

**Multi-Level Governance and the Urban/Rural Divide in  
British Columbia**

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*Abstract: Rhetoric in politics and political processes has in recent years touted new governance approaches to political and policy issues, with a move towards less hierarchical approaches of policy ‘steering’, involving many actors beyond the traditional bounds of government. This work takes the more specific idea of multi-level governance and adapts it from its European origins to deal with the issue of governance in Canada from a local government perspective in British Columbia. The work finds that, despite some indications – formal or otherwise – that the process is becoming more inclusive and less hierarchical, new forms of governance have not taken root as much as some might think and the process remains quite hierarchical and governmental.*<sup>1</sup>

Municipal politics have become increasingly complex and multi-layered in recent years, with new actors and processes being introduced (or forced) into the local politics milieu and an increasingly intricate concept of governance has thus developed. However, this increasingly complex reality has not always been met with new ways of studying these processes, and the move towards ‘governance’ as opposed to old-style ‘government’ has often been assumed. The main question this paper aims to answer is whether governance, as seen as a more inclusive, less hierarchical approach to policy making, has in fact taken hold to the extent that much governance literature argues it has. This will be accomplished by examining these processes from the local level and attempting to place local (and specifically urban/rural) government studies into the context of governance theory in order to provide a clearer understanding and framework for both. Some governance concepts that have been used more extensively in the study of the European Union may help to shed some light on a Canadian idea of governance somewhat separate from the more traditional, federalism-orientated study of the system. The first section of the paper will outline the concepts that need to be further fleshed out, namely the idea of multi-level governance and urban/rural local relations. The second section will provide a more nuanced framework for examining local government policy making from the standpoint of governance studies. The final section will provide a brief illustrative case study to show how this framework and approach can be utilised and applied to Canadian politics from a local perspective. The research draws on British Columbia and shows that a proper application of key governance concepts and frameworks can provide insight into the relationship structures that define approaches to governance in local situations, often in ways that provide new understanding of processes or are counterintuitive to traditional beliefs about urban and rural governance.

### **Multi-Level Governance and Local Politics**

The underlying concept of ‘governance’ has sometimes remained relatively underdeveloped in some literature dealing with the concept, and various applications of this term have further muddied the waters. Concepts such as network governance, corporate governance, global governance and countless other variations have led to a situation where there exists numerous and sometimes contradictory approaches to an already fuzzy concept. Multi-level governance (MLG) represents an area of governance study that has successfully demarcated itself from the broader idea of governance and

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established a useful toehold in explaining political systems in a clearer manner, at least in a European context. However, this concept can be used in a wider political context as well, but the exposure to different ideas of government and governance systems allows for and indeed requires a somewhat different and more nuanced approach to the concept. In addition, a detailed analysis and unpacking of the idea of governance will help to reduce the fuzziness of the concept of governance as it relates to government and politics and provide a clearer direction for future 'governance' research to develop by clearly defining a subset of the term that can be used in many political situations.

Casting the net a bit wider for a moment, governance in general is a term that is often used but more rarely examined. Among international institutions, the United Nations has many operating definitions of various types of governance.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the clearest 'governance' definition comes from the UN's Stockholm Initiative on Global Security and Governance, which states that governance is

the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs at all levels. Governance is a neutral concept referring to the complex mechanisms, processes, relationships and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their rights and obligations and mediate their differences' (1991).

While this definition is useful, it is also vague. There is no mention of differences in governance, applications of the term or ways in which analysis of these structures might prove useful.

Rhodes effectively and more specifically defines governance in a politics sense as '*self-organizing, interorganizational networks* characterized by interdependence, resource exchange, rules of the game and significant autonomy from the state' (Rhodes 1997). Governance has several important characteristics outlined in this definition, including interdependence between organisations, continuing interaction between network members and some autonomy from the central idea of the 'state' (Rhodes 1997). Less actor-centric but equally germane to this work is the idea of governance as self-organizing networks. Here, one draws on the idea of governance as self-organising and 'involving a complex set of organizations drawn from the public and private sectors' (Rhodes 1997) with a high level of interdependency and linkages in delivering services.

Amidst the definitions of governance outlined above, it may seem that multi-level governance just provides another hyphenated excuse for skirting the issue of nailing down a meaningful concept of governance, but this idea proves to be more useful, but still flexible, than some less developed conceptions of governance. Much work has been done on the idea of 'multi-level governance', mostly in the European Union, since the phrase was first coined a decade ago by Gary Marks to examine changes in European Union structural policy (Bache and Flinders 2004). This approach has been developed as a way of dealing with the dispersal of power both upwards towards supra-national

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<sup>2</sup> These include, but are not necessarily limited to, Internet governance, e-governance, corporate governance, responsive governance, global governance, international governance, urban governance, environmental governance, decentralized governance, democratic governance, local governance, political governance, economic governance, national governance, indigenous governance, participatory governance and engaged governance. In addition, they have numerous committees, institutes, workshops, charters and partnerships for governance.

