

Social Capital and Local Governance Regimes: Early Childhood Development Roundtables in British Columbia¹

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The concept of social capital has received enormous attention in the social sciences and beyond. Researchers have shown a particular interest in “neighbourhood effects” – how neighbourhood social capital and local area environments might impact a variety of outcomes in positive and negative ways. However, insufficient attention has been given to issues of local governance in the social capital literature. This is despite much of the public policy, urban politics and multilevel governance literature that associates local democracy with positive policy outcomes. Surprisingly though, little such research has considered local governance in the area of early childhood development (ECD). Therefore, the paper will explore the relationship between “neighbourhood effects” and local democracy within the setting of policies for families and children. It will map and compare the community governance structures at work in the area of ECD in several British Columbia (BC) communities. Through the lens of feminist political economy, the paper will argue that by canvassing the ECD roundtables across BC communities, at least three regimes can be identified: the Traditional Public Administration (TPA), the New Public Management (NPM), and the Community Democracy (CD). While all three are strongly shaped by the dominant neoliberal context, the latter seems to be the most successful in bringing together procedural and substantive democracy in the realm of ECD.

A Feminist Political Economy of Social Capital and Local Governance

Despite the immense popularity of social capital as an analytical and conceptual tool, it has attracted much criticism. While social capital can be useful to political science, greater attention must be paid to the power relations in which it is imbedded. This study locates both social capital and governance within a neoliberal gender order and an overarching political economy of residualism for ECD policy at both the provincial and federal scales.

Social Capital and Local Governance

A range of social capital components (network ties and diversity, neighbourhood attachment, resources, collective efficacy, personal safety, health) are relevant to the area of ECD. However, social capital tends to direct focus to the level of the individual or family (Warner 1999), and not on the impact of local governance and political processes and institutions (such as local political economy, community partnerships, citizen engagement) on child outcomes. This is indicative of a significant gap in the social

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capital research, which largely sidesteps issues of democracy and the state. In the bulk of the literature, very little is said about the role of government in fostering or damaging social capital (Kumlin and Rothstein 2005; OECD 2001; Skocpol 1996; Taylor 2002, 2003; Warner 1999). Yet as Taylor indicates, “the state has an important role to play in creating the conditions in which social capital, and indeed civil society, can thrive and avoiding policies which destroy them” (2003: 230). Local government can support and complement social capital development in communities (Taylor 2003; OECD 2001). Governance is also needed to address inequalities in social capital.

This project makes questions of governance central to the process of social capital development. It also contributes to the public policy, urban politics, and multilevel governance literature, which associates local democracy with positive policy outcomes (Bradford 2003a, 2005, 2007). In doing so, the study explores the relationship between two concepts that have thus far remained largely distinct: “neighbourhood effects” (Kershaw et al. 2007) and neighbourhood, local, or community democracy (Taylor 2003). “Neighbourhood effects” refers to “the impact on developmental outcomes of the area in which children live” (Beauvais and Jenson 2003: v).

Researchers have been canvassing the multiplicity of experiments in neighbourhood, local, or community democracy, but seldom in the area of ECD (Beauvais and Jenson 2003). Mahon and Jenson point out that in the explosion of interest in cities, “research remains limited and policy-makers do not often concentrate on this intersection of ELCC and the local. As policy communities focus on Canadian cities, for example, they still tend to pay more attention to physical than social infrastructure” (2006: 6). Furthermore, the urban governance literature generally does not clearly map democratic processes to substantive policy outcomes (OECD 2001). There has been some isolated attention to the relationship between neighbourhood effects and democracy. For instance, Connor and Brink (1999) maintain that in addition to socioeconomic factors, social organization and social capital affect child development. Beauvais and Jenson also argue that socioeconomic status (SES) alone cannot determine child outcomes, and that other factors, such as family composition, resident mobility, and civic engagement matter as well (2003). They note that at a policy level, “there are relatively few programs that focus both on children and community development, seeking to shape community involvement and empowerment as well as improve child outcomes” (Beauvais and Jenson 2003: vi).

Not only does policy design rarely address the link between child outcomes (substance) and community engagement (process), there also appears to be a lack of academic studies that systematically explore this relationship. Our study seeks to do so. Having said this, Beauvais and Jenson (2003) draw attention to the difficulty in designing neighbourhood effects studies that show causality. It should be stressed that we do not claim to be measuring a causal relationship between child outcomes and community democracy. We are attempting to map the different local governance structures and processes that exist across our sample ECD communities and simply hope to glean democratic lessons from these communities.

Feminist Political Economy and Governance

There is a risk that with the “local turn” in governance and public policy (Bradford 2003a: 3), community governance can be viewed in abstraction, outside of the power relations in which it is situated. For this reason, Levi has denounced the “romanticism of both associational life and, more generally, social capital” (1996: 51). Similarly, for Gunn and Gunn, social capital is really about the “political economy of communities” (1991: 1). Others have also developed notions of social capital more attuned to social relations, with critical and feminist scholars drawing extensively from Bourdieu’s work. Saegert notes that Bourdieu “understands social capital as a mechanism for reproducing social class and unequal access to economic and cultural capital” (Saegert 6). In this way, reliance on social capital is very likely to reinforce, rather than to challenge inequality. Indeed, in their study of child care in Canadian municipalities, Mahon and Jenson found that neighbourhoods with more social capital were able to secure better services (2006).

