

**“BORDERLAND COMMUNITY AND THE REFORM OF THE
WINDSOR-DETROIT BORDER”**

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BORDERLAND COMMUNITY AND THE REFORM OF THE WINDSOR-DETROIT BORDER

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Abstract:

A growing and diverse academic literature exists on the functional, cultural and political linkages between border communities. These examinations of borderland communities seek to explain why and how linkages develop and assess the strength and implications of these relationships. In North America, Detroit-Windsor is the quintessential metropolitan border region along the Canada-U.S. border. It is a community that shares many problems and policy concerns as well as strong functional linkages. Over recent years one of these concerns has been the reform of the Detroit River border crossing. This is the busiest land border crossing in North America and it is central to the regional economy as well as the wider North American economy. Over the past decade, the senior governments have debated reform of border infrastructure and the access routes to planned and existing crossings. One of the central considerations in this set of reforms has been the construction of a new crossing to reduce wait times and increase infrastructural redundancy at this key choke point. Any new crossing will have a major impact on the local communities and various local actors on both sides of the border have sought to participate in the policy debate and influence the decision-making process. This paper examines the extent to which local actors in Detroit and Windsor have interacted and sought to coordinate their policy positions and strategies within the border reform debate. The paper focuses on the extent of the interaction among municipal governments and community groups in an effort to map and understand functional and political relationships between local actors in this dynamic border space.

INTRODUCTION

The Detroit River border crossing links Michigan, Detroit, a large but declining U.S. city of approximately 750,000 residents, with Windsor, Ontario, a small Canadian city of 250,000 residents. These cities are closely linked in terms of geography, economics and society. There are, for example, considerable flows of people across the border taking advantage of neighbouring cultural and commercial attractions and also employment opportunities. The cities also share many policy problems and concerns. These include problems affecting the automotive sector, particularly evident in the wake of the post-2008 'great recession', environmental concerns, and issues relating to the Detroit River border crossing.

This border crossing is a central element in the regional economy, and particularly the integrated automotive sector with its manufacturing and supply plants in both Ontario and Michigan. The border is also vital to the wider North American economy and indeed is the busiest international border in the world with respect to commercial trade. Over the past decade, and particularly following the terrorist attacks of September 11th 2001, this border crossing has been the subject of intensive and extensive policy debate as governments on both sides of the border have turned their attention to the security and efficiency of border infrastructure.¹ These debates have ranged over a number of issues including whether a new border crossing is required; where a new crossing and its plazas should be located; how a new crossing should be integrated with the existing highway systems on both sides of the border; and who should pay for any infrastructure reform.

The Detroit River border thus both divides and links two states and also two local communities. Indeed, it is the importance of this border, combined with the size of the two communities on either side, which has led the Windsor-Detroit area to be frequently studied within the literature on borderland studies.² This literature examines the relative importance of social, commercial and political links across communities straddling international borders. It raises questions about the extent to which local communities compete with each other in a globalized economic context or whether cross-border links can and do mediate competitive economic pressures. It is at least possible that in a context of shared policy problems, local actors will develop cooperative working strategies based upon shared interests and seek to cooperate to influence policy outcomes.

This paper explores these issues in relation to the reform of the Detroit River border crossing. It examines the engagement of cross-border actors in the debate over the need for a new border crossing and its potential location. Specifically, the paper examines the extent to which municipal and community actors on both sides of the border have interacted in the development of policy positions, whether they have shared policy

¹ See Kergin, M. & Matthiesen, B. (2008). *A New Bridge for Old Allies*. Toronto: Canadian International Council; Austin, J.C., Dezenski, E. & Affolter-Caine, B. (2008). *The Vital Connection: Reclaiming Great Lakes Economic Leadership in the Bi-National U.S.-Canadian Region*. Washington D.C.: Brookings.

² See Brunet-Jailly, E. (2000). Globalization, Integration and Cross-Border Relations in the Metropolitan Area of Detroit and Windsor. *International Journal of Economic Development* 2, no. 3: 379-401; Brunet, E. (2006). NAFTA and Cross-Border Relations in Niagara, Detroit and Vancouver. *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 21, no. 2: 1-19; Nelles, J. (2010). Cooperation in Crisis? An Analysis of Cross-border Intermunicipal Relations in the Detroit-Windsor Region. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Geographers, Washington, DC. 14 April; Konrad, V. & Nicol, H.N. (2008). *Beyond Walls: Re-Inventing the Canada-United States Borderlands*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

objectives and whether they have worked cooperatively in seeking to achieve these objectives. It finds that despite strong linkages between the communities and economies on either side of the border collaboration between local political actors on the subject of a new border crossing has been relatively minimal. This finding is somewhat surprising given the collection of theoretical literature that details the barriers to the emergence of cross-border cooperation in metropolitan areas, which identifies few significant impediments to political integration in the Detroit-Windsor region. However, these findings are consistent with previous research on this border region that also identified weak political linkages at the local level between border communities.³ This ensemble of (somewhat incongruous) results represents an important contribution to the development of theory on the evolution and political integration of borderland communities. The paper's research is based on interviews with Detroit and Windsor municipal and community actors carried out through 2010 and 2011, as well as examination of their policy positions based on analysis of secondary sources.

BORDERS AND BORDER COMMUNITIES: ASSESSING INTEGRATION

International boundaries are a paradoxical concept. They conjure up images of barriers and limits yet in many parts of the world they are crossed routinely by millions of people and goods every day. A national border may demarcate the territorial frontier of political and legal jurisdiction and divide individuals on either side linguistically or culturally. However, changeable boundaries are just as likely to arbitrarily divide peoples with a common heritage as to separate distinctive ones and, where cross-border interchanges are permitted, communities on either side have thrived and intertwined because of their proximity to advantages and opportunities in other nations. It is no surprise that borders are described as both boundaries and bridges, as the sources of community resources and identities, and as separations and interfaces.⁴

Much of the scholarship on cross-border spaces focuses on unpacking their paradoxical nature. It seeks to explain why some border communities have become functionally and politically integrated while others fail to develop significant linkages. This literature posits a wide set of factors that affect the development of cooperative relationships and integration between borderland communities. These can be broadly classified as factors that relate to local contexts, functional interdependencies, and asymmetries between jurisdictions.⁵ According to this theoretical framework the Detroit-Windsor region exhibits many of the characteristics of highly integrated border communities.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Anderson, J. & O'Dowd, L. (1999). Border, Border Regions and Territoriality: Contradictory Meanings, Changing Significance. *Regional Studies* 33, no. 7: 593-604; Nelles, J. & Walther, O. (forthcoming, 2011). Changing European Borders: From Separation to Interface? *Articulo – Journal of Urban Research* 6; Sohn, C. & Walther (2011). Building a Cross-border Metropolitan Region: The Political Stakes of Scalar Restructuring in C. Sohn (Ed), *Luxembourg: An Emerging Cross-border Metropolitan Region*. Brussels: Peter Lang.

