NEW STATE SPACES IN CANADA: METROPOLITANIZATION IN MONTREAL AND TORONTO COMPARED

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Abstract: This paper compares the transformation of metropolitan institutions in two Canadian city-regions (Toronto and Montreal). Taking Neil Brenner’s argument about new state spaces as a starting point, we discuss comparatively how governance restructuring in recently consolidated Toronto and Montreal has been part of more general changes to the architecture of governance in Canada. We look specifically at changes to the mediation channels between civil society and metropolitan institutions. A “nationally” scaled comparison, this project must take into account the specific differences between Francophone and Anglophone Canada, between the different civic traditions in Montreal and Toronto and different traditional significance attributed to the scale and nature of metropolitan governance structures and variously scaled agency in both cities. This makes our case in many ways more like an international comparison. [Key words: comparative urban studies, new state spaces, Canada, Montreal, Toronto.]

Comparative urban studies is experiencing a renaissance of sorts. Scholars have emphatically been proposing new methodologies and frameworks for urban comparisons (Brenner, 2001, 2005; Elwood, 2004; Jouve and Booth, 2004; Robinson, 2004; Harding, 2005; Kühler and Heinelt, 2005; Kantor and Savitch, 2005; Newman and Thornley, 2005; Pierre, 2005; Sellers, 2005). Whether it is triggered by the real developments of continentalization and globalization, which force us to see places in their internationally networked and topological existence rather than in fixed national hierarchies, or whether it is due to the increased pressure on (more mobile) academics and politicians (Sellers, 2005, p. 422) to orient themselves transnationally in research and policy in order to be relevant and competitive, comparative urbanism has seen both conceptual and empirical resurgence.

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This may also be the direct consequence of the specific “localization” that occurs under neoliberalization: “While the processes of institutional creative destruction associated with actually existing neoliberalism are clearly transpiring at all spatial scales, it can be argued that they are occurring with particular intensity at the urban scale” (Brenner and Theodore, 2002, p. 367). In this process, cities are not just wilful recipients of restructurings concocted at other scales, but often operate as the active locations where the “dirty work” of globalization is done (Keil, 2000). All this adds up, some would argue, to the understanding that “urban research is a more promising field of comparative research than comparing nation-states” (Pierre, 2005, p. 455). Moreover, the decentering of urban research is significant for the understanding of nation-states, too: “The nation-state, beneath its ordered, rationalized appearance from above, emerges as archipelago of local and regional logics that are ordered from below. In each urban setting, these logics depend on relations and coalition building within civil society” (Sellers, 2005, p. 433). The same fruitful outcomes of comparative research is said to be expected for “comprehending transnational and global processes” (Sellers, 2005, p. 435). Of course, the “urban (re-)turn” in comparative research poses all manner of methodological problematic. For example, it remains to be defined in each case how the unit of comparison might be defined: there is a wide variety in what one might capture with words such as local, urban, metropolitan, and city-regional (to name but a few). In addition, as Pierre pointed out “the scholar is faced with the challenge of striking the right balance between reducing complexity and uncovering the causal mechanisms on one hand, and allowing for contextual richness—what Evans calls the ‘overall gestalt’ of the case—on the other” (Pierre, 2005, p. 456; Evans, 1995). As Brenner (2005) has argued, much existing comparative work suffers from a lack of attention to methodology and research design and runs the risk of being slotted into the elusive camp of convergence theories. He criticizes the critics of alleged convergence theorists for fighting intellectual mirages and for overstating the argument for individual singular case studies in the interest of demonstrating difference among places, which does not yield much by way of explanation beyond this descriptive insight. He further elaborates that, rather than expounding the value of the particular and the diverse, it is necessary in and for comparative research to make explicit the assumptions at the outset of the research from what theoretical standpoint differences between places matter.

We understand our work in this context of critical comparative research. In contrast to usual inter- or transnational studies that look at cases across national boundaries, we have deliberately constructed our comparative research as an intranational study between two Canadian city regions: Montreal and Toronto. As Pierre correctly pointed out “the embeddedness of cities in national institutional contexts offers good possibilities of intranational comparison among cities in national institutional contexts” (2005, p. 455; see also Sellers, 2005). Interestingly, of course, one might argue that the differences between Quebec and Ontario are international in nature due to the peculiar nature of the position of Quebec in the Canadian federal state architecture, and we will see later how that matters. In any case, we face the conceptual difficulty of operating in two linguistic worlds in one country where “regional” in the Anglophone context more likely than “metropolitan” covers what métropolitain refers to in Francophone parlance. Historically, in Toronto, “metropolitan” referred to the specific second tier local government of The Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, which was chartered in 1953. In Montreal, metropolitain refers to the urban agglomeration. Processes such as city-regionalization are
called métropolisation in French. Pierre has referred to a similar issue in the comparisons between European and U.S.-American urban governance: whereas, in the United States, “regional governance” tends to refer to the same phenomenon as metropolitan governance, that is, the coordination of cities and their surrounding suburbs,” in Europe regional governance and regionalism refer to “patterns of regional social, political, and cultural awareness and assertiveness” (2005, pp. 457–458). One may argue that the “amalgamation” of Toronto and “merger” of Montreal were clear interventions into the regulation of urban–suburban relationships, and conflicts around these top-down rescalings were, to some degree, articulated with the center-periphery problematic not unlike that in the United States (Keil and Boudreau, 2005a). Yet, our interest in the current project of comparing Toronto and Montreal is more akin to the European tradition here, as we are looking at patterns of decision-making and governance that add up to regional collective agency in both city regions. Despite Montreal’s and Toronto’s location in one federal state, we are partly dealing with the reconfiguration of “urban governance in different state contexts” (Elwood, 2004). The Quebec and Ontario provincial states are institutionally, legally, and legislatively different territorial units under one federal roof. The uneven federalism of the Canadian state is perhaps most pronounced between these two leading provinces, which have been at the core of the territorial compromise that has constituted the Canadian federation even before Confederation in 1867. We have two cases in front of us which are divergent cases of integration into global flows of capital and people; part of the same North American continental urban system; regulated by one (barely existing) national urban policy; strangely convergent in some aspects of provincial urban policy despite radically varying political economies, political cultures, and ideological debates; wildly different in their local political traditions.

Most studies of the political geographies and cultures have historically concentrated on the downtowns of Toronto and Montreal. There is a continuing tendency of equating the culture of the old downtown with the culture of the metropolitan region. Nothing could be further from the truth as the political cultures of suburban and exurban Toronto and Montreal are markedly different from their core cities and from each other. In Toronto, the old suburbs (e.g., Scarborough) have grown into a unique mix of majority visible minority populations, which have begun to eclipse and to evade the political culture of the downtown elites. In the city’s northern and western neighbors (e.g., Markham, Vaughan, Mississauga), distinct ethnoburbs with novel immigrant polities have emerged (Dale, 1999; Kipfer and Wirsig, 1999; Walks, 2004a, 2004b, 2005). In Montreal, old suburbs on the Island have mostly developed as wealthy Anglophone havens (particularly on the west end of the island), while the central city has been home to a majority of francophone, immigrant, and poorer families. However, suburbs such as St-Léonard and St-Laurent have long been home to immigrant families. The pre-merger City of Montreal was also much larger relative to its inner-ring suburban population than in pre-amalgamation Toronto (approximately 1 million in the City of Montreal relative to 800,000 in the inner-ring suburbs of the Island, compared to approximately 600,000 in the old City of Toronto relative to 1.8 million in the old suburbs of the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto).³

³The Greater Toronto Area (GTA) population is now close to 5 million, compared to 3.5 million for the Montreal Metropolitan area.
Exurbs on the North and South shores of the St. Lawrence River are overwhelmingly middle class and francophone.