From the point of view of feminist political economy (FPE), this is to be expected, but is at the same time, unacceptable. This is because FPE emphasizes the tension between structural constraints and agency – the importance of negotiating contradictions that are inherent in a neoliberal gender order to develop democratic alternatives. Underpinning this orientation is an understanding that “[e]xpanding democratic control over the institutions of society is fundamentally hampered by capitalism” (Gunn and

Gunn 1991: 151).² Therefore, this analysis is guided by an FPE approach that is concerned with the ways in which power inequalities are institutionalized in governing structures, but also with the agency of political actors and the potential for democratization. The paper argues that governance is guided by a primary set of principles, norms, discourses, rules and procedures, or a governance (and gender) regime. Each regime advances different notions of representation, citizenship, and democracy that have particular gendered and racialized consequences. Each regime also has a distinctive understanding of social capital underlying it. However, each regime also operates within, and is structured by, neoliberalism as the dominant governance paradigm.

The prevailing approach to studying governance is neo-institutionalism. According to Louise Chappell, neo-institutionalism “is interested in examining the way institutional arrangements shape political behaviour,” and the ways that institutions within a given system interact with each other (2002: 8). Neo-institutionalism is useful in emphasizing the important role of political institutions in shaping public policy, but says much less about how the institutions themselves are shaped by power relations, and how social forces bring about change within such a context. It does not capture Warner’s conceptualization of the state as “both product and producer of social and economic relations” (1999: 379).

FPE considers “the historical intersection of gender, class, race/ethnicity, colonialism, state, politics, ideology, sexuality, and identity,” and views the state as “a contested terrain” (Maroney and Luxton 1997: 87, 89). It seeks a more radical restructuring of state institutions, society, and the relations between them because popular control of governing institutions is a positive end in itself (procedural democracy), and because it can lead to better public policy (substantive democracy) (Findlay 2008).³ From this view, whether and how women and other marginalized groups are represented in the policy process matters. These questions are addressed quite differently across varieties of local governance regimes providing disparate prospects for transformation. And while these regimes are responsive to pressure from below, local governance on its own is not enough (Mahon 2007),

The Political Economy of Scale

Modern policy emerges from a process of multilevel governance, with the involvement of several levels of government (federal, provincial, municipal), and often a complex web of non-governmental actors. The political economy of scale gets at the ‘who does what and where’ of governance. It is especially important for appreciating a field like ECD, which encompasses the responsibilities of all three levels of government in Canada and spans multiple policy areas. Any study of the local scale must bear this in mind. As the ECD coordinator in one BC community astutely concluded, local governance can only go so far without broader political, economic and social change for families with children in Canada.

Her observation is echoed in extensive research showing that cross-government coordination and trust, government capacity and the federal role is essential (Bradford 2003a, 2007; Jenson and Mahon 2002; Mahon and Jenson 2006; Mahon 2007; Warner 1999). For instance, as Warner points out,

the mismatch between the current enthusiasm for social capital and the scale and depth of community development problems is a reflection of the general retreat of the state under globalization. Thus a focus on community social capital building must be complemented by programs that address transformation in governmental institutions and markets at the local, state and national levels (1999: 389).

Citing the Swedish child care experience, Mahon concludes that “[l]ocal mobilization may help to establish the credibility of an egalitarian alternative, but these opportunities will remain but fragile local experiments if activists are not able to secure changes at higher levels” (Mahon 2007: 76). Mahon and Jenson also emphasize that

² Bradford also stresses the limits on “associative governance” that are inherent in a liberal democracy (1998: 540).

³ Similarly, Mahon and Jenson indicate that their “study is motivated by a concern with identifying routes to successful governance as well as adequate services” (Mahon and Jenson 2006: 6).

as the government with the most limited tax base, cities cannot, on their own, strengthen and expand local ELCC [early learning and child care] to the extent needed by children and their families. Recognizing that the other governments must join the partnership and that local government must be recognized as a full partner, the report argues for local or regional solutions within strong federal and provincial frameworks (2006: 3-4).

It cannot be ignored that local ECD governance is imbedded in a federal and provincial context in which:

- 1) Canada is far behind other industrialized countries in spending on, and access to, ECD programs and services, according to international comparisons by the OECD and UNICEF.⁴
- 2) In Canada, ¾ of women with young children are in the paid labour force, but less than 20% of children outside of Quebec have access to a regulated child care space. In addition, Canadians pay among the highest child care fees in the industrialized world.
- 3) There has been a major reversal of progress on ECD policy in Canada since the 2006 cancellation of the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Bilateral Agreements on ELCC by the federal Conservative government
- 4) The provincial government in BC made \$35-\$40 million in cuts to child care in 2007, advocates characterize the province's investment approach as "ABC: Anything But Child Care," and plans for all-day kindergarten and pre-kindergarten for three and four year olds have been stalled.
- 5) Overall child vulnerability rates in BC have increased from 26% of children to 29% over two waves of Early Development Instrument (EDI) data and BC has had the highest 'child poverty' rate in the country for the last five years.⁵

This context, embedded within thirty years of neoliberalism, is a lot for local democratic community governance alone to overcome. As Bezanson indicates:

Decentralization, a focus on the local or the 'community,' and an adherence to the idea that stronger social capital (networks, associational life, trust and confidence in institutions) will result in stronger communities means that redistribution and measures to counter structural class, race and gender inequalities (among others) are not foregrounded. While non-state organizations are central to fortifying democracy and building social movements, the Putnam version of social capital as a social or collective good, they *cannot* replace a redistributive and responsive state (2006: 433).