⁵ Nelles (2010); Brunet-Jailly, E. & Dupeyron, B. (2007). Introduction: Borders, Borderlands and Porosity in Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly (Ed), *Borderlands: Comparing Border Security in North America and Europe*, 1-17. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press.

Contextual variables are the institutional and spatial conditions that can shape the relationship between actors in cross-border regions. For instance, geography defines the range of potential partners and their distribution relative to the border spaces.⁶ In this case, cross-border relations are concentrated on the two central municipalities despite the presence of over a hundred cities, township and county governments in the region. The dominance of Detroit and Windsor of their respective metropolitan regions creates a favourable environment for institutional cooperation. Cooperation and communication between local authorities on either side of the border are also more likely in the context of positive relationships and strong institutional linkages between other levels of government.⁷ The relationship between all levels of Canadian and American governments has been, for the most part, peaceful and amicable and the two countries are productively involved in a wide variety of bi-national and international organizations and institutions in issue areas from environmental management to international trade.⁸ Furthermore, communication between all levels of government on the issue of the border has also been largely positive,⁹ albeit subject to occasional dispute, particularly in the post 9/11 environment.¹⁰

The Detroit-Windsor region is also characterized by a high degree of functional interdependency in terms of both socio-economic and cultural connections. The physical links between the two cities make up one of the largest crossings and transport almost 30 percent of all Canada- U.S. trade.¹¹ Between 7,000 and 10,000 trucks cross the Ambassador Bridge alone each day.¹² The travel patterns of individuals also demonstrate the degree to which the region functions as a cross-border metropolitan space. Over 80 percent of passenger vehicle traffic across the border is local between greater Windsor

⁶ Ibid.; Heddebaut, O. (2004). The EUROREGION from 1991 to 2020: An Ephemeral Stamp? In Olivier Kramsch & Barbara Hooper (Eds), *Cross-Border Governance in the European Union*, 70-87. New York: Routledge.

⁷ Brunet-Jailly (2006); Haas, E. (1953). *The Uniting of Europe*. Stanford, CT: Stanford University Press; Scott, J., Sweedler, A. Ganster, P. & Eberwein, W-D. (1997). Dynamics of Transboundary Interactions in a Comparative Perspective, in P. Ganster, A. Sweedler, J. Scott & W-D. Eberwein (Eds), *Borders and Border Regions in Europe and North America*. San Diego: San Diego State University Press.

⁸ As one Canadian Prime Minister expressed:

“Let no one seek to devalue the achievements of our friendship by glossing over its occasional difficulties. It is true that, as is not uncommon among lifelong friends, we have sometimes had serious differences of opinion, misunderstood each other, struggled against each other’s competing ambitions. [...] *The true nature of our international relationship, however, is revealed by the fact that it is defined not by our differences, but by our capacity and eagerness to resolve them*” Quoted from Trudeau, P. E. 1976. Forward. In *Between Friends/Entre Amis*, by Lorraine Monk, iii. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart. Arguably, this sentiment is just as true today as it was in 1976.

⁹ DePalma, A. (2001). *Here: A Biography of the New American Continent*. New York: PublicAffairs; Sands, C. (2009). *Toward a New Frontier: Improving the U.S.-Canadian Border*. Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institute.

¹⁰ See Bradbury, S.L. & Tuberville III, D.E. (2008). Are Enhanced Trade and Enhanced Security Mutually Exclusive? The Western Canada-U.S. Borderland in a Post-9/11 World. *American Review of Canadian Studies* 38, No. 3: 317-340; Molot, M.A. (2003). The Trade-Security Nexus: The New Reality in Canada-U.S. Economic Integration. *American Review of Canadian Studies* 33, no. 1: 27-62.

¹¹ Detroit River International Crossing Study (2005). *Transportation Planning and Needs Report*.

¹² Sutcliffe, J. B. (2008a). The Role of Local Decision-Makers in the Reform of the Detroit River Border Crossing. Paper presented at the *MPSA Annual National Conference*, Palmer House Hotel Chicago IL, April; Alden, E. (2008). *The Closing of the American Border: Terrorism, Immigration and Security Since 9/11*. New York: Harper.

and greater Detroit. Most of the local cross-border traffic at peak hours consists of travellers crossing the border for work. There are important labor market synergies in the region as over 3,500 Canadian health care workers commuted to the Detroit region on a daily basis in 2007.¹³ The region is also industrially linked by the auto industry. The industry is so integrated across the international border that it is estimated that the average car crosses the border seven times in the course of its production.¹⁴ While the two core cities differ in the demographic make-up they are united in a single linguistic community and a highly similar personal value system. The two communities share cultural, entertainment and news sources across the border, including allegiance to sporting teams. It is even the case that unlike many Americans most Detroiters are interested in hockey and can hum the former theme for the CBC's legendary "Hockey Night in Canada" television broadcast.¹⁵

In spite of the level of economic interdependence and the depth of cultural and social cross-border relationships, the level of cross border integration among civic groups is quite weak and it is difficult to define a specific regional identity in Detroit-Windsor. A survey of major civic associations active in the region shows a definite division of functions where similar associations exist to serve constituencies and address similar issues on both sides of the border.¹⁶ While closer investigation reveals that there is often cross-border interaction between counterparts, these relationships are typically informal and no more integrated than with similar counterpart organizations in jurisdictions or states far removed from the border. Similarly, a study that identifies strong socio-cultural commonalities indicated that the cross-border region lacks a common identity.¹⁷

Regional asymmetries across international boundaries can manifest on many different levels and divert the interest of local authorities away from regional integration and collaboration.¹⁸ In the Detroit-Windsor case the most significant asymmetries mentioned by local actors are the difference in size between the two communities (in spite of recent population loss, Detroit remains more than three times the size of Windsor) and institutional differences at the level of local government roles, responsibilities and processes.¹⁹ Differences in size and context have meant that the order of magnitude of shared issues – such as unemployment and housing crisis resulting from the economic downturn and restructuring of the auto industry – is several degrees larger in metropolitan Detroit than in Windsor. Nevertheless, many of the most serious

¹³ SEMCOG (2009). Economic Impact of the Border: Detroit/Windsor. SEMCOG Report; Brunet-Jailly, E. (2000).

¹⁴ North American Competitiveness Council (2007). *Enhancing Competitiveness in Canada, Mexico and the United States*. Report of the NACC; Pastor, R.A. (2008). The Future of North America: Replacing a Bad Neighbour Policy. *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 4: 84-98.