In our research, we look empirically at how both urban regions have fared in the years after their metropolitan cores (CUM and the City of Toronto) were amalgamated/consolidated, with their respective provincial governments treating them in good Canadian federalist tradition, which does not grant constitutional autonomy to municipalities. We examine specifically if and how these regions have been emerging as collective actors in the areas of international competitiveness, environmental policy, and transportation governance (Boudreau et al., 2006). The regions are defined as the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and the Montreal Metropolitan Community (MMC).

The amalgamation of Toronto occurred in 1997 under the political leadership of a staunchly neoliberal Progressive Conservative government of Mike Harris in Ontario. Harris had defied advice from an expert panel to seek a more regional solution that would have included the entire GTA and opted for consolidating Metropolitan Toronto with its six constitutive local governments into one megacity: Toronto, East York, Scarborough, North York, York, and Etobicoke. The highly unpopular move was resisted passionately by many citizens across the Toronto urban area with opposition strongest in the old core city of Toronto. A non-binding plebiscite returned more than 70% No votes on the amalgamation and the merger ultimately went ahead. On January 1, 1998, the Toronto megacity was born (Boudreau, 2000).

The merger of Montreal occurred in 2000 under the leadership of a neoliberalizing yet persistently social-democratic nationalist party, the Parti Québécois (PQ). It was a hotly contested process imposed by the heavy hand of the province despite civil society opposition. Contrary to Toronto, however, most expert reports written over a period of 20 years have recommended some form of amalgamation or strengthening of metropolitan institutions. The merger of 28 municipalities on the Island of Montreal and around the South shore old suburban town of Longueil was accompanied by the creation of a new metropolitan institution at the scale of the census metropolitan area, the Montreal Metropolitan Community. This has cost the PQ the loss of the following provincial elections. Under the leadership of the Liberal party, a process of de-merger was implemented. Fifteen municipalities on the island and one around Longueil were de-merged in 2006.

Our empirical comparison of Toronto and Montreal starts from the historical coincidence of two consolidated city regions at the end of the 20th century in Canada. These two cities are the historical metropolitan centers of the nation, both during colonial times and after. Montreal lost its status of primacy in the Canadian urban system in the 1970s to Toronto. While the latter has become Canada’s predominant global city, articulating various scales of economic and cultural activity into the Canadian federation, Montreal has recently rebounded as a major financial and high-tech center. Its status as the cultural capital of francophone Canada ties the city into the global networks of the Francophonie as much as into the national concerns of Quebec.

Theoretically, this comparison is based on our assumptions that both cities are central sites for wealth production, face problems of segregation (particularly in terms of access to urban services), display a similar evolution of their morphology, urban structure, transportation behavior, household consumption, firm localization patterns, and so forth. These pressures impose themselves onto existing comparable Canadian characteristics of dense, transit-served, lively inner city communities surrounded by sprawling, typically
North American suburban rings characterized by automobility. We believe that the classical center/periphery model seems inadequate to understand these new realities as urban forms and urban life need re-regulation through untried metropolitan governance models that straddle the old inner city/outer city divides. We posit that our two study cities participate in articulating pressures for a new configuration of intergovernmental relations. In this state of institutional and political flux, the main challenge of public policy-making is to stabilize a place for exchanges between institutions and citizens. We assume a position of methodological metropolitanism as there seems to be an emerging political space at the metropolitan scale, where collective action and claims for local democracy unfold. The recent reforms—following consolidation—have created more and more organized and, at times, mobilized local societies, which have also begun to discover their regional terrain of action. In this context, metropolitanization also means an internal reconstitution of the political sphere and its articulation with civil society. There is a diversification of local responsibilities and activities, from the production of local services to, among other things, a proactive role in economic development.

Our research uses a comparative framework. We chose the two cases essentially because of a set of variables, the most important of which is that both cities recently experienced consolidation, institutional and territorial reform. In both cases, the provincial government not only merged municipalities into a larger whole, but also put in place new metropolitan institutions: the Communauté Métropolitaine de Montréal (CMM) and—initially and temporarily—the Greater Toronto Service Board (GTSB). These two institutions have had different histories. The CMM was institutionalized in 2000. It is an instance of coordination and of planning among various sectors (planning, economic development, housing, transportation, environment). The GTSB was created in 1998 and had competencies in transportation policy. However, it never succeeded in the face of other institutions of the provincial government and was ultimately disbanded.

The degree of autonomy of these and other emerging regional/metropolitan institutions was tested through 3 sectoral policies:

1. **Transportation.** In the context of recent institutional reforms, transportation agencies had to adjust. Does the new metropolitan frame favor better regional transportation planning? What happens in terms of the traditional center–suburbs conflict on these issues? We looked at recent planning models and the importance given to public transit versus other modes of transportation. The analysis consisted of going through planning documents and newspaper articles (to highlight public controversies on tunnels, bridges, freeways, light rail), and conducting a series of semi-structured interviews (Keil and Young, in press).

2. **Environment.** Montreal and Toronto have different cultures, is this reflected in public policy? What gaps between plans and planning practices? Did recent reforms change the interrelation between different government levels in terms of environmental jurisdiction? We focused on the metabolism of Toronto and on the new Ontario Greenbelt policy (Keil and Boudreau, 2006).

3. **Internationalization.** What strategies were developed in both city-regions to become players on the global scene? Who pushed for these internationalization policies? What kind of reactions did they spur in civil society? How did they generate rescaling strategies
for socio-political mobilization? How did they play out in the neoliberal redefinition of social democracy in these two very different political cultures?

We are taking as the starting point for this paper the recent book by Neil Brenner (2004), *New State Spaces*, which provides a far-reaching and encyclopedic overview of the rescaling of urban governance in Europe in the last half-century. In our brief comments on this book, we will ask the question: What can this book tell us about comparative urban governance in Canada? We believe and will argue accordingly that despite the obvious differences in societies and states on both sides of the Atlantic, Brenner’s work has a compelling significance for the explanation of changes in urban and regional regulation as we experience them in Toronto and Montreal. When evoking Brenner’s important work, we are not proposing to follow his elaborate methodological strategies based on his “strategic relational approach.” We rather apply his basic suppositions to our cases in a hermeneutic manner.