Methodology

The methodology for this study seeks to bring together provincial, population-level data on early childhood development with qualitative, community-based research on local governance in BC. The project is part of the broad research agenda of the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP).

Community Selection: The Collaborative Sampling Framework

HELP is a consortium of interdisciplinary researchers across six BC universities: the University of British Columbia, the University of Victoria, Simon Fraser University, the University of Northern British Columbia, Thompson Rivers University, and the University of British Columbia Okanagan, that is funded largely through the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). Its mission is to work with government and communities to advance research that will improve the lives of children. Much of HELP's activities are linked to a tool designed by Offord and Janus at McMaster, called the Early Development Instrument

⁴ See OECD (2006) and Adamson (2008).

⁵ The 'child poverty' rate increased in BC from 18.2 % in 1998 to 24.2% in 2002. In 2006, it was 21.9%. In reality, 'child poverty' is a measure of family poverty, especially the poverty of female-headed households.

(EDI). The EDI is used in BC to measure children's development upon entering kindergarten.⁶ Since 2004, it has been used in all public schools in the province. Each February, kindergarten teachers complete a series of questions for each child in the class.⁷ The EDI is designed to get a holistic picture of children's physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development and communication skills. It is not used as a measure of individual children. The results are compiled at the population level: the neighbourhood, school district, health area, and province.⁸

The EDI data has been used to inform the work of communities, governments, and researchers, and has guided research spanning from "cell-to-society" at HELP. Because there is such a wide range of projects being conducted, researchers sought a method for selecting common locations in which to study community effects on early development. Using the EDI results, HELP has identified neighbourhoods where child outcomes are different than would be predicted based on local SES. In other words, they are 'off-diagonal' – child vulnerability levels are higher or lower than expected in these places.⁹ Prioritizing clusters of stable 'on' and 'off-diagonal' neighbourhoods when making sampling decisions achieves two goals: first, it directs researchers to neighbourhoods where further research is particularly valuable because existing models consistently do not predict local outcomes compared to other nearby places; and second, it facilitates better coordination of research across the biological sciences, education, social sciences, epidemiology, geography, architecture, etc. because the Collaborative Sampling Framework (CSF) allows for the collection of data on a wide range of characteristics in a common set of communities.

As part of the interdisciplinary, collaborative endeavor organized in BC, this study designs its sample in the light of the CSF, searching first for adjacent pairs of school districts/municipalities that are home to diverging clusters of off-diagonal neighborhoods: one home to many neighborhoods doing worse than expected; the other home to neighborhoods doing better than expected. The best example of this pattern exists across the adjacent districts of the Central Okanagan and Vernon, located in the interior of BC. A second pair of nearby districts captures a similar pattern in the urban lower mainland: Surrey is home to many neighborhoods that do better than would be expected, whereas Vancouver is home almost exclusively to neighborhoods that do well and poorly precisely as researchers would predict given Census measures of socioeconomic status (SES). A second criterion for inclusion is communities that are home to neighborhoods doing well and poorly as researchers would predict, *along with* neighborhoods that are doing better and worse than SES-based predictions would imply. Prince George in central-northern BC and the three school districts that represent Greater Victoria on Vancouver Island capture this pattern of EDI results. Finally, we completed the sample design by selecting communities which already had reputations for either very strong, or very weak, ECD governance. Revelstoke represents the former; and Dawson Creek the latter. These final selections offer additional points of reference with which to examine governance activity in the communities selected because of EDI results. In addition, the sample communities have the advantage of moving beyond the focus on major, global cities that is prevalent in the urban policy literature to include mid-sized locales (Bradford 2003a) and more rural areas. They also provide a good representation of the diverse political economy of BC.

Research Design, Data Collection and Analysis

The study considers local governance structures including municipal government, local health authorities, school boards, and in particular, local partnership structures in each of the communities, in an effort to understand both intra-community variation across neighbourhoods, and inter-community variation. Through a qualitative method, it maps, and compares the community governance structures at work in the area of ECD in the selected BC communities.

The method involves a number of research choices. First, we are interested in *governance* and not simply government. In explaining the difference between the two, Neil Bradford says that

⁶ It is also used in other Canadian provinces, other countries including Australia, the USA, Chile, Jamaica and Kosovo, and by the World Bank and UNICEF (Kershaw et al.).

⁷ It takes teachers about twenty minutes per child to complete the questionnaire. Teachers are paid for their time and HELP provides training in completing the EDI.

⁸ See HELP (2008).

⁹ For an elaboration, see: Paul Kershaw, et al. (in press).

State bureaucracies no longer can claim a monopoly on policy knowledge, and they encounter more resistance in imposing their will on other actors. In order to meet the policy challenges, new relations must be forged among the state, civil society, and the economy, and within the different branches and levels of government ... Governance is about the collective capacity to set policy directions, implement them, and adjust as circumstances warrant (2005: 10).