¹⁵ Chinni, D. (2007). Ambassador Bridge controversy highlights cultural divide, *The Christian Science Monitor* August 2; Policy Research Initiative (2005). The Emergence of Cross-border Regions – Interim Report. *Report of the PRI*; Surlin, S. & Berlin, B. (1991). TV, Values, and Culture in US Canadian Borderland Cities: A Shared Perspective. *Canadian Journal of Communications* 16, no. 3.

¹⁶ Blatter, J. (2004). 'From Spaces of Place' to 'Spaces of Flows'? Territorial and Functional Governance in Cross-Border Regions in Europe and North America. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 28, no. 3: 530-548.

¹⁷ Policy Research Initiative (2005).

¹⁸ Gualini, E. (2003). Cross-Border Governance: Inventing Regions in a Trans-National Multi-Level Polity. *DISP* 39, no. 152: 43-52; Scott et al. (1997).

¹⁹ Nelles, J. (2010).

problems facing both communities have similar causes and effects. Institutional differences in how local governments function has meant that local officials are sometimes uncertain of who their counterparts are on the other side of the border. This has made consistent communication across the boundary difficult, although the officials who identified this asymmetry as a problem had also admitted that they had not really tried that hard and that reaching out hadn't really been necessary.²⁰ Relatively speaking, these asymmetries should not have presented considerable barriers to the emergence of cooperation.

This collection of characteristics in the Detroit-Windsor cross-border region suggests that the region is quite likely to also exhibit strong institutional integration and political cooperation. However, as Nelles demonstrates, formal political ties and integration between local authorities on either side of the Detroit River are, with few exceptions, quite weak.²¹ This was also the conclusion reached by Brunet-Jailly in his study of the region. He argued that the "competitive city paradigm...best explains relations across the Ontario-Michigan border region," with the major local actors competing for economic resources.²² One notable exception to this pattern was a spate of collaboration between local political authorities and civic organizations following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. In this instance the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce took the lead and created a bi-national coalition of actors to address the immediate and longer-term concerns of the communities and businesses that were profoundly affected by the temporary closure and subsequent "thickening" of the border. This suggests that when there is a clear issue or threat of common interest – such as a sudden restriction on travel between the two communities – local actors can come together relatively effectively to raise their concerns with other levels of government. In many respects the ongoing debates surrounding the renovation of cross-border infrastructure shares many similarities with the 9/11 border closures. Both communities have a strong interest in increasing the volume and efficiency and reducing the environmental impact of cross-border traffic. Similarly, neither community has any direct political responsibility or decision-making authority in the area of cross-border infrastructure. As a result, both local governments and civic associations must rely on effective communication with other levels of government to influence the placement and terms of governance of any new border infrastructure. It is therefore reasonable to expect that the debates and lobbying processes leading up to key decisions on the construction of a new border crossing would provoke a similar degree of cross-border collaboration as the 9/11 closures.

This paper explores this hypothesis with the aim of better understanding the dynamics of cross-border interaction between local authorities and organizations on the Detroit-Windsor border. Tracking cross-border relationships in this policy area will help shed some light on the generally weak day-to-day levels of interaction between local authorities in this border region and contribute to the further development of theories of cross-border integration and the emergence of cross-border communities.

²⁰ Interviews with author.

²¹ Nelles, J. (2010); also see Brunet-Jailly, E. (2000).

²² Brunet-Jailly, E. (2000): 395.

DEBATING THE DETROIT RIVER BORDER CROSSING

In terms of the connection of border communities, there is little mistaking the importance of the Detroit River border crossings linking Detroit and Windsor. The economic importance of this crossing has developed particularly following the 1965 Autopact, the 1989 Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement and the 1993 North American Free Trade Agreement. These agreements, and the economic integration that has developed in their wake, have resulted in significant economic flows across the Detroit River. Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade estimates that Canada-U.S. bilateral trade has tripled since 1989 and grown by six per cent per year since 1993. In sum, DFAIT estimates that over C\$1.6 billion in both goods and services crosses the Canada-U.S. border every day.²³

A remarkable percentage of this trade crosses at the Detroit River border crossings, with the majority of the freight traffic using the 80 year old, four-lane Ambassador Bridge that links Windsor and Detroit.²⁴ Approximately three million trucks use the Ambassador Bridge each year arguably making it the most significant single element in the network North American border infrastructure.²⁵ In part because of this significance and in part because of the age of the bridge, there have been several calls to reform the Detroit River border crossings in recent decades. These calls increased in urgency following the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the border delays that followed in the wake of these attacks and the increased security imposed at the Canada-U.S. border.²⁶ A Canadian Senate report, for example, concluded that a terrorist attack on the Ambassador Bridge would be economically devastating for North America and that increased border capacity was therefore essential.²⁷ Major business interests, and particularly the 'Big Three' North American automobile manufacturers and their suppliers have also argued that their success, if not survival, depends upon the smooth operation of the border crossing, and that it is therefore essential that more capacity is added at the Detroit River border.²⁸ There are currently two main proposals to add increased border capacity at the Detroit River. One of these comes from the private companies that own and operate the

²³ Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Government of Canada (2008). The Canada-U.S. Trade and Investment Partnership. Accessed May 2009.
http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/washington/commerce_can/trade_partnership-partenariat_commerce.aspx?lang=eng.

²⁴ See Appendix 1.

²⁵ See Austin, J.C., Dezenski, E. & Affolter-Caine, B. (2008); Canadian Senate Committee on National Security and Defence (2005). *Borderline Insecure: An Interim Report*. 38th Parliament, 1st session, June. Ottawa.

²⁶ Alden, E. (2008); Andreas, P. & Biersteker, T.J. (Eds) (2003). *The Rebordering of North America: Integration and Exclusion in a New Security Context*. New York: Routledge; Lennox, P. (2007). From Golden Straitjacket to Kevlar Vest: Canada's Transformation to a Security State, *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 40, no. 4: 1017-38.

²⁷ Canadian Senate Committee on National Security and Defence (2005).

²⁸ A sample of this business support for a new crossing is available at *New International Trade Crossing* (<http://buildthedricnow.com/>).

Ambassador Bridge.²⁹ The bridge company argues that it can resolve the capacity problem at the Detroit River through the Ambassador Bridge Enhancement Project, which aims to build a second span immediately to the west of the existing bridge. To this end, the company has already (controversially) begun some of the construction necessary for a new span and has purchased most of the land that will be required for the span and its plazas on both sides of the river. In addition the company has begun the process of securing the permissions that are required on both sides of the border in order to proceed with the project, although at the time of writing this process has stalled, with the federal governments on both sides arguing that more information is needed from the bridge in order to proceed further with the planning process.