We base our comments, first, on the precise reading of certain parts of Brenner’s book, and on empirical work we have done on metropolitan governance restructuring in Toronto and Montreal. In this work, we contend that the transformation of metropolitan governance cannot be understood without adopting a double reading frame referring on the one hand to the actual content of policies aimed at the metropolitan scale, their *raison d’être*, the macro-economic logics that underlie them, and on the other hand to the configurations of actors and institutions, which evolved strongly in the last 20 years. Essentially, the metropolitan level, beyond the municipal, progressively became (and not without conflict or opposition) the new territory of reference for political and economic leaders.

Just so that there are no misunderstandings: We are not arguing that Canadian cities are like European cities. There are some obvious differences: urban form, the intensity and variety of capitalism, the role of the urban bourgeoisie, the role of the urban working class, the status of immigrants, just to name a few. Similar differences can be observed in comparisons with cities in the United States or in Asia or elsewhere. Like in the famous debate on the North American city (Goldberg and Mercer, 1986; Garber and Imbroscio, 1996; Mercer and England, 2000), it all depends on the distance we have toward our object of inquiry. From the point of view of Florence, Toronto may be a North American monstrosity; from the point of view of Houston, Toronto is a compact city. From the point of view of Paris, Montreal is a North American, albeit French-speaking, grid city. From the point of view of Toronto, Montreal is a European city of *boulangeries*, cafés, and cultural avant-garde. And even in Europe and in Canada, there are perhaps diverging modes of urbanization despite some indication that convergence is everywhere. For instance, Montreal and Toronto are both undergoing important processes of neoliberalization, but through localized means and with diverging effects. Our research demonstrates that the specificities of local cultures, local configuration of actors, and local relationship with state institutions

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4We are also not claiming to entirely reinvent the common ways of viewing Canadian urban governance. There is, indeed, a strong tradition of work on this subject on which we explicitly (and sometimes explicitly) build our arguments here. In particular, we are well aware of the foundational work of scholars such as Warren Magnusson, Judith Garber, Christopher Leo, Andrew Sanctor, Caroline Andrew, Jean Pierre Collin, among others.
bring about divergent modes of neoliberalization. Whether or not these different modes lead to the same outcomes remains to be seen. Neoliberalism with a Québécois face, as leaders in Montreal who like to think about the success of the “Quebec model” would put it, looks very different from neoliberalism in Mayor David Miller’s Toronto neoreformist clothing. The debate around convergence is not without recalling tensions in Europe between U.S.-style neoliberalism or the specifically European brand of neoliberalism. In the end, processes of neoliberalization make their way in all of those places, take various forms, and are normalized in ways that resonate locally. Are people better off in the state-led interventionist neoliberal Quebec than in the philanthropist neoreformist Toronto? It would be very difficult to answer. Yet, local politics matter, to use a popular phrase; it makes a difference in the ways neoliberalization takes place (Wilson, 2004).

As Canadian cities became more and more globalized, Canada’s pattern of urbanization has developed from a national to an international urban system replacing, in the first instance, the traditional East–West orientation across the country with a North–South orientation and the United States as the main space of reference. In addition, the overall global shift from European orientation to North American orientation in the world-economy has also recalibrated Canadian cities’ role in the world, or at least the hemisphere. Specifically, a continentalist vision has arisen, which is strongly inflected with rhetoric of globalization (Magnusson, 2002). We have called this elsewhere the shift from “permeable Fordism” to “porous” post-Fordism in Canada as urban regions now are open to investment both from the United States and from other world regions (especially East Asia; Keil and Kipfer, 2003; Keil and Boudreau, 2005a). The consequence has been a general reorganizing of Canadian cities to fit the globalized system. The question asked in this context has been how do global cities fit into a system of metropolitan governance, which was ostensibly structured to fit the consecutive periods of colonial, semi-peripheral, national, and continental histories of the country over the past 150 years?

NEW CANADIAN STATE SPACES?

In what follows, we begin with a brief comparison of the European and the Canadian city in order to position our work on Montreal and Toronto in relation to Brenner’s book. Then, throughout the paper, we discuss three claims developed by Brenner that speak to Canadian concerns:

1. It is not simply that the institutional infrastructure of urban governance is being redefined but, more generally, that transformations of urban policy have figured crucially within a fundamental reworking of national statehood since the early 1970s. A geographically attuned and scale-sensitive approach to state theory is required in order to decipher the new state spaces that are being produced under contemporary capitalism. (Brenner, 2004, p. 2)

It is clear that, while it has taken about two decades for Canada to fall in line with other nations where urban governance has played a more important role earlier, it has now
arrived with a vengeance, epitomized by the New Deal for Cities.\textsuperscript{5} This delay is surprising because, if anything, being enmeshed in bitter battles with Quebec and other provincial governments, Canadian state theory has always known what Brenner wants us all to acknowledge now: that states and spaces have to be theorized together (Magnusson, 1996; Brodie, 2000).

2. Another important starting point for a Canadian reading of Brenner’s book is certainly the notion of statehood. In Canada, even more than in other federal systems from Australia to Switzerland, it is obvious that there is no singular and monolithic state. While intellectually driven by different inputs, Brenner makes very similar observations as more Foucault-inspired writers such as Andrew Kirby (1993) for the United States or Warren Magnusson (1996) for Canada: acknowledging the existence of central state strategies at work in the past century, Brenner notes that these “are today being widely superseded as a more polycentric, multiscale, and non-isomorphic configuration of statehood is created” (Brenner, 2004, p. 260).

3. Brenner describes the current configuration of state spatiality as a Rescaled Competition State Regime (RCSR)—

rescaled, because it rests upon scale-sensitive political strategies intended to position key subnational spaces … optimally within supranational … circuits of capital accumulation; a competition state, because it privileges the goal of economic competitiveness over traditional welfarist priorities such as equity and redistribution; and a regime, because it represents an unstable, evolving institutional-geographic mosaic rather than a fully consolidated framework of statehood. (Brenner, 2004, p. 260)

It is clear that Brenner has Europe in mind when he makes this defining observation, but describes just as well the Canadian rescaled, competitive and unstable state architecture.

THE EUROPEAN AND THE CANADIAN CITY

Brenner’s book is undoubtedly about a very specific spatial configuration, that of Western Europe in the post-WWII years, a period that Brenner calls “spatial Keynesianism,”

\textsuperscript{5}The “New Deal for Cities” was a catch-all phrase used by the Government of the Liberal Party of Canada during the final years of the Chretien cabinet and by his successor, Paul Martin. In the years 2003–2005, the term gained overall notoriety as a commonly used reference for all manner of reforms aiming at the improvement of federal–municipal relationships and ultimately also provincial–municipal relationships in Canada. The New Deal remains intact as a general consensus among policy makers even as the new Canadian government under Stephen Harper has no power base in large cities and hence no incentive to fix federal–municipal relationships (they have, instead, prioritized Senate Reform, which is more about classical regional inequities than urban concerns). After the Conservatives came to power in January 2006, an important report was released, which had been originally commissioned by the Martin government. The report of the External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities under the chair of former British Columbia Premier Mike Harcourt (External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities, 2006), continues to pursue the general line of argument established in the larger debate on the New Deal. At the time of this writing, there is no conclusive answer available on the reaction of the current government to this report. Another important document in this vein is the Conference Board of Canada’s Canada’s Hub Cities: A Driving Force of the National Economy (The Conference Board of Canada, 2006), which argues strongly, as have other advocates of urban matters previously, that cities are the drivers of the Canadian economy.
and its subsequent crisis and restructuring during the era of globalization. Brenner himself points out, in a footnote nonetheless that:

a very different formation of spatial Keynesianism was consolidated in the USA during the postwar period. Whereas postwar European national states promoted a spatial fix under Fordism by attempting to spread industrial urbanization as evenly as possible throughout their territories, the US state promoted intense inter-urban competition among local growth machines, subsidized suburban development on a massive scale and channelled major public resources into the military-industrial complex. (Brenner, 2004, p. 131)

In European spatial Keynesianism, Brenner contends, spatial policy had “focused almost exclusively upon underdeveloped peripheries” and he points out that “national urban policies were now introduced in major western European states in order to address the specific socioeconomic problems of large cities” (2004, p. 193).