We have also drawn from Paul Sabatier's work. He distinguishes between two approaches to policy research: "top-down" and "bottom-up." As Sabatier explains, the top-down approach is concerned primarily with the role of top-level decision-makers (1986). In contrast,

the bottom-up approach of Hjern et al. starts by identifying the network of actors involved in service delivery in one or more local areas and asks them about their goals, strategies, activities, and contacts. It then uses the contacts as a vehicle for developing a network technique to identify the local, regional, and national actors involved in the planning, financing, and execution of the relevant governmental and non-governmental programs. This provides a mechanism for moving from street level bureaucrats [sic] (the 'bottom') up to the 'top' policy-makers in both the public and private sectors" (Sabatier 1986: 32).

Given our focus on governance and community democracy, (and the feminist political economy approach described above), the model of "bottom-up" policy research has special resonance. Therefore, we are using local ECD Roundtables as our starting point in each community for consistency in method. We have begun by observing Roundtable meetings and conducting a scan and content analysis of institutional and policy documents in each community. In the next phase, we will interview Roundtable participants, relevant members of the policy community: municipal government, health authority and school board officials, and community organizations and individuals involved in local ECD policy.

We have several reasons for starting with the ECD Roundtables. First, all but one¹⁰ of our priority communities has a Roundtable in place, so they provide a common entry point into the ECD policy community. Second, they include those who are most directly engaged in, and are very knowledgeable about the policy area. Third, they act as a bridging institution between the government and community and therefore a window into the governance process. Fourth, they are feminized governance structures, helping to disrupt the tendency in the social capital literature to focus on male social networks and organizations. Finally, this method corresponds with HELP's mandate, which is about community development.

The "bottom-up" or community-focused framework addresses the main weakness of the top-down approach: a lack of attention to pressure and influence from below. But the role of high-level decision-makers is certainly still significant. Considering Sabatier's desire for a synthesis approach, and his emphasis on the "policy subsystem" (1986 40), it is important to underscore that we are interested in mapping the entire policy community -- the elected and non-elected, state and non-state actors that are part of governing local ECD policy.

Increasingly, research on local policy makes a link between greater community and citizen engagement and good public policy (Beauvais and Jenson 2003; Bradford 2003a, 2005, 2007). Given the thrust of such research, without demonstrating a *causal* link between child outcomes and community governance, we should anticipate that in those communities that are doing well, and in those that are doing better than expected, there are effective structures of local governance in place. In other words, we should find that there are, in fact, democratic community effects on ECD.

Some studies have shown a connection between community democracy and material outcomes. The OECD concluded that

concrete results have been obtained by partnerships. Economic development has been stimulated in under-developed areas where other policies had poor results; localised barriers to the re-integration of disadvantaged groups have been overcome; appropriate training has been provided, helping local communities to break the vicious circle of dependence and poverty and to reap the benefits from growth; localised business development has been nurtured through adequate labour market co-ordination" (OECD 2001: 108).

¹⁰ Dawson Creek does not have a Roundtable structure in place.

There is also some correlational evidence with community health. A study by Caughy, O'Campo and Brodsky found that “[h]igh levels of community involvement may be associated with improved health outcomes by resulting in higher resource availability in the neighbourhood or through empowering residents to access service as individuals” (1999: 620). We aim to determine whether similar results can be observed in the area of ECD.

Here, some cautionary notes are necessary. Should there be observable democratic community effects, it does not mean that governance models can be transplanted from one place to the next (Peters and Pierre 233). Yet there does seem to be some key governance characteristics that have been identified across a range of jurisdictions and policy areas that have had a positive impact. In this regard, we should be able to gain a better understanding of the governance strategies that have been most successful in the area of ECD in BC communities. And, as outlined above, we should be able to distinguish between some broad governance categories or regimes.

Even if we can identify some common patterns, research on local governance also shows that with participatory structures in place, a significant impact on policy results cannot occur in the absence of support from a national policy framework that includes coordinated multilevel governance and direct, universal, policy interventions (Beauvais and Jenson 2003; Mahon and Jenson 2006). Thus, it is unlikely that local community governance on its own will dramatically impact ECD results, but such a finding will not discount the importance of democratic governance. There is value to partnerships and community democracy beyond policy outcomes, namely accountability and representation (OECD 2001), or procedural democracy. What it will underscore is that democratic policy processes and local governance regimes must be “scaled up” (Warner 1999: 389) and that social capital must be developed at multiple scales. Communities themselves have expressed such qualified, or ambivalent, confidence in local democracy, which leads us to discussion of the final aspect of the research method.

Feminist Methodology and Community-Based Research

The approach taken in this project reflects HELP's orientation toward community capacity-building, and the influence of feminist methodology and community-based research. Feminist and community-oriented qualitative research is essentially about the valuing of community voices and the local production of knowledge. We have tried to incorporate these principles into the research process in several ways.

First, negotiating initial entry into communities has been facilitated by HELP's longstanding relationship-building efforts. This provided a foundation for establishing credibility and trust with communities. From there, we have sought to integrate elements of community-based, participatory research. One of the particular challenges associated with the CSF is that multiple projects are occurring in the same neighbourhoods, with the potential to over-burden members of the ECD community. Therefore, respect for participant's time (Marshall and Rossman 1995), and in this case, especially women's (often) unpaid time is a high priority. We have tried to coordinate with other researchers in a way that minimizes overlap and demands on community and to design our work in a way that will provide local benefits and meet shared research needs (Marshall and Rossman 1995). This has involved approaching the study with a spirit of reciprocity, by arranging research partnerships, integrating community questions into the research design, and committing to information-sharing and report-back.