The second major proposal for border reform emerged from a partnership involving officials from the governments of Canada, the United States, Ontario and Michigan, established by these governments in 2000. This partnership (the Detroit River International Crossing partnership) was tasked with determining whether a new border crossing is required, and if so, to develop the plans for such a crossing along with its location, plazas, and Canadian highway access road. On the basis of their 2001 and 2005 travel demands forecast, the partnership concluded that a new border crossing was required.³⁰ In 2005 the Detroit River International Crossing partnership (DRIC) was examining 15 possible crossing types and locations. In 2006 this was narrowed to a proposal for three possible bridge locations and four possible plazas to the west of the existing Ambassador Bridge. In 2008 the DRIC partnership released the environmental report for its 'technically and environmentally preferred' locations for a new bridge and plazas (as well as a Canadian access road).³¹ In 2009 this proposal secured the necessary environmental approvals in the United States and Canada and has the support of the Canadian and U.S. federal governments as well as the Government of Ontario. The final outstanding approval required is that of the Michigan legislature. Although the state House of Representatives voted in favour of the DRIC proposal in May 2010, opposition in the state Senate prevented it being brought to a vote prior to the 2010 state elections.³² The new Michigan Governor, Rick Snyder, however, has indicated his support for the proposed DRIC border crossing.³³

²⁹ It comes as a surprise to many that the Ambassador Bridge is one of the only Canada-U.S. border crossings, and certainly the most significant, to be privately owned. The bridge has been privately owned since its construction in 1927-9. Currently the bridge is owned and operated by two companies – the Detroit International Bridge Company and the Canadian Transit Company – but both are owned by Matthew (Matty) Moroun who purchased the bridge in 1979. This paper uses the Ambassador Bridge Company as a convenient short-form.

³⁰ These forecasts are available on the Detroit River International Crossing Partnership web-site. Accessed February 2011 (http://www.partnershipborderstudy.com/reports_canada.asp). A 2010 traffic survey, commissioned by the Michigan Department of Transportation, projected lower traffic increases than in the partnership reports but nevertheless confirmed the need for a new crossing. (See Battagello, D. (2010a). Traffic study backs need for a new bridge. *Windsor Star* 17 Feb.) The Ambassador Bridge companies, however, question these numbers and argue that a new crossing will have serious consequences for the amount of traffic using the Ambassador Bridge.

³¹ See Appendix 2.

³² See Battagello, D. (2010b). DRIC clears hurdle. *Windsor Star* 27 May; Battagello, D. (2010c). State to delay DRIC ruling. *Windsor Star* 5 Nov.

³³ Willick, F. (2010). Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder backs Detroit River International Crossing. *Windsor Star* 20 January; Battagello, D. (2011). Snyder ready to push DRIC. *Windsor Star* 22 March.

The Canadian federal government has begun the process of land purchases in the Brighton Beach area of Windsor in order to facilitate construction of the new border crossing and plaza. In addition, the Ontario government has begun preliminary work on the construction of a new highway access road that will link the existing Highway 401 to the new DRIC bridge and has selected a private consortium to build and operate the road.³⁴ The construction of a new border crossing is not, however, guaranteed. There remains opposition to both the proposals at the community and political level. Opposition to the Ambassador Bridge Company's proposal is evident within local communities in both Detroit and Windsor and has been strongly opposed by Windsor City Council (see below). It was also rejected by the Detroit River International Crossing team in their early analysis of different reform proposals. The DRIC proposal is, not surprisingly, being resisted by the Ambassador Bridge Company on the grounds that an extra crossing is not required at this time and will thus substantially damage its business. The DRIC proposal has also attracted opposition, particularly in Michigan, from politicians who argue that it is too expensive at a time of a sizeable state deficit and that, in this context, it does not make sense to spend public money on an infrastructure project when a private company is prepared to spend its own money.³⁵ Matty Moroun, the bridge owner, has lobbied hard and donated to various political campaigns in Michigan in an attempt to influence opinions within the state about the need for a new, publicly-owned crossing as opposed to a twinned Ambassador Bridge.³⁶

BORDERLAND COMMUNITIES AND REFORM OF THE DETROIT RIVER BORDER CROSSING

The two proposals to reform the Detroit River border crossing are therefore controversial and the policy debates surrounding them overlap and have extended over a number of years. These policy debates and the decisions that are ultimately made affect a number of local actors on both sides of the border within the community and within the public and private sectors. A large number of these actors have sought to engage in the policy debates. The key questions with respect to this paper concern the extent to which local municipal government and community groups have formally cooperated in seeking to influence the policy debates, and thus whether there is evidence of a borderland effect in relation to this policy-making process.

Analysis of the different policy-making process indicates that the picture is mixed with respect to the degree of cross-border participation, with the situation differing depending upon the actors involved and the stage of the policy-making process. In very few cases were actors' positions developed in a formal cross-border relationship. Instead,

³⁴ The plans for this access road (the Windsor-Essex Parkway) were developed by a sub-set of the DRIC partnership alongside the plans for a new bridge and plaza. The construction of this new road is, however, a purely Canadian decision requiring only environmental approval (and financing) from the Ontario government. The Canadian federal government has committed to provide financial support for the construction of this road.

³⁵ See Battagello, D. (2006a). Border concerns raised. *Windsor Star*, 3 August; Pearson, C. (2009). New bridge called a 'boondoggle'. *Windsor Star* 12 August.

³⁶ See Battagello, D. (2010d). State lawmakers delay vote on new bridge. *Windsor Star* 21 May.

it was usually the case that the groups or actors developed their positions independently and occasionally worked cooperatively if these positions overlapped.

The policy-making process surrounding the Detroit River International Crossing (DRIC) process is designed around cross-border collaboration at the senior government levels. The Detroit River International Crossing team, as noted above, is a bi-national collaboration involving representatives from the state, provincial and two federal governments. It is also the case that politicians from the senior governments have cooperated in advocating for particular policy options.³⁷ Thus, in the period since the DRIC selected a location for a proposed new bridge, politicians from both the Canadian federal government and the government of Ontario have been frequent visitors to Michigan seeking to persuade the Michigan Senate to approve the new crossing.³⁸ This has built on earlier cooperation between the former Michigan governor, Jennifer Granholm, and the Premier of Ontario, Dalton McGuinty, who worked together in advocating the need for the new bridge proposed by the DRIC partnership.³⁹

The DRIC process has therefore been built around institutional consultation and cooperation among senior governments from both countries. It is less evident, however, that this decision-making process has helped developed institutionalised cooperation at the local government or community level. It is certainly the case that individuals, community organizations and municipal governments have been highly active in the policy-making process.⁴⁰ Overall, the DRIC team has held more than 300 Canadian consultation sessions during the study “with participation from thousands of Windsor-Essex County residents, community groups, experts, local elected officials, and other government agencies.”⁴¹ Similar consultations have occurred on the American side of the border. It is not the case, however, that the individuals and groups consulted are formally part of the bi-national decision making group. Moreover, the extensive consultation exercises have been separated into two categories – those occurring on the American-side of the border and a second group on the Canadian side. Cross-border connections in these consultative mechanisms occur only to the extent that individuals and representatives from community organizations or local governments elected to cross the river to attend meetings in the other country.⁴² The formal decision making process does not require cross-border connections below the level of the senior governments.