We will postulate here that Canada is less than the United States and more like Europe in this comparison. Yes, Canadian urbanization looks very North American: there is the sprawl and there are the growth machines. Yet, Canada’s major cities have kept a modicum of urbanity alive and the state is never far away. We even find traces of social democracy (Keil and Kipfer, 2003). While federal and provincial state spatial strategies had long prioritized equalization of resources across Canada’s vast territory (very similar to Europe one might add) as far back as the national policies of the 19th century, they have recently been turned explicitly to an urban agenda (just like in Europe). It has been noted that Canada’s prior privileging of rural and suburban regions has not just been a carry-over of Fordist strategic priorities, but even longer traditions in a country that has considered itself mostly rural and resource-based despite its urbanization rate of more than 80% (Keil and Kipfer, 2003).

What is so interesting about the two Canadian cases is that, while new regional or metropolitan solutions are sought, the old metropolitan centers of Toronto and Montreal keep making their weight felt as classical central cities. This observation is central to our comparison as it demonstrates fundamental differences with U.S. cities (where the suburbs rule) and astonishing similarities with European metropolitan regions (where central cities cohere stronger; Brenner, 2002; Dreier et al., 2002).

Yet, in Canada’s own thrust for metropolitan-oriented federal and provincial policies, there is still more talk than action despite recent budget signals to alleviate urban financial stress from both the federal government in Ottawa and the provincial capitals through fiscal innovation. What’s more, the metropolitan turn, which in Europe has led to significant new visibility for cities and regions in the continentalized urban system, has not yet delivered similar results for Canadian cities on the political front. A sneaking suspicion prevails that upper level government hand-outs for urban regions will not be accompanied by a loosening of the reigns. Rather, there is a specter that urban regions in Canada might be kept on a budget, which is tightly controlled by the federal government in Ottawa and the provinces, while the municipalities’ political powers remain restricted and their policy challenges continue to rise. Since the 1950s, when provincial and federal expenditures as percentage of Canadian GDP and per capita have risen dramatically, spending by the municipal state have stayed relatively low by comparison. In fact, there
is little evidence as of yet that the tendency of “municipal loss of importance and autonomy relative to upper levels of government” can be reversed (Villeneuve and Séguin, 2000, p. 550). Instead, it may well be that metropolitanization is used more as a tool of devolution, which has no tangible effect on the uneven power architecture of the Canadian state. There is no lack of excitement and rhetoric on the part of urban decision makers about the creative city, entrepreneurialism, the new classes, international competitiveness, and the like.

But in reality, there are very few convincing strategies for locational policies and other economic incentive policies that actually deliver the goods. In addition, recent federal policy shifts from an “urban” to a “community” focus have somewhat weakened the urban portfolio in the federal government despite continued statements to the contrary. At the same time, provinces have been less than enthusiastic about actually conceding power to municipalities. In Ontario, for example, the provincial government has recently “out-scaled” the municipal position (with more than one glance over the shoulder toward an overbearing Toronto) by introducing province-wide or supra-local legislation such as the Greenbelt and the Places to Grow acts. Such large-scale regionalization of municipal and metropolitan growth concerns has potentially weakened the political position of Toronto versus the province as the city now finds itself embedded in the larger and more complicated area of the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

METROPOLITANIZATION AS A STATE RESCALING STRATEGY

Brenner’s “central argument is that urban governance has served as a major catalyst, medium, and arena of state rescaling processes” (2004, p. 174), which means he looks at the urban theater as part of a larger campaign of state rescaling. In a different study of European urbanization, Patrick Le Galès also explains:

This kind of reorganization occurs in all cities where there is simultaneous experimentation with different scales of proximity in service management: the municipal scale, the inter-municipal scale of the conurbation, and beyond these to the scale of the city region, which extends urbanization. *This last scale, in general, uses a fairly light touch in coordinating things, but it may be the place where the coordination of public policy—transport, the environment, or to attract business—is learned.* (2002, p. 247; emphasis added)

This remarkable statement goes to the core of our own project about metropolitanization in Toronto and Montreal, where we are studying precisely new collective action at the city-regional level in the fields of transportation, the environment, and international competitiveness.

Indeed, as big cities bring pressures for a new configuration of intergovernmental relations, the main challenge of public policy-making is to stabilize a place for exchanges between institutions in this context of political flux. There is an emerging political space at the metropolitan scale, where collective action and claims for local democracy unfold. The recent Canadian reforms have created more and more organized local societies varying according to their local legacies. Metropolitanization also means an internal reconstitution of the political sphere and its articulation with civil society. There is a
diversification of local responsibilities and activities, from the production of local services to, among other things, a proactive role in economic development.

Brenner—following Pierre Veltz (1996)—has studied processes of metropolitanization in Western Europe,

in which (a) high value added socioeconomic capacities, advanced infrastructures, industrial growth, inward investment, and labor flows are increasingly concentrated within major metropolitan regions, and (b) territorial disparities between core urban regions and peripheral towns and regions are significantly intensifying across the entire European economy. (Brenner, 2004, p. 180)

This double tendency clearly also exists in Canada, where generally increased urbanization has bifurcated into a pattern of globalized, successful, growing, dynamic city regions (e.g., Calgary-Edmonton, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver, and, with reservations, Winnipeg) on the one hand, and a large number of declining towns—mostly in the old industrial and resource economy belts of the East and the North on the other hand (Simmons and Bourne, 2003; Bourne, 2004). Even within “successful” city-regions, social polarization remains pregnant. In Montreal, for instance, 36% of children live under the poverty line. In Toronto, poverty has risen dramatically even after years of robust economic growth.

Our comparison of Toronto and Montreal highlights divergent dynamics of “going global,” which have impacted on the kind of metropolitan governance chosen, as well as the role of each city-region in the Canadian federation. We have looked at metropolitanization in each case from two perspectives. First, we observed the internal dynamics in each city-region, the scale of civil society/state relations, and the perceived political role of each city-region in Canada. Second, metropolitanization was assessed in terms of the federal government’s role in promoting each city-region.