This collaborative approach also extends inside HELP, which has reinforced the importance of research as a collective activity. Our project is supported by a research team – Lynell Anderson, Paul Kershaw, and Joanne Schroeder – who provide ongoing feedback and discussion, and lend their diverse and interdisciplinary, expertise.

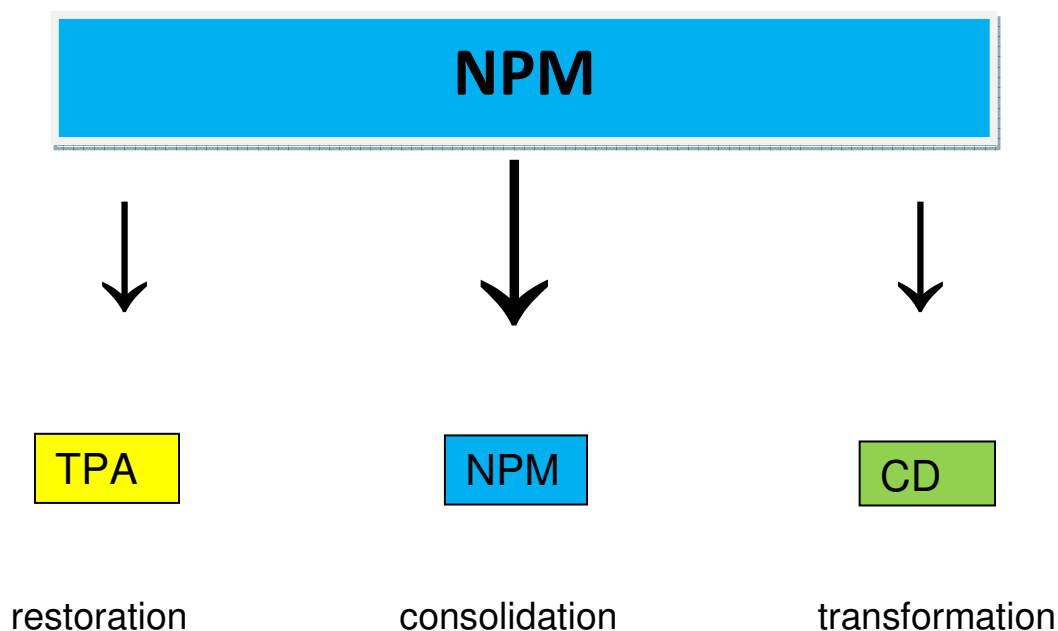
As the study continues to unfold, feminist methodology will guide the gathering of interview data, emphasizing the significance and authority of community knowledge, stories, and lived experience (Marshall and Rossman ix) to our understandings of governance. In order to centre this learning within the researcher's interpretation, the analysis may employ aspects of narrative inquiry, where whenever possible, information from participants is conveyed in their own words.¹¹ Participants will also have the opportunity to review interview transcripts.

¹¹ As Janet Mort explains, “[t]he narrative approach to qualitative research provides an opportunity for the researcher(s) to consider and propose theories but also invites readers to engage with the narrative and draw their own conclusions” (2009: 7). It “is meant to communicate life's experiences, both personal and social, in relevant and meaningful ways” (Mort 2009: 23).

Feminist methodology is about process, but also purpose. It rejects claims of value neutrality, viewing research as a political endeavor that seeks to “radically change fundamental social structures and to reconceptualize the entire research enterprise” (Marshall and Rossman 1995: 1). And it demands that researchers make their biases and their theoretical framework explicit (Marshall and Rossman 1995). In this case, a desire to advance principles of democratic governance and universal, quality ECD policy underpins the work.

Categorizing Local Governance Regimes

It is common in the local governance literature to see reference to new challenges (globalization, re-scaling, technological and environmental change, democratic pressure) requiring new models of policy-making (Bradford 2003a, 2005, 2007; Taylor 2003). The research often traces a wide range of governance experiments, so it is unexpected that a community will fall squarely into any one category.¹² Nevertheless, as already noted, governance approaches tend to be guided by some identifiable characteristics. Since each has a different relationship to the neoliberal climate in which they all exist, a key distinguishing feature of a regime is the extent to which it is motivated by resistance or acceptance. Furthermore, as Albo (1993) outlines, in the search for alternatives, are governance solutions sought in the traditions of the past, or in creating new futures? We submit that, three regimes, the Traditional Public Administration (TPA), the New Public Management (NPM) and the Community Democracy (CD) respectively embody processes of restoration, consolidation and transformation.



Traditional Public Administration (TPA)

Greg Albo's typology is useful. He identifies three different governance schools or regimes. The first remains committed to a conventional approach to public management. It places high priority on the neutral, professional expertise of the public service, and on the accountability of elected officials (Albo 1993). This regime, which we call *traditional public administration* (TPA), has been observed in the local governance research.¹³ Some studies have found that attention to transforming governance has been more rhetorical than real, and that very little has changed in the operation of local government (OECD 2001). The TPA regime is more about government than governance, primarily focusing on elected

¹² It is more likely that there will be a spectrum within and across the regimes.