³⁷ In November 2007 the two federal governments signed a memorandum of understanding indicating that the construction of a new Detroit River crossing was a “high priority.” See Battagello, D. (2007). “Canada, US endorse DRIC. *Windsor Star* 27 November.

³⁸ Battagello, D. (2010e). Feds offer Mich. \$550M to back DRIC. *Windsor Star* 30 April.

³⁹ In 2005, for example, Granholm and McGuinty appeared at the Great Lakes Manufacturing Forum to make the case for a new bridge. See Vander Doelen, C. (2005). Premier presses for new crossing. *Windsor Star* 5 March.

⁴⁰ Sutcliffe, J.B. (2008b). Public Participation in Local Politics: The Impact of Community Activism on the Windsor-Detroit Border Decision Making Process. *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 17, no. 2: 57-83.

⁴¹ Detroit River International Crossing study (2008). *Environmental Assessment Report*, p.i.

⁴² There are no complete statistics indicating how often this cross-border interaction occurred. Some interviewees noted that they did attend consultation meetings in the other country but the majority of attendees at the consultative meetings appeared to come from the country in which the meeting was located. The separate nature of the process is indicated in part by the report and meeting sections of the DRIC web-site, which are divided into American and Canadian sections. See <http://www.partnershipborderstudy.com/reports.asp> and <http://www.partnershipborderstudy.com/meetings.asp>.

To what extent, then, have community and municipal actors on different sides of the border worked collectively to influence the border debate? In different contexts, some scholars have argued that such links are common. Chris Sands, for example, argues that cooperation is common among sub-national actors in borderland regions.⁴³ Sands draws attention to the concept of social capital as developed by Robert Putnam among others,⁴⁴ and claims that when,

there is a lot of social capital present, people tend to work together more easily. The social capital among northern border stakeholders is greatest at the local level, and least concentrated at the federal level. This follows from the common sense observation that at the local level, mayors on opposite sides of the border have more opportunities for informal interaction and can build up mutual trust and understanding.⁴⁵

Similarly, studies of the Pacific Northwest border region have pointed to the importance of cross-border relations at the local level in the process of finding solutions to border crossing problems.⁴⁶

In the case examined here of the Detroit River border crossing, the situation is mixed. Many of the local actors have a shared and deep interest in seeing the addition of border crossing capacity in this region given the importance of the border to the region's (and indeed the wider North American) economy and the interconnected nature of many regional industries.⁴⁷ Over the past decade, for example, Windsor City Council has advocated for the construction of a new border crossing, with the express aim of reducing border delays and also removing international trucks from city streets as they make their way to the border. Municipal governments in Michigan, including the City of Detroit, have also expressed their support for a new border crossing in order to add capacity and redundancy to support local industries and jobs fueled by cross-border trade.⁴⁸ The important efficiency and reliability of border crossing infrastructure to American local authorities has increased since the beginning of the DRIC process as Southeast Michigan has sought to establish itself as a global logistics hub.⁴⁹ While economic development initiatives such as these have engaged actors on the other side of the border the exact proposals advocated by the municipal governments have not, however, been developed in a collaborative fashion, nor have both sides consistently been in agreement throughout the decision-making process.

⁴³ Sands, C. (2009): 34.

⁴⁴ Putnam, R. (1995). Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital. *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 1: 65-78.

⁴⁵ Sands, C. (2009): 34.

⁴⁶ Kergin, M. & Matthiesen, B. (2008); Bradbury, S.L. and Tuberville III, D.E. (2008); Brunet-Jailly, E. (2008). Cascadia in Comparative Perspective: Canada-U.S. Relations and the Emergence of Cross-Border Regions. *Canadian Political Science Review* 2, no. 2: 104-124 examines the emergence of 'policy parallelism' in the border region.

⁴⁷ See Austin, J.C., Dezenski, E. & Affolter-Caine, B. (2008); Alden, E. (2008); Sutcliffe, J.B. (forthcoming 2011). Neoliberalism in a Small Canadian City: Windsor City Council and the Reform of the Detroit River Border Crossing. *American Review of Canadian Studies*.

⁴⁸ Calley, B. (2011). Now is the time to build a new bridge. *The Detroit News* 18 April.

⁴⁹ See, for instance, the TranslinkeD initiative spearheaded by the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce. Blouse Jr. R.E. (2009). *TranslinkeD: Driving Global Connectivity*. Detroit: DRCC.

Windsor City Council has been very active with respect to the border crossing debate. It has, as noted, supported reform of the border infrastructure with the aim of moving international truck traffic off of city streets (that is, away from the current route linking Highway 401 to the Ambassador Bridge).⁵⁰ To this end, the city commissioned and released a 2005 report, the Schwartz Report, which called for a new access route to the border and a new bridge.⁵¹ The city also was supportive of the Detroit River International Crossing team's June 2008 selection of a final location for a new bridge linking the Brighton Beach industrial area in Windsor to the Delray area in Michigan (Appendix 3).⁵² A related element of Windsor City Council's position with respect to the border crossing debate has been consistent opposition to the Ambassador Bridge's proposal to build a second span directly to the west of the existing bridge. The city has lobbied extensively against the Ambassador Bridge's proposal arguing that this option will be environmentally damaging to the city's residents.⁵³ In 2006 the city called on both the Canadian federal and Ontario provincial governments to reject this plan. The city's submission to the U.S. Coast Guard, the lead U.S. federal authority examining the bridge's application to build a second span, requested that this proposal be rejected arguing that the proposed bridge is "fraught with significant and adverse environmental consequences for the city and its residents".⁵⁴

Representatives from the City of Windsor did connect with sub-national actors in Michigan when arguing in favour of a new crossing linking Brighton Beach and Delray and against the twinning of the Ambassador Bridge. In March 2005, for example, Windsor Mayor Eddie Francis made these arguments in a speech to the Canada-U.S. Business Association in Detroit.⁵⁵ Similarly, following the 2008 announcement of the location of the proposed DRIC bridge, Francis held a press conference in Detroit with the Oakland County Executive, Brooks Patterson. Both politicians expressed support for the DRIC proposal and opposition to the Ambassador Bridge proposal.⁵⁶ Windsor City Council has continued its advocacy of this proposal as part of the wider campaign to secure approval from the Michigan Senate.⁵⁷

⁵⁰ Since his election in 2003, Windsor Mayor Eddie Francis has vocally made this demand. It has, for example, been a consistent issue in his annual 'State of the City' addresses. See, for example, his 2008 address: <http://www.citywindsor.ca/2008StateoftheCity.pdf>

⁵¹ Battagello, D. (2005a). Windsor mayor vows to hold prime minister to his promise. *Windsor Star* 22 January; Hall, D. (2005). Let's change the face of Windsor. *Windsor Star* 22 January.