Internal Dynamics Toward City-Regionalism in Montreal and Toronto

City-regionalism is seen by local actors in Montreal and Toronto as a means to access more power leverage in the federal arena. However, these strategies of “jumping scales” differ in both cases. For instance, there is much more consensus and buzz around city-regionalism in Toronto than in Montreal, where the scale of activity remains the amalgamated City of Montreal (or even at the smaller scale of the boroughs and neighborhoods) rather than the broader Montreal Metropolitan Community (MMC). In both cases, however, obtaining more power for the City in relation to their respective provincial governments, is a central objective. This campaign for rescaling the configuration of state power is led by the figure of the central city’s mayor in both cities. Mayor Tremblay in Montreal conceives of his role differently than Mayor Miller in Toronto. In pushing Toronto’s interests, Miller has embarked on a Canadian campaign for the benefit of other big cities across the country, while Tremblay is more concerned with the power of central city of Montreal within the city-region and in the face of a strong provincial government. In this sense, Toronto is keener on reinforcing federal-municipal relations than Montreal, where the Quebec government is often perceived as the “national” center of power and where the federal government does not carry the same symbolic weight.
Beyond the role of mayors, city-regionalism is not carried by the same set of actors in the two cases. Economic elites representing transnational capital as much as the traditional growth-machine centered on real-estate capital play a key role in Toronto under the banner of a coalition called the Toronto City Summit Alliance (TCSA). For Toronto economic elites, the construction of a city-regional political space provides new leverage for accessing the corridors of power at the federal and provincial levels, and consequently obtain new public monies (for infrastructure development and increasing the urban quality of life) that will increase competitiveness and encourage private profits. At the same time, their involvement at the city-regional level opens opportunity for influencing political decision-making directly through the establishment of private–public partnerships that are common tools of city-regional governance, rather than relying solely on lobbying, as it is often the case at the provincial and federal levels. In Montreal, economic elites have not been successful so far in dominating the city-regional agenda, which remains the domain of the provincial government’s policy experimentation in search of a compromise between neoliberalism and social democracy. Moreover, economic elites in Montreal are associated with the central city, which has been in fierce competition with suburban municipalities in struggles for power at the city-regional scale. The history of metropolitanization in Montreal is fraught with instances where suburban municipalities have tampered the entrepreneurial ambitions of the central city and its globally oriented economic elites.

Another important difference between Toronto and Montreal is the striking and seemingly uncritical level of consensus on regionalism in the former, compared to the lack of interest in such matters in the latter. Whereas Montreal has a formal metropolitan institutional structure composed of numerous overlapping institutions resulting from the various policy experiments conducted by the Quebec government (e.g., the Montreal Metropolitan Community, the Agence métropolitaine de transport). This institutionalization has failed in inducing the scaling up of civil society activity to interact with metropolitan state structures. In the case of Montreal, we did a series of interviews with managers and representatives of the municipality and of the metropolitan governance body, the MMC. These interviews confirmed our reading regarding the restructuring of the balance of power between the various categories of public actors involved in the metropolitan governance process. The difficulty to implement the metropolitan reform by the provincial government in the Montreal case was due to the resistance coming from many suburbs, especially those located in the west part of the island and those on the north shore of the city-region. What is striking is a divergence in the representation of social and political integration as well as a different vision of the urban in the public discourse by public and professional actors. Above all, those interviews were exploratory, helping us to better understand the multiple dimensions at stake in metropolitan governance. In contrast, Toronto’s absence of formal metropolitan institutions has generated a significant rescaling of civil society activity filling up the void at the city-regional scale.

The region, imagined differently by various actors, is common appellation in political life and serves as a reference point for many civil society organizations and urban “organic” intellectuals beyond those of the economic elites mentioned in this article. In dozens of interviews conducted with civil society spokespeople in Toronto between 2003 and 2006, we have confirmed a pervasive interest in Toronto’s regional concerns.
Regardless of whether interviewees lived or were active in either the 416 or 905 telephone areas, most displayed a strong regional identification beyond their immediate home turf. From the Labour Council to the spokespersons of downtown business interests, from those responsible for the waterfront to those that establish the regional greenbelt, from the economic development departments of Toronto to Brampton, from community based environmentalists to the airport authority, all have an expressed stake in and identification with the well-being of the region in some form. Toronto’s previous “metropolitan” history has meant that the new appellation has begun to take hold as “regional,” although the more recent move by the provincial government to create a supra-regional Greater Golden Horseshoe reference for southern Ontario has muddied the conceptual waters even more. Not surprisingly, answers to our request to define the region in geographic terms ranged from the Greater Toronto Area, to the bioregion, to the Golden Horseshoe region. In Montreal, rather than scaling up, civil society organizations have scaled down to the borough and neighborhood levels in the wake of the 2000 reforms that had amalgamated all municipalities on the Island of Montreal while establishing a decentralized borough structure. The level of activity around some of these district/borough/neighborhood nodes is higher than it was in the old city of Montreal before amalgamation.

The Federal Government’s Role in City-Regionalism in Montreal and Toronto

During their last two terms in office, the Canadian Federal government under the Liberal Party put forward policy documents aimed at rethinking its role in urban affairs. Paul Martin, leader of the Canadian Liberal Party and Prime Minister of Canada from 2004 to 2006, put his support behind a “new deal for cities.” His minority government was supported on these issues by the New Democratic Party, which was led by former Toronto councilor and Federation of Canadian Municipalities’ President Jack Layton. At the time, in 2004, Martin personally called Toronto Mayor David Miller to back his demands for more revenues at the municipal level, more infrastructure monies, and a process of local decision-making on the redevelopment of a downtown airport. In the meantime, though, the relationships between the federal and provincial governments on one side, and the Toronto government on the other (led by a social-democratic mayor) have become somewhat strained. Faced with the criticisms of smaller municipalities and of provincial governments wishing to keep municipal affairs under provincial rather than federal jurisdiction, Paul Martin had quickly changed his language to talk instead of a “new deal for cities and communities,” thus bypassing the specific needs of bigger city-regions such as Toronto and Montreal in order to offer a similar package to all municipalities.

In a recent political move, Toronto left the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the umbrella organization of municipalities, because “We don’t speak through proxies, we speak for ourselves,” as Mayor Miller defiantly said (Lewington, 2004, p. A14). In response, the provincial government intervened promising to address Toronto special needs such as transit funding and immigrant services directly and to let the City deal with some administrative issues on its own rather than having the province interfere (Harding and Lewington, 2004). In the spring of 2005, the province and the city were in bilateral negotiations to grant important new powers through a City of Toronto Act
(Gillespie, 2005). In the election of 2006, ending the reign of the Liberal minority government, propped up by a social-democratic budget deal that funneled billions of dollars into social programs relevant to municipalities, urban issues that were underplayed as the failure of the Liberal Party to capture the trust of Canadian voters became the central election concern. The incoming minority government under Stephen Harper has been widely considered disinterested and incompetent regarding urban issues as their electoral base is in rural or suburban areas with a regional base in the more conservative western provinces. Their election platform contained little awareness of urban issues beyond a perfunctory reference to urban crime.