¹³ Denhardt and Denhardt use the term “old public administration” (5).

politicians and professional bureaucrats as the key players to manage the policy process, as the ethical guardians of the common good and social inclusion, and as the providers of technical information and expertise. Institutions are designed to keep distance between administrators and community through strict rules and procedures, and the politics-administration dichotomy (Bradford 1998; Kathi and Cooper 561; Moore 1995; Peters and Pierre 1998). Administrators are often described as fulfilling the role of 'conduit,' mediating the competing claims of a pluralistic society.

Communities are involved only to the extent that they might be called upon to participate through consultation (with the parameters of discussion established in advance), by engaging in formal lobbying, or as recipients of public funding (Shields and Evans 1998). This circumscribed view of partnership is reflected in Moore's description of the responsibilities of managers who "must mobilize support and resources for the organizations they lead while enlisting the aid of others beyond their organizational boundaries who can help them achieve the substantive results for which they are held accountable" (1995: 23). Rather than mobilizing citizens to make their own preferences known, Moore suggests that managers choose the appropriate societal allies to ensure policy implementation.

Generally, public participation is viewed as a threat to neutral bureaucracy, and is tightly controlled (Kathi and Cooper 2005). In this regime, the most well-connected, well-organized, and well-resourced individuals and groups are able to dominate the process and can develop close relationships with local government. Inequalities in social capital (hierarchical social capital) are reflected in policy influence and a bias toward the powerful is institutionalized (Warner 1999). In some cases, where the state is especially dominant, social capital may be weak overall. Partly due to this narrow policy community, the traditional approach tends to focus on single issues, or 'silos,' not interconnected policy problems (Potapchuk, Crocker and Schechter 1999; Evans, Richmond and Shields 2005).

TPA continues to be relevant because it is not simply temporal – an historical artifact, it is also normative – a strategic response to the growth of neoliberal NPM (Albo 1993). For example, two of the main critics of the NPM, Savoie and Aucoin seek a return to the principles of Weberian administration in the pursuit of democratic reform. For Savoie, "public administration begins and ends with political institutions, notably Parliament and cabinet. Big answers – if they exist, and I am not suggesting that they do – are to be found by fixing these institutions" (Savoie 1995: 118). Aucoin (2000) emphasizes the need to reestablish the expertise of the public service. Gregory also advocates a process of restoration to address the "diminishing public service social capital" (1999: 67), or the level of social capital inside government itself, and the loss of policy-making experience and knowledge. It is possible, then, to find communities guided by TPA.

Actually, the traditional regime can be seen in ECD in a number of ways. The most basic example is in those places where community partnerships or roundtables do not exist, where community capacity is shallow (for instance in Dawson Creek), and where policy is left up to conventional processes. These regimes are also traditional in the sense that even for elected officials and public servants, ECD as a substantive policy sphere, is not on the radar screen. In Dawson Creek, governance innovation focused on sustainability has not spread to include social infrastructure to support families and children.

In communities that do have ECD roundtables, there are still some indications of TPA we might identify. These include: dominance of the policy field by upper levels of government or lack of multilevel coordination; top-down governance and reliance on public servants as experts; policy silos; gendered (male breadwinner model), residual, paternalistic approach to family policy; limited community participation and/or involvement of the 'usual suspects,' elitism and monopoly of powerful groups; hierarchical or weak social capital; and primacy of ministerial accountability. In Victoria, relative to other roundtables, it looks like the municipal government plays little role, the silos of child care and early learning appear largely in tact, and the partners seem to be largely traditional.¹⁴

Finally, there are communities that are more closely aligned with one of the other regimes, but contain some TPA qualities. For instance, Surrey's promising roundtable still struggles within a policy context that lacks coordination across levels of government and policy areas and that contains tension

¹⁴ Strictly speaking, even the 'traditional' partners in ECD, are rather 'untraditional' historically. But in the modern policy environment for ECD, 'traditional' community partners include those such as health, education and social services, with little representation from more marginalized communities (i.e. feminist/women's equality, Aboriginal peoples, ethno-cultural, disability). Interestingly, labour seems to play little role in these partnerships.

between ECD as a public versus a private, family responsibility. Revelstoke's ECD Committee, while a leader in the creation of democratic governance, does not reflect the full diversity of the community.

New Public Management (NPM)

The second governance model that Albo outlines is a neoliberal one that prioritizes consumer choice and efficiency (1993), or the *New Public Management (NPM)*. In the NPM regime, governance is transformed largely through decentralization and marketization: privatization, the contracting-out of service provision, public-private-partnerships, and offloading of responsibility to voluntary sector organizations and charities. Because the overarching motivation is about public sector downsizing and/or cost saving, not democratization, service delivery functions are decentralized to communities without a corresponding transfer of power and decision-making authority (Shields and Evans 1998). Shields and Evans explain that "[w]hen the proponents of the New Public Management speak of 'partnership' what they have in mind is an operational partnership where the external agent is responsible exclusively for the delivery of a policy over which they have had no role in shaping" (1998: 22).¹⁵ Partners are tightly and centrally controlled through funding and accountability mechanisms such as reporting and performance measurement and participation is highly selective (Bradford 2003a; Evans, Richmond and Shields 2005; OECD 2001).