⁵² Battagello, D. (2008a). Border 'No.1' priority. *Windsor Star* 19 June. The city, however, expressed opposition to the access road proposed by DRIC and fought for over a year to have more tunneling included in the Canadian access road.

⁵³ Sutcliffe, J.B. (forthcoming 2011); Fessler, P. (2007). Proposal for a new border bridge draws critics. *National Public Radio Broadcast* 22 May.

⁵⁴ Battagello, D. (2006b). City fights twinning of bridge. *Windsor Star* 2 November.

⁵⁵ See Windsor Star (2005). Border on agenda in Detroit. *Windsor Star* 23 March. This was only one of many examples of Windsor city politicians visiting Michigan to argue in favour of their preferred border solution. Francis also made a number of trips to Washington either individually or as part of a larger Canadian delegation to lobby for the DRIC bridge. See Battagello, D. (2005b). Francis touts border fix. *Windsor Star* 17 March.

⁵⁶ Greenwood, T. (2008). Zug Island crossing backed. *The Detroit News* 10 July.

⁵⁷ A press conference was held in April 2010 that included various supporters of the DRIC bridge from both Canada and the United States. These supporters included Eddie Francis, then Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm, Brooks Patterson, and Detroit Mayor, David Bing.

Local political support for the DRIC process on the American side of the border has been much more divided, in part because of perceptions about the continued viability of the twin span alternative. Where for the city of Windsor expanding capacity at the Ambassador Bridge site is a political non-starter, the city of Detroit could handle additional traffic and development on its side of the span. Although the twin span proposal does not address issues of redundancy and continues to raise concerns over private ownership of such a vital piece of international infrastructure, Moroun and his Detroit International Bridge Company have managed to generate opposition to the DRIC proposal. Moroun continues to make the case that he should be allowed to resolve the capacity problem at the border and can do so without cost to either Canadian or Michigan taxpayers. To date, it is often claimed that the bridge company's lobbying has secured support from state politicians in Michigan.⁵⁸ It is also the case that during his time as Mayor of Detroit (2001-2008), the scandal-affected Kwame Kilpatrick adopted a position that stood in stark contrast to that of the City of Windsor. Kwame Kilpatrick publicly made the case that the DRIC-proposed bridge was unnecessary and that the Ambassador Bridge company should be allowed to proceed with its twin span proposal.⁵⁹ It is also the case that Kilpatrick had close ties with Matty Moroun as was made evident when a media request for access to Kilpatrick's diary showed that he had met frequently with the owner of the Ambassador Bridge.⁶⁰ The Moroun family and businesses were significant contributors to the mayor's election campaign.⁶¹ They were also significant donors to U.S. Congresswoman Carolyn Kilpatrick, the mayor's mother, who vocally opposed the DRIC from her seat on the House Appropriations Committee.⁶²

More recently, local political support for the DRIC proposal has been more united as the current Detroit mayor David Bing, and executives from Oakland, Wayne and Macomb counties issued a joint statement in favour of proceeding with the DRIC option.⁶³ Significantly, these "Big Four" Metropolitan Detroit executives did not strongly oppose the Ambassador Bridge in their endorsement of the DRIC plan demonstrating the degree to which, on the American side, the alternative proposals are not an 'either-or' decision. Local officials on the U.S. side consistently report that the construction of more border crossing capacity is their primary concern and *where* the new crossing is constructed, and *by whom*, has been less important. However, all of the officials interviewed recognize that the Ambassador Bridge twin was not acceptable to their Canadian partners and were eager to support whichever solution that would be feasible to both sides. This sentiment is echoed in Oakland county executive L. Brooks Patterson observation: "If they're not going to take a second (Ambassador) span, the only game in

⁵⁸ Vander Doelen, C. (2010). DRIC fate a question mark. *Windsor Star* 4 November; Battagello, D. (2010d). For a different view, see Spangler, T. (2010). Moroun puts political ties to the test. *Detroit Free Press* 13 June.

⁵⁹ See Henion, A. (2007a). Who will build Ambassador twin? *The Detroit News* 31 March.

⁶⁰ Battagello, D. (2008b). Francis says files confirm Moroun wanted tunnel. *Windsor Star* 23 October. It is also the case that there were strong ties between Moroun and Kwame Kilpatrick's mother, Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick who represented Michigan for 14 years in the U.S. House of Representatives. See Battagello (2010f). Moroun foes hail Kilpatrick loss. *Windsor Star* 9 August.

⁶¹ Szezesny, J. (2010). One bridge or two? Michigan Senate mulls DRIC plan as sides state their cases. *Press & Guide* 1 September.

⁶² Battagello, D. (2009a). Kill DRIC project, U.S. urged. *The Windsor Star* 8 April.

⁶³ Oosting, J. (2010). Metro Detroit 'Big Four' back DRIC, vow regular meetings, work on regional transportation. *mlive.com* 4 June.

town is the DRIC, or the crossing could head to Buffalo [...] Moroun has some legitimate complaints, but Windsor is not going to take that bridge.”⁶⁴ Ultimately, however, the decision about whether to proceed with the DRIC proposal rests with the state legislature, which has not been as supportive as the province of Ontario of the infrastructure project.

Successive state governors, John Engler (R), Jennifer Granholm (D) and Rick Snyder (R) have all supported the DRIC project but have faced opposition from their legislatures. Legislation (House Bill 4961) introduced by Governor Granholm to empower state actors and establish governance criteria to proceed with the DRIC proposal was blocked by Senate Republicans in 2009. Rick Snyder, the recently elected Republican governor, enjoys Republican majorities in both the House and Senate but has still faced challenges in selling his legislation, which is currently circulating in draft form before being introduced for debate later this year. Most observers are confident that the new bill will pass, finally green lighting the project, but it is still likely that such a massive infrastructure project will face political challenges during these debates.⁶⁵

Major municipal actors on both sides of the river have therefore adopted a similar policy position in favour of the proposed DRIC bridge and have cooperated in making this case. There are, however, limits to the extent to which this represents evidence of a borderland community. First, for the most part the municipal governments developed their responses to the border debate independently and only subsequently sought allies across the river among those municipalities that had adopted similar positions. Windsor City Council’s 2005 Schwartz Report, for example, was developed by a hired traffic consultant, Sam Schwartz, based on a commission from Windsor City Council alone. It was then released following approval by the Windsor council; again, acting independently. The plan was not developed cooperatively by Windsor City Council and municipalities in Michigan. A similar situation is evident based on an examination of Michigan municipal councils’ response to the border debate. Municipal governments and county representatives largely participated in the public local advisory council meetings independently and in the interest of their constituents without prior coordination with their neighbours.