Focusing here on the federal government’s role in city-regionalism, three points need to be highlighted. First, former Prime Minister Martin’s interest in promoting an urban agenda can be interpreted as a legitimation strategy. When Paul Martin was Minister of Finance under Prime Minister Chrétien, he authored the most radical budget cuts in Canada’s history when he prepared his 1994 budget. Under his financial leadership, the federal government underwent drastic changes, dismantling many of its welfare structures while aiming at reducing the public deficit. Much of the costs of welfare were downloaded to provincial governments and subsequently to municipalities. Encouraging city-regionalism as a means of coping with these changes in the very nature of government spending is a logical step for Martin to take a decade after his historical budget, in a period when the federal government now enjoys huge surpluses while provinces and municipalities remain strangled (McQuaig, 1998; Dobbin, 2003). Moreover, Martin’s flirt with city-regionalism is in perfect continuity with his reorganization of federal-provincial share of power in social and health issues. Indeed, while social and health services as well as municipalities are under provincial jurisdiction, the federal government operates as a redistributive agent by transferring funds to provinces through an equalization formula. Under Martin as Finance Minister and then as Prime Minister, the federal government has become increasingly proactive in setting national standards as strings to these transfers, leaving some provinces nervous about losing their autonomy. Just as budget cuts at the federal level were shouldered by provinces and municipalities while the federal government was handing out tax cuts and thus gaining legitimacy in the eye of many citizens, the federal government’s proactive role in health care, social services, and urban issues increases its visibility on issues affecting everyday life with the effect, again, of providing more legitimacy.

Second, the federal government’s role in promoting city-regionalism, just as in other countries, is motivated by the will to position the country on the world market. Governing through cities, experimenting with new forms of governance (most notably with private partners), subsidizing winners rather than redistributing to losers, and betting on a good quality of life as an economic development strategy are all strategies of neoliberalization that are part of what Brenner calls state rescaling. Yet, what is also important to note in the case of Canada is that the federal governments “spatial selectivity” (Jones, 1997) in choosing how to help winning cities is not only the result of economic calculations. Political factors play a huge role. Toronto’s weight in the federation results not only from its economic vitality. The proactive role of its political class who sees itself as endowed with a Canadian role, as compared to Montreal’s focus on its role within Quebec, certainly affects federal government’s attitude toward Toronto. Moreover, as the welcoming home of the majority of Canada’s new immigrants, Toronto carries much weight in Ottawa on
immigration issues, but also on certain aspects of the federal government’s diplomatic strategies.

Third, and briefly as things are still unfolding on that front, the new conservative government of Canada under Harper has shown little interest in expanding its urban policy role but remains under pressure to offer something to cities if it wants to gain majority status in the next election. Selective infrastructure investments (with a waning interest in supporting transit and a continued commitment to the expansion of the road and highway system) continue the Liberal policy to build a 21st century public–private infrastructure in the major urban centers considered the core regions of the country’s economy. No indication has been given, though, that the more far-reaching proposals for democratic decentralization and deepening of the urban policy agenda that began under the pressure of the big city mayors, the FCM, and a broad spectrum of citizen and business groups will continue.

In the case of Montreal, its role as Quebec’s economic center has influenced the federal government’s decisions toward the city in that relationship with Montreal inevitably touches on the sensitive terrain of Quebec’s autonomy. What is less known is that, at certain times, this “intrusion” was ardently demanded by both Quebec and Montreal. The difficult economic situation of the 1980s and 1990s aggravated the city-region’s loss of economic activity to the profit of Toronto. Indeed, throughout the 20th century, federal policies encouraged transfer of economic activities to Toronto (such as support for the transport, finance, and car sectors in Ontario, or the construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway, which disadvantaged the Port of Montreal). Yet in the mid-1980s, the federal government changed direction and helped Montreal more than Toronto (Consultative Committee on the Development of the Montreal Region, 1986). The Quebec Liberal government at the time was in favor of such a process because it expected to receive financial transfers from the federal government for Montreal. Moreover, the new conservative government in Ottawa (in power as of 1984) wanted to pacify its relationships with Quebec in the wake of the 1980 referendum on sovereignty-association. The effects of the Consultative Committee on the Development of the area of Montreal were to be felt more than 10 years after its publication. But nevertheless, its impact on the transformation of the hegemonic discursive frame of reference was very deep, legitimizing the neoliberal-ization of a city where a leftist coalition was in power. Intergovernmental relations, and the role played by the federal government, were a powerful vector of redefinition of the Montreal urban regime in a province where social democracy was much more enduring than at the federal level or in the neighboring province of Ontario.

**CANADA’S POLYCENTRIC CONFIGURATION OF STATEHOOD: CONSEQUENCES FOR URBAN COMPARATIVISM**

With regard to the regulation of its urban political structure, we posited at the onset that Canada resembles the federated and constantly shifting statehood of the European union, which lacks a single and uniform structure. But beyond this broad comparison, our research emphasizes intra-national differences whereby certain cities may function more like European cities than others. In other words, the Canadian case is particularly interesting for urban comparitivism because, even though we are dealing with one country, the cases of Montreal and Toronto have to be observed through the lens of an international
comparison. Moreover, even within Montreal, one can disaggregate the comparison further by emphasizing the differences between francophone and anglophone communities. In other words, we argue that it is important to give attention to fine grained contrasts when comparing processes of neoliberalization in cities, and this, as Brenner reminds us, means opting for a multiscale approach rather than considering nation-states as monolithic containers structuring urban governance (see also Pierre, 2005; Sellers, 2005).

The methodological point here is that comparative criteria based on national differences, such as the typology of municipal autonomy proposed by Goldsmith (1996), do not stand anymore. For the Canadian case, the comparative methodology proposed by Savitch and Kantor may be more useful as it incorporates endogenous and exogenous variables. They compare the “bargaining position” of various cities, in order to understand how cities can enlarge their choices in the face of increased global exposure to competitive pressures (Savitch and Kantor, 2002; Kantor and Savitch, 2005). According to them, cities have a margin of maneuver in their choices to recycle land, to grant development rights, to decide on taxation levels, to lower business overhead costs, to loosen air pollution control, to reduce the risks of business by underwriting loans or by entering into public–private partnerships, and to bid for headquarters, international offices, etc. They ask: “Why do some cities follow free-market strategies and inducements for private investors to accomplish their objectives, while others use a political process to promote collective benefits?” (Savitch and Kantor, 2002, p. 30). They suggest that it depends on their bargaining position, which is influenced by (1) exogenous factors that are usually highlighted in comparative frameworks based on national units: market conditions, the form and degree of popular control, the specificities of intergovernmental relations; and by (2) endogenous factors such as the disposition of business leaders and the local culture. City bargaining is thus “the ability of a city to garner resources in order to maximize its choices and ultimately realize its objectives in the capital investment process” (Savitch and Kantor, 2002, p. 43). They assume that “[c]ities have collective interests. They are more than arenas of power in which different interests battle for rewards, but indeed they have a defining identity and a perceptible behavior…. Elites and citizens responded to common threads of experience” (Savitch and Kantor, 2002, p. 351).