In this model, not only do power inequalities remain, but they are also intensified. Community partnerships can be captured by elite interests and/or relieve governments of their responsibilities (Bradford 2005). Social capital becomes the vehicle for what Peters and Pierre call "governance without government" (1998: 223). In fact, I have argued elsewhere, with Lynell Anderson (2008), in the context of public reporting, that the NPM's brand of citizen engagement is more about state replacement than democratization. This is made clear in: the precedence given to service provision over advocacy (Evans, Richmond and Shields 83); the public choice delegitimization of 'special interests' and absence of organized labour; and the diversionary preoccupation with performance management (OECD 2001). In the latter case, imposing a business model on communities bogs them down in accountability measures, acting as a distraction from effective policy promotion and development, leading some to refer to "punishment by counting" (Evans, Richmond and Shields 2005: 88).

Within ECD, NPM regimes take a targeted, market-based, 'gender neutral,' child-centred approach to programs and services for families. The citizens-as-customers-or-consumers tune plays out in terms of 'choice' for parents, and hierarchical social capital. Warner shows that services like "Parent Resource Centers provide an example of the limited social capital building effects of individual, client-focused program designs ... They build individual social capital linking parents to each other and the school. By focusing on individual return to parents (higher skills, social network of other parents, better student performance), these programs ensure a return on parental investment" (1999: 386). However, their lack of ability to address broad community issues reinforces inequality (Warner 1999: 386). He contrasts this with a program such as Head Start, where parents serve on a policy council and are "viewed as a partner in production of the service rather than merely a recipient of it," and the mission is the empowerment of the poor (Warner 1999: 385).

Individualized ECD programs and services reinforce NPM values, and in some cases, ECD roundtables also appear to contribute to the consolidation of neoliberal governance. In particular, Vancouver exhibits a number of NPM characteristics. It is intensely child-focused, funding and accountability are a central preoccupation, and given the demographic diversity of Vancouver, there are some key communities missing from the table.¹⁶

Even Revelstoke, which appears to be the "best case scenario" for community democracy, is marked by heavy reliance on the municipality (the level of government with the least policy capacity) and on the local credit union through a PPP funding arrangement. As seen, Victoria's roundtable contains more TPA aspects, but it is striking how the language of value for 'taxpayers' and the separation of early

¹⁵ Aucoin (2000) has also shown that the NPM has resulted in centralization, rather than a decentralization of power.

¹⁶ So far, Vancouver's table is also the only one known to be co-chaired by government (MCFD) and community. It is yet unclear whether this results in a collaborative form of co-management, or a mechanism of control.

learning over care (a favoured neoliberal rhetorical strategy in BC) have crept into its work. In several ways, all of the tables have been affected by the NPM and have internalized its discourse. Albeit to varying degrees: all have taken up the child as the focal point of family policy; have a tendency to either foreground, or slide into, targeted solutions; are constrained to some extent by various performance requirements; have no formal representation from the federal level or from labour; and have work to do on the representation of community diversity and leveling hierarchical social capital. Moreover, all of these under-resourced ECD roundtables are overwhelmingly made up of women, raising questions about the offloading of governance onto the shoulders of those already overburdened. So with this in mind, is change possible?

Community Democracy (CD)

The final approach that Albo describes is one based on the principles of democratic administration and emphasizes citizenship rights, participation and equality (1993). We are calling this the *Community Democracy (CD)* regime. Precedence is given to supporting community capacity-building, and governments are responsible for addressing power imbalances among governance partners. There is a full commitment to power-sharing, co-decision-making and community control. The ultimate goal is to fundamentally transform the process and substance of public policy by making democracy and participation central to the governance regime. While constrained by it, CD is about creating alternatives to neoliberalism and resistance is the distinctive element of the model.

Under the CD regime, governance partnerships and social capital are not substitutes for the state, as they are under the NPM, rather, they are opportunities to re-think the state's relationship with society (Bradford 1998; Gunn and Gunn 1991; Peters and Pierre 229; Taylor 2002). Therefore, "governance without government" (Peters and Pierre 1998: 223) is an impossibility in CD. The model requires an actual restructuring of power, not just offloading the responsibility for the governance and provision of social reproduction onto communities. As Denhardt and Denhardt put it, "citizens are not only customers; they are 'owners'" (2003: 59), thus true partnership in governance means that communities play an active role in the setting of policy (Shields and Evans 1998) and that engagement practices are not merely "cosmetic" (Denhardt and Denhardt 2003: 96). For CD, states must also address inequalities in social capital (Denhardt and Denhardt 2003; Taylor 2002; Warner 1999) and "recapitalize community governance" (Potapchuk, Crocker and Schechter 1999 235). In this way, Potapchuk and Crocke stress the importance of civic capital – the infrastructure required for collaboration, dialogue, deliberation, and communication (1999).

The regime is about both procedural and substantive democracy. Historically, the TPA model brought some substantive advances in policy outcomes, without significant societal participation. The NPM put much more emphasis on procedural matters, but falls short on substantive results. Bradford's analysis of PPPs in Ontario underscores the need for policy *and* representational innovation (2003b). CD looks to transform both the process and substance of policy-making.