Second, and significantly, it is not always the case that the positions of the different municipalities on the two sides of the Detroit River were identical. Indeed, in several cases, the municipalities’ positions have been (and remain) in direct conflict. In 2005, as noted above, the Detroit River International Crossing team unveiled 15 possible border crossing locations that it was studying as part of its planning process.⁶⁶ This unveiling resulted in expressions of opposition from a large number of Michigan and Canadian municipalities that felt they would be negatively affected by one or more of these options.⁶⁷ Michigan communities to the south of the existing Ambassador Bridge were particularly opposed to the possibility of an international bridge and its associated truck traffic being located in their community. The small Michigan municipality of Wyandotte, for example, was highly critical of the possibility of a bridge linking it to

⁶⁴ Quoted in Oosting, J. (2010).

⁶⁵ See Battagello, D. (2011). Snyder ready to push DRIC. *Windsor Star* 22 March.

⁶⁶ See Editorial (2005). Border dither. *Windsor Star* 22 June; Battagello, D. (2005c). Bureaucrats threatening city’s future. *Windsor Star* 21 June. These 15 alternatives were subsequently narrowed to three possible bridge locations and then to the final proposal released in 2008.

⁶⁷ Singer, C.M. (2005a). Detroit targeted for border crossing. *The Detroit News* 19 October.

LaSalle in Ontario. The then-mayor of Wyandotte, Leonard Sabuda, asked the citizens of his municipality to express “a strong no” to such a crossing. “It’s the truck traffic, the effect on the environment, it’s taking what little land we have available and taking it for parking and security. [A border crossing] is taboo here.”⁶⁸ Wyandotte was not alone in expressing its opposition to the construction of a new border crossing in its community. In May 2005, for example, Wayne County Commission voted to oppose the construction of a new crossing in its territory that would affect the township of Grosse Ile.⁶⁹ Similarly, now that the DRIC has selected a final location for a new bridge, opposition to this selection has been expressed by some (although not all) community groups in the Delray area where the new Detroit plaza will be located.⁷⁰ In May 2009, several small Delray community groups, and significantly the Ambassador Bridge company, launched a lawsuit against the proposed DRIC bridge claiming that race and income were factors in the decision to select the Brighton Beach-Delray crossing location.⁷¹

It is perhaps not surprising then that in this case, there is a degree of NIMBYism (not-in-my-backyard) in the municipal responses to the border crossing debates.⁷² The majority of municipalities recognizes the importance of additional border crossing capacity and therefore supports the construction of a new bridge. Very few of them, however, are willing to support the construction of a new bridge directly in their community. Attitudes with respect to the Ambassador Bridge’s proposal to build a second span adjacent to the existing bridge also vary across municipalities and community groups. A number of community groups in the shadow of the Ambassador Bridge oppose this proposal. This opposition has involved municipal and state politicians and community groups on both sides of the border working collectively to express their hostility to the bridge company’s proposal.⁷³

Cross-border cooperation between the principal local authorities may have been complicated in the past by the mayor of Detroit’s public support for the Ambassador project. During Kilpatrick’s seven year tenure as mayor the possibility of close links developing between Windsor City Council and Detroit City Council was limited because he supported a policy position fundamentally opposed to that promoted by Windsor’s mayor and the whole of the city council. Kilpatrick’s position was not, however, shared by all members of Detroit City Council and indeed council opposition to Kilpatrick was not uncommon.⁷⁴ Despite these fundamental differences over the Ambassador option informal communication between the cities of Windsor and Detroit, their executives and administrations, on the subject of the border crossing continued and the relationship between the two sides never became hostile. It is also worth noting that the current mayor

⁶⁸ Quoted in Battagello, D. (2005d). Town wants crossing. *Windsor Star* 15 April.

⁶⁹ See Battagello, D. (2005e). Americans weigh in on border crossing. *Windsor Star* 15 September.

⁷⁰ Singer, C.M. (2005b). Delray is fighting 3rd bridge crossing. *The Detroit News* 28 December.

⁷¹ See Battagello, D. (2009b). Bridge lawsuit alleges race a factor in DRIC plan. *Windsor Star* 15 May; Shea, B. (2009). Bridge project battle lines drawn. *Crain’s Detroit Business* 1 June.

⁷² King, C.S., Feltey, K.M. & O’Neill, B. (1998). The Question of Participation: Toward Authentic Public Participation in Public Administration. *Public Administration Review* 58, no. 4: 317-326.

⁷³ Interview with Mary Ann Cuderman, Windsor West Truck Watch Coalition, 13 March 2011. See also McArthur, D. (2009). Citizens oppose twin span. *Windsor Star* 27 June.

⁷⁴ Henion, A. (2007b). EPA blasts plan for twin span to Canada. *The Detroit News* 24 July. In March 2006, for example, the City of Detroit Planning Commission sent a letter to the Michigan legislature indicating its support for the DRIC process.

is very supportive of the DRIC proposal. This has not, however, appreciably increased the frequency of communication or collaboration between the two cities.

Overall, then, analysis of the positions adopted by municipal councils and community groups on both sides of the Detroit River indicates a mixed picture. There are definite links among municipalities and community groups and Canadian municipal actors and community leaders in particular have been regular visitors to Detroit as part of the effort to secure their favoured policy solution to the border debate. It is not the case, however, that these borderland links represent the establishment (or product) of an institutionalized borderland community. It is more frequently the case that the subnational actors developed their policy positions independently as a reflection of their own interests and only subsequently sought to build connections with like-minded actors across the border.

CONCLUSION

The construction of a new border crossing over the Detroit River is undoubtedly one of the most important border issues for communities located in the Detroit-Windsor region since 9/11. The construction of a new span will have important consequences for the economic development of the region, its ability to maintain its competitiveness with alternate crossings, and the competitiveness of industries (and jobs) on either side of the border that rely on the feasibility of just-in-time shipping models. Furthermore, the physical location of the new span will impact local traffic patterns, neighbourhood development, public health and land use planning. For these reasons local authorities on either side of the border have a lot at stake in the DRIC process and incentives to attempt to affect its outcomes despite the fact that they have not been included as formal members of the bi-national partnership. Given the importance of the crossing as a local border issue, that shares some similarities with border closure in the wake of 9/11, the DRIC presents an opportunity for greater local cross-border policy coordination. Where previous studies of the region have turned up little generalized policy interaction across the border perhaps in this case the construction of a physical bridge would result in the strengthening of political bridges between communities.