Inspired by this framework, our work on Montreal and Toronto asked two questions: (1) Was each city-region able to create a fairly coherent political space at the city-regional scale that permits acting as a unified actor, if so, how did it happen?; and (2) What were the internal struggles and forces at play in this process? Looking specifically at policies designed to increase international competitiveness, transportation policies and environmental policies, how different are urban-regional cultures in Montreal and Toronto reflected in public policy? How does the globally influenced transformation of metropolitan institutions in two of Canada’s most important city-regions change the “capacity to act” of each city-region? Can we speak of the emergence of a collective actor at the city-regional scale? Is there a political, territorial, institutional frame at the metropolitan scale that enables states to coordinate between economic and social activities, to coordinate between actors and processes, and to produce coherent public policies?

Thus, in terms of endogenous variables affecting the different paths toward city-regionalism in each case, we mentioned earlier the contrast between successful business leaders in Toronto in comparison to the relative weakness of their peers in Montreal. While before amalgamation (1997 in Toronto, 2001 in Montreal), both cities had comparable
political cultures driven by left-to-center progressive coalitions (Reformists in Toronto and the Montreal Citizen Movement in Montreal), the amalgamation debate in both cities was framed very differently. The Tory provincial government of Ontario sought to weaken progressives in Toronto by merging their turf in the central city to more conservative suburban municipalities. The more social-democratic Parti Québécois justified the merger of Montreal with its suburban municipalities in terms of the need to strengthen the central city in order to cope with an unequal distribution of resources between the suburbs and the inner-city. Ironically, a few years after amalgamation, reformism is again in power in Toronto, while the Montreal Citizen Movement is dead in Montreal.

These diverging relations with their respective provincial governments highlight that, despite the fact that both Ontario and Quebec operate under the same legal framework in their relationship with municipalities (which are considered “creatures of the province” in the Canadian constitution), different practices of municipal autonomy evolved in Montreal and Toronto. In other words, exogenous variables such as the structure of intergovernmental relations cannot explain much if they are not interpreted in light of exogenous factors such as the local political culture. Ontario and Quebec have different stakes toward their municipalities. Ontario is dealing with Canada’s largest, most cosmopolitan, and most powerful, and very progressive city-region, Toronto, in a generally very conservative province. Overwhelmingly, francophone, nationalist, and suburban Quebec has an ambiguous relationship with cosmopolitan, largely anglophone, and anti-nationalist Montreal, where half the province’s population lives. Moreover, the Parti Québécois has a long history of building support among community groups and local social movements, rather than being antagonistic to them as were the Tories in Ontario. The Quebec government further has a strong interest in keeping municipalities under its control in order to avoid losing an area of jurisdiction in the federal-provincial division of powers.

To these differences, we can add another layer if we look at political practices in francophone and anglophone municipalities. Anthropological work has shown that Anglo-Montrealers reacted so strongly to municipal mergers largely because the municipality is considered the heart of political engagement through volunteerism and community involvement, something that is not as prominent in francophone areas (Radice, 2000; Boudreau, 2001, 2003a, 2003b). In sum, Canada’s polycentric configuration of statehood makes it a fertile terrain for multiscalar urban comparativism.

RESCALED COMPETITION STATE REGIMES IN CANADA

The case of Toronto illustrates well what Brenner (2004, p. 260) means by a “rescaled competition state regime.” City-regionalism there is indeed a set of “political strategies intended to position” the city “within supranational … circuits of capital accumulation,” and thus competitiveness serves as a legitimizing device for virtually every policy move in a “regime” characterized by “an unstable, evolving institutional-geographic mosaic rather than a fully consolidated framework of statehood” (Brenner, 2004, p. 260). The contrast with Montreal is clear: city-regionalism in this case is the target of institutional building strategies aimed at consolidating statehood. Montreal is governed by a complex institutional architecture comprising: the Montreal Metropolitan Community (a formal city-regional governmental body); the Metropolitan Transportation Agency; five provincial administrative regions; several *Municipalités régionales de comté* designed to
regulate rural and semi-rural areas; the amalgamated cities of Longueil, Montreal, and Laval; a series of de-amalgamated suburban municipalities; a borough system within the City of Montreal; and the list goes on. These multiple layers of institutions result from the provincial government’s social-democratic tradition of interventionism in a political culture shaped by the use of statehood for an emancipatory project since the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s. This institutional configuration explains largely why business elites were unable to control city-regionalism as they do in Toronto.

In contrast, despite its sizeable welfare state and extensive history of spatial Keynesianism, Ontario has also at times been known for its voters’ fear of big government, something that was particularly exacerbated during the years of aggressive neoliberalism under Mike Harris. There are no formal institutions at the city-regional scale as provincial hesitation to create large shadow governments at a sub-federal level, the posturing of municipal governments and traditional home rule sentiments have stopped most such attempts in their tracks. This is not to say there are no efforts at building a city-regional political space in Toronto. To the contrary, projects and networks across social, political, and economic sectors are leading toward the emergence of a city-regional regime. The path toward this city-regionalism, however, is more fluid, ad hoc and project-based than in Montreal, where institutionalization and top-down planning prevails. Moreover, there is more social mobilization at the city-regional scale than in Montreal, where it is virtually absent. The rescaling of the Toronto region during the 1990s has left many questions unanswered. Amalgamation has stopped short of regional integration, a significant fact given the loudly touted idea that globalization is realized through the leopard skin of regional growth and development. Yet, immediately after amalgamation, elite groups in the region attempted to capitalize on the newly created political reality with a series of Toronto-centric megaprojects and a number of more or less half-hearted attempts to compensate for the lack of regional scope in the amalgamation of the central metropolitan area. Most eminent in the elite projects following amalgamation was the failed bid for the summer Olympics in 2008. When the Toronto Bid Committee suffered an embarrassing defeat when Beijing was selected, the core of the Toronto project, the renewal of the waterfront, continued to capture the imagination of developers, politicians, and citizens alike. Yet, clearly, the tide has now turned on the waterfront. While strongly in favor of waterfront development, Mayor Miller’s winning campaign in 2003 was centered on his opposition to the most utilitarian expansion of the waterfront—the expansion of the inner city Toronto Island Airport (Bunce and Young, 2004). In addition to the perennial expansion of the waterfront, the other major elite project (here more the professional elites) has been the revamping of the City’s official plan (Kipfer and Keil, 2002). Blackwell and Goonewardena (2004) have characterized the Toronto Official Plan as based on the assumptions “that planners will be reasonable, developers will be benevolent, architects will be brilliant, and citizens will be quiet” (pp. 222–223) and that it is geared toward three relevant groups in the urban process: developers, taxpayers, and global capitalists.

On the regional scale, the Greater Toronto Services Board (GTSB), which existed briefly in the late 1990s, was meant to coordinate transportation and rural planning for the Greater Toronto Area. While full of promise and with the wind of public opinion and most pundits in the back, the GTSB was dismantled in 2001 in another haphazard reshuffling of government responsibilities in the late provincial Tory regime. Similarly, the other big piece of legislation affecting regional planning in the Greater Toronto Area
(GTA), the protection of the environmentally sensitive Oak Ridges Moraine, was advanced with huge exemptions to please the development industry. Although there have been some changes since the political shift toward more liberal regimes in both the Provinces (the proposal of a regional greenbelt in particular), the overall porosity of rural landscapes to urbanization has not yet significantly decreased.