Procedurally, for some ECD roundtables, participation and representation are central. Real effort is made to move beyond the "usual suspects" and to reflect the social relations in the community. Warner highlights the importance of such horizontal linkages across community, as well as vertical linkages between community and the state (1999). This can be seen in Surrey, where a diverse range of public and community partners are involved (provincial MCFD, the City of Surrey, United Way, school district, public health, literacy, child care, women's equality, ethno-cultural and immigrant and refugee groups). In addition to the 'standards,' Revelstoke's ECD committee integrates local business and parents. This sectoral and demographic representation seems to incorporate feminist principles of both procedural (or descriptive) and substantive representation. This is crucial in ECD, where women (though not necessarily feminist perspectives) predominate, so procedural representation is simply not enough. Surrey in particular exhibits identity and interest-based representation to bring a women's equality and diversity lens to the table. Surrey and Revelstoke also have some (albeit insufficient) male participation. Given the dangers of ghettoization and offloading for women, CD must be mindful of the presence of men in ECD governance because it is an important indicator of the social value of ECD and the reality is, it is likely to bring needed resources to the table. The absence of labour is also a nagging issue in need of address.

Representation and participation are vital accountability mechanisms for community organizations (Evans, Richmond and Shields 2005).¹⁷ Surrey and Revelstoke stand out in their public engagement and capacity building efforts. Surrey has improved its public communication strategy through community radio; engaging with kindergarten teachers, child care centres and family doctors; organizing social events; and parent consultations and interviews. In response to needs identified in a parent survey, Revelstoke has developed an impressive array of public ECD information in print (pamphlets, a community calendar) that are widely available around the city, and prominently displayed on the community centre bulletin board. They also hold an annual '3-Year Old Fair' for children and parents, and a weekly 'Family Night Out.' A combination of academic research (largely from HELP) and community input through surveys and focus groups form the basis for their work, including their strategic plan.

These tables also have strong individuals or groups who take on the role of "local champions" or convenor (Bradford 2003a), and well-developed structures and processes. Revelstoke has two levels of membership (active and associate) to facilitate participation by respecting different community time constraints. For the same reason, some partners use rotating reps to attend meetings. Precedence is given to consensus decision-making. The capacity of Surrey/White Rock's Make Children First Coalition is supported by a jointly funded¹⁸ Office of Early Childhood Development, Learning and Care established in 2006.

In substantive policy terms, ECD in this regime comprises some basic principles. In Surrey and Revelstoke, roundtables consider ECD to be a universal right, requiring access for all, children as the subjects of public policy are viewed within the proper family and community context, and ECD is viewed as a collective responsibility that requires an integrated approach and work/life balance. This orientation is consistent with research that shows the importance of universal programs to the building and maintenance of social capital (Kumlin and Rothstein 2005) and to good public policy. As Potapchuk and Crocke indicate, "if we recognize that children do well when their parents do well and parents do well when they have living wage jobs in safe and supportive communities, we can begin to articulate the elements of a comprehensive initiative that achieves better outcomes" (1999: 182). Guided by this ECD philosophy, Revelstoke has managed to eliminate the waiting list for child care for 3-5 year olds, and to use an MCFD grant to address the services gap in infant care. Building on the larger male participation in its programs,¹⁹ Revelstoke also actively encourages the participation of fathers.

Of course, all of this exists within the tradition of Canada's liberal, residual welfare state and the absence of effective multilevel governance. Mahon and Jenson's study "shows that there is an increasing understanding that collaboration among all governments and community organizations is essential if children's programs are to expand and move towards greater coherence in ways that will help both children and parents" (Mahon and Jenson 2006 4). Therefore, when analyzing the governance styles of ECD roundtables, an important question is one of resistance.²⁰ Do they simply accept the inadequate, haphazard, patchwork approach to ECD, or do they challenge it? In the cases of Surrey and Revelstoke, they maintain a strong expectation of quality multilevel governance, and target their work accordingly. Revelstoke's committee campaigned against the federal cancellation of the FPT child care agreements, and specifically defines the purview of the ECD coordinator as spanning the local, regional,²¹ provincial and federal levels.

¹⁷ Evans, Richmond and Shields (2005) argue that these accountability mechanisms are often overlooked in the NPM preference for performance measures.

¹⁸ By Fraser Health, MCFD, School District 36 (Surrey), the City of Surrey and the United Way of the Lower Mainland.

¹⁹ which the ECD coordinator explained, is related to the shift work associated with the local resource-based economy.

²⁰ This is especially since conflict is inherent in a liberal democracy and why Saegert maintains that confrontational tactics may sometimes be necessary for community partnerships.

²¹ Revelstoke regularly coordinates with other roundtables in the region.

Conclusion

These ECD roundtables in BC provide some interesting lessons about community governance regimes. Such partnerships can serve to consolidate NPM as the dominant governance form, or to contest it, either aiming to restore the traditional public administration model, or to transform the policy process through community democracy. Yet in the end, there are limits to the procedural and substantive democratic capacities of local communities. Feminist political economy and the political economy of scale direct us to take into account potential political opportunities, as well as the constraints presented by a neoliberal gender order and weak multilevel governance of public policy in Canada. Perhaps one way to negotiate this tension is through a scaling up of community democracy to the national level. Why not a pan-Canadian roundtable of roundtables governing ECD?

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