British Columbia is that the Vancouver city-region obtains most of the benefits of having a metropolitan authority without the addition of another competing tier of directly-elected local government.” (Sancton 2005).
- ▶ **Brisbane.** A strong city governance structure (executive Mayor plus Civic Cabinet and party political control) at the centre of a rapidly growing metropolitan region.
- ▶ the State as de facto regional authority including regional planning and much infrastructure.

Designing Regional (Mega-City) Local Governance: Examples (4)

- ▶ **Auckland.** Mayoral powers allow the Mayor to choose a weak or strong mayoral model – the power to establish committees and appoint committee chairs could underpin strong cabinet style governance, or could be used as the present mayor has to try and create a consensus-based Council.
- ▶ A unique use of council controlled organisations with strong democratic accountability – balancing corporate and representative strands.
- ▶ The future of local boards as community governance is still unclear.

Have We Solved the Regional Level Design Problem

- ▶ Almost certainly not. Unresolved issues include:
 - The vulnerability to parochialism, and the challenge of how to mitigate its downsides whilst drawing on its strengths (the commitment of elected members).
 - The ongoing tendency of higher tiers of government to intervene.
- ▶ Other issues include the risk of overly concentrating power in executive mayors, the growing importance of metropolitan centres, and hence the need for good governance, and the conflict between formal and functional boundaries.

Local or Neighbourhood Governance(1)

- ▶ The second necessary dimension of effective metropolitan governance.
- ▶ There are at least two compelling arguments for strong local or neighbourhood governance.
- ▶ The first is the need for strong local knowledge and networks to support the effective delivery of major social services. The second is the need for means of engaging at a community level on those crucial challenges for local government which depend on behavioural change.

Local or Neighbourhood Governance(1)

- ▶ Consider the UK coalition government's Big Society initiative, its 'predecessor' total place, the Manifesto for Londoners, and Lambeth Borough Council's co-operative Council initiative.
- ▶ How will the new Auckland Supercity take the crucial decisions on water and road pricing, climate change initiatives and much more without genuinely shared understanding with its many communities?
- ▶ Establishing effective local neighbourhood governance is the Elephant in the governance room. Addressing it will require politicians themselves to go through major behaviour change, and understand the difference between quick decisions and effective decisions.

Concluding Comments

- ▶ Good governance at the city level is a combination of capacity and capability plus legitimacy.
- ▶ Much recent restructuring has focused too much on the one and not enough on the other. We need a major shift in understanding, and empowerment.
- ▶ Consider the analogy of the great circle route between Europe and America – just as we know that the straight line is not the quickest route, so we need to learn administratively neat decision-making processes are not the quickest way to agreement on how to ensure urban sustainability.