Unlike in Montreal, Toronto was not the target of as much policy experimentation in regionalism. It has long been heralded as a model of metropolitan governance with Metro Toronto, created in 1953 as a two-tiered structure in order to manage growth and distribute social housing across what was then the city-region (making space for downtown redevelopment). By the time of amalgamation in 1997, Metro Toronto (or its affiliated commissions) was responsible for about 75% of service provision (including property assessment, major infrastructure, policing, housing, transit), as well as covering 20% of the municipal share of welfare costs. The amalgamation of Metro Toronto with its six local municipalities created what is now the new City of Toronto. In the newer suburbs of Toronto, de-regionalization tendencies were felt in recent years as the exploding City of Mississauga has been—unsuccessfully—trying of separate from its second-tier municipal jurisdiction, Peel region, with its more small-town and rural character and orientation.

Amalgamation did not solve the problem of cooperation given that the city-region had spilled over the territory of former Metro Toronto. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Ontario government was much more active at a broader regional scale than it was in the 1990s. In the 1960s, feeling the need for preparing the larger region for continued growth that demanded some form of equalization of development costs and consequences, it stripped Metro Toronto of its planning responsibilities and transferred them to a provincial agency that was working around the concept of a Toronto-Centred Region (TCR) that covered nearly three times the size of the present Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Provincial bureaucrats were then very active in regional planning, infrastructure development, and commuter transit (with the successful regional GO Transit system created in 1967) for which it paid all capital costs and operating deficits. But with amalgamation in the 1990s, the GTA-scale city-region disappeared from the provincial policy radar as the Harris government had its sights set on protecting their electoral base in the politically autonomous suburban regions at the expense of penalizing the inner city with boundary reforms and downloading.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have embraced the new enthusiasm in urban studies for sustained and systematic comparative work. While restricted to two urban regions in the same country, we have found a comparative methodology useful in capturing both general and idiosyncratic, overarching and localized trends in urban governance during the current period of neoliberalization and globalization. We have used as a lens three important insights from Neil Brenner’s work on state rescaling and metropolitanization in Europe, which we transposed to the Canadian context. Aware of the myriad differences between Canadian and European urbanization, both historical and contemporary, we found that a careful application of Brenner’s concepts can yield interesting results for Toronto and Montreal. (1) Transformations of urban policy have been centrally important to the overall restructuring of the Canadian state architecture. (2) Canadian statehood is not singular and
monolithic: urban regions provide for significant variations under the same federal umbrella and in similar provincial jurisdictions. (3) We have found remarkable differentiation in the way the Rescaled Competition State Regime (RCSR) asserts itself across Canada. Viewing the localized political processes in Montreal and Toronto in comparison provides a rich diversity of experience in creating more or less aggressive RCSRs under similar circumstances with Toronto elites edging out the Montreal ones if not in outcomes but in intention to situate “their” urban region better in terms of their bargaining position.

This paper allows us to only sketch the comparison of Montreal and Toronto in broad strokes in order to demonstrate the general viability of the proposed methodology. We are aware of the obvious limitations of such a strategy. In future work (see also Boudreau et al., 2006, for a more comprehensive treatment of our research), we note the necessity of engaging more concretely with individual areas of governance such as competitiveness strategies, environmental policy, or transportation management. In pursuing a more sectoral strategy, we find of particular value recent work by Sellers who has demonstrated the necessity to mobilize sub-national comparisons along the lines of local specificity, complexity of influences from below and above, actor interdependence at various levels/scales, special conditions of/for governance and politics, as well as sensitivity to temporality (Sellers, 2005). We may then be able to approximate over time the notion that “[m]ultilevel accounts of cities and their contexts must move beyond rhetoric about the global-local nexus to grapple with the national institutions, economies, and cultures within which urban regions and their politics continue to nest” (Sellers, 2005, p. 441). The political economy of scale literature, to which Brenner’s methodical treatment of European urban governance is a crystalline window, has long been on its way to break down this obsolete spatio-institutional dichotomy. The various forms of state rescaling that have gripped nations in the West in recent years can be studied very well through the lens of urban-regional comparison.

Having said that, we can come to the following specific conclusions about the cases we studied:

(1) Municipal actors have begun to use the federal stage as an important scale for the continued campaign toward a stronger metropolitanization of politics overall—hoping for effects both in terms of regional competitiveness and social cohesion. In Toronto, a strong impetus was felt to connect local and regional strategies for more influence at the provincial and federal tables with the broader rhetoric on a “new deal for cities,” which had been articulated at those scales as a consequence of relentless pressure from lower level governments across Canada. In Montreal, such interaction was also present, largely due to the activities of the city’s mayor, but the policy horizon remains largely fixed on the province at one end and on the neighborhood level at the other. In addition, such articulation with upper level government rests on different actor-coalitions in Toronto and Montreal, with the former clearly more business-driven, and the latter more state-oriented. The overwhelming evidence of emerging regionalism among Toronto elites and even social critics finds no counterpart in Montreal despite that city’s metropolitan institutions.

(2) In terms of the polycentric statehood of Canada, we were able to confirm the possibility of looking at the comparison between Montreal and Toronto as one affected both by inter- and intra-national dynamics. There are, however, remarkable differences between the more federally oriented Toronto and the more provincially oriented Montreal
(with the province of Quebec being viewed as a separate nation in practice even by those actors who would not necessarily favor formal political separation from Canada). Additionally, Anglophone–francophone differences were felt to be important in Montreal, while such cultural differentiation are not played out in any obvious manner in governmental differentiation in Toronto (despite the fact that specific parts in the urban region are beginning to be identified more strongly with markers of class and ethnicity). We concluded from such micro-differentiation that comparative work cannot restrict itself anymore to the inter-national perspective alone but needs to be aware of variables of differentiation at various places. Toronto has grown increasingly problematic as a governed and governance space in the Canadian federation, while Montreal has been kept at the leash of a more social-democratic, interventionist, but also more dirigiste Quebec government, which has retained its role as the prime interlocutor of the federal government while keeping (its admittedly partly de-merged) municipality under tight control.

(3) With regard to the emergence of competition state regimes in Toronto and Montreal, we found that the former has an actively neoliberalized governance apparatus, which pushes into the urban region and aggressively involves state, business, and civil society actors in building a new regional consensus around growth, while the latter has experienced a mostly state-centered strategy, which has kept both business and civic actors at bay—with the exception of the traditionally strong involvement of neighborhood-based groups. What we have, then, is a dynamic mix of diverging and converging trajectories in Canada’s largest cities. The intra-national comparison—in the context of our European-influenced perspective borrowed from Brenner and Le Gales—has proven a productive way to shed light on the locally distinctive developments in both urban regions under the larger impacts of neoliberalization and globalization.

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