This paper explored the degree to which local authorities have collaborated and coordinated policy positions in an effort to influence the DRIC process. Our research found little evidence of formal political interaction between border communities. The relationship between authorities on either side of the border remains quite good but while they have informally shared information and monitored each other's positions throughout the DRIC process, none were able to identify an instance where they worked *together* to influence the outcome of the debate.

From a purely theoretical perspective this lack of serious interaction is somewhat surprising. Theoretical frameworks identify few generalized barriers to political collaboration and, in the case of the DRIC, there were no specific factors that blocked cooperation. All area authorities agreed on the need to develop increased border capacity and there was little difficulty finding a location amenable to communities on both sides. Yet despite this political alignment and lack of formal barriers formal cooperation between authorities failed to materialize.

On a more practical level this lack of formal linkages is easier to explain. First, although the decision to build an international bridge can be characterized as a metropolitan issue the details of where and how to build are actually quite localized. Even though Windsor agreed to a new structure the list of potential locations it would accept was a matter of intense, but local, debate. Similarly, on the American side an independent shortlist emerged of potential termini that the city and its neighbourhoods, could accommodate. One American official aptly summarized this state of affairs as follows:

They had to fight that fight locally and we had to fight our fight with MDOT and the consultants. Do I need to talk to them? Not really, but it would be nice. We just figure that we'd get it the way we want over here and they would get it the way they want over there and we would connect the two ends.⁷⁵

As luck would have it these individually developed parameters combined with sites that were environmentally and economically feasible yielded several potential alternatives acceptable to all parties. While communities on both sides ultimately agreed on the final location, coordinating policy positions was not actually necessary.

The structure of the DRIC consultation process further institutionalized these more localized processes. Although municipalities and other local authorities were not formally included in the partnership their input was sought through a process of public consultation. These public consultations were organized and led by different consulting companies hired by the DRIC and were conducted separately on either side of the border. Participants from anywhere in the region were welcome to and did attend and contribute to all of the public meetings but in practice there was little cross-over between them. As a result, policy discussions about the crossing were directed at the public officials representing the DRIC rather than at (or including) the communities across the border. In the end the assent of the affected communities, through the DRIC partnership, was all that was needed and sustained dialogue across the border was neither a goal or terribly important to the process.

It is worth noting that there is still a long way to go before the bridge is constructed and operational and that the evolution of the DRIC may yet afford more opportunities for political interaction across the border. Once (if...) the approval for the DRIC clears the Michigan legislature, policy makers will turn to the practical concerns of building and governing the bridge. The bridge will be jointly owned by a bi-national bridge authority and local actors may be included on the governing board. That stated, Detroit and Windsor have shared ownership of the Detroit-Windsor tunnel since 1930 and its effect on furthering political integration has not been significant.

The unimpressive degree of political local political coordination across the border is readily explainable by the mechanics of the problem of building a bridge and the structure of coordinative processes. However, it is important to acknowledge that this process has also taken place in the context of very little *generalized* political interaction. If there had been a stronger tradition of cross-border political linkages, the DRIC process may have unfolded very differently. Regrettably we have yet to discover a suitable

⁷⁵ Personal communication, 13 April 2011.

counterfactual in which to explore this possibility. However, it is worth reflecting on what this research reveals for the theory of borders and the development of cross-border political spaces.

Other research on the region and on political integration in other cross-border regions proposes several explanations for the weakness of local cooperation across the Detroit-Windsor border. Some have attributed the limited nature of public sector institutional cross-border integration in this region and to the extent of economic competition among local actors. Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly, for example, has concluded that the extent of economic integration in the region “does not foster any form of cross-border public sector institutional cooperation in the Detroit, Sarnia or Windsor region. On the contrary, local communities compete to attract, recruit and retain businesses and investors”.⁷⁶ Without question the cities of Detroit and Windsor, and their surrounding counties, are in competition for scarce investment and jobs but local officials on both sides of the border claim that this competition is no more intense than between any other neighbouring communities and was never cited as a specific barrier to cooperation. Furthermore, although intense interlocal competition can preclude cooperation in some policy areas it rarely blocks partnership-building between communities in all areas.⁷⁷ If competition for investment or on tax rates were that debilitating to the emergence of political partnerships there would scarcely be any metropolitan transportation systems, regional economic development associations, or other metro area services.

Elsewhere, Nelles has suggested that the structure of senior-level intergovernmental relations has had a decisive and long-term impact on local political strategies at the Detroit-Windsor border.⁷⁸ Because of the historical and current strategic importance of the crossing to both countries and states many areas that would ordinarily fall under local jurisdiction have been adopted by senior levels of government. As a result of the persistent dominance by senior governments of cross-border debates municipalities are more likely to turn to the responsible authorities than their neighbours to address concerns related to the border. While senior government interest in border areas is hardly unique to Detroit-Windsor their reluctance to include local actors in the policy process is somewhat exceptional and may have bred the inward- and upward- rather than outward-looking habit of local authorities in the region.

The serious study of cross-border regions characterized by strong economic and social linkages and weaker political integration is a relatively recent phenomenon. As the development of cross-border regions has intensified in Europe as a result of EU cohesion policies it has become clear that functional interactions in border regions do not necessarily beget political institutions and that governance can be quite problematic in places with large cross-border flows.⁷⁹ As importantly, it is becoming clear that this pattern of strong flows but weak ‘links’ is not a uniquely North American phenomenon. We still lack a satisfactory theory as to why some cross-border regions are more successful at building collaborative political institutions but it is clear that these

⁷⁶ Brunet-Jailly, (2000): 394-5.

⁷⁷ See Nelles (2009). *Civic Capital and the Dynamics of Intermunicipal Cooperation for Regional Economic Development*. Unpublished PhD dissertation. Department of Political Science, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON.

⁷⁸ Nelles (2010 and 2011).

⁷⁹ Sohn & Walther (2011).

institutions require more than strong economic and social linkages (or perhaps need specific *types* of those linkages) in order to emerge and thrive. This research on Detroit-Windsor, and studies like it, on one such region help contribute to the further development of a theory of cross-border political governance.

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APPENDIX 1



APPENDIX 2

Detroit River International Crossing – Technically and Environmentally Preferred Alternative (2008).



Source: Free Press research

Detroit Free Press

APPENDIX 3

Proposed DRIC Detroit Plaza (2008)



The Detroit News