organisations such as the European Union, and downwards to regional governments (Marks and Hooghe 2004). The MLG approach examines governance as non-hierarchical, with power dispersed amongst several heterarchical governmental levels, instead of power being concentrated with any specific level. Intergovernmental relationships are seen as ones of influence and interdependence rather than ones of control and clearly delineated power structures. This view of intergovernmental relations accounts for the 'multi-level' part of the term, while the governance part is revealed by the approach's broad range of governmental and non-governmental actors involved in the process. These actors include not just governmental players, but also many non-public actors, whether they be NGOs, corporations, interest groups, citizens, or anybody else who may play a role. Multi-level governance does not assume (or dismiss) any form of hierarchy, and in fact acknowledges and relies on the idea that relations between actors are not always clearly defined vertically and often have a significant horizontal component. Finally, multi-level governance emphasises the importance of informal relations in determining the role, actions and importance of various actors in the political process (Peters and Pierre 2004).

Bache and Flinders highlight several concepts key to any decent definition of MLG that will also be followed for this research (Bache and Flinders 2004). First, decision-making in politics is marked by more participation by non-governmental actors. Multi-level governance does not preclude the existence of the state nor even necessarily admit that it is no longer the supreme power. Instead, it argues that new, emerging spheres of authority are also playing a role in governance (Rosenau 2004). Second, networks and governmental levels have become more intertwined and less hierarchical, with jurisdictions becoming increasingly cloudy. In addition, some power has been moved up to supranational levels and down to local and regional governments. This has created a system in which governmental levels traditionally found at the top of the hierarchy (nation states) have assumed more of a 'steering' role in policy development, often leaving implementation to lower levels and, intentionally or unintentionally, also giving more power to these levels. In addition, the increased role of non-governmental actors who are often less territorially tied (perhaps straddling national, regional and local lines) has made the strict idea of jurisdiction less clear. Finally, the state actors involved in the idea of governance are developing different strategies to coordinate and 'steer' policy to respond to the changing nature of this governance. These coping mechanisms or tools may differ depending on the governmental level involved and their role in formulating or implementing policy.

Much of the research undertaken in this work revolves around the idea of types of multi-level governance first proposed by Hooghe and Marks (Hooghe and Marks 2001). It should be pointed out that the two systems envisaged by the authors are not necessarily mutually exclusive and can complement each other and operate successfully nested within the same overarching political system (Marks and Hooghe 2004). The first type of multi-level governance has historical underpinnings in the ideas of federalism (Marks and Hooghe 2004) and tends to revolve around the state government and various well-defined sub-national governments. Several characteristics distinguish this type of governance. First, the governmental jurisdictions tend to be general purpose. That is, decision making is dispersed, but in a relatively small number of packages, and jurisdictions remain constant and the tasks tend to be dispersed in bundles, rather than on a case-by-case basis.

Second, membership in the levels, which are usually territorial in nature, does not tend to intersect. The jurisdictions do not overlap, and actors tend to 'belong' to only one jurisdiction. Third, there are a limited number of jurisdictions and jurisdictional levels. These jurisdictions tend to be large in nature, multi-purpose and finite. Finally, the jurisdictions are quasi-permanent and the political architecture remains relatively similar as one moves through the multiple levels of government. Although the jurisdictions are discrete, they resemble each other in structure and tend to remain constant over time (Hooghe and Marks 2001; Marks and Hooghe 2004). The assumption remains that governance revolves around governments, and those governmental levels remain the most power and influential actors and the focus of attention.

The second type of multi-level governance envisions the boundaries and separation between governmental levels much differently than the first type. In type II systems, jurisdictions are fluid and function-specific, changing depending on the nature of the policy or political issue. Jurisdictions align and overlap on numerous different levels and are not limited to simple territorial distinctions. Instead of using governmental levels as the scope of analysis, type II systems focus more on the policy area, with the jurisdictions tending to line up along policy lines, rather than governmental lines. This means that jurisdictions may overlap territorially, and the territories themselves may differ depending on the jurisdiction. In addition, the membership of these different 'levels' overlaps to a much greater extent than in type I systems. Many jurisdictional levels exist and often do not exhibit the hierarchical form or clear-cut difference between levels generally envisaged in type I systems. Finally, these jurisdictions and responsibilities are much more flexible and responsive to the needs of the public and practitioners (Hooghe and Marks 2001; Marks and Hooghe 2004). These factors create a concept of multi-level governance much more fluid – and messier – than traditional federal systems or type I MLG. Type II systems are most predominant 'at the edges of Type I governance' (Hooghe and Marks 2001) and are may be more clearly exhibited in areas such as the local level, as local governments are more likely to need to invoke other, more complex relationships in providing and administering governmental services without the safety net of a larger, resource-rich governmental structure (Marks and Hooghe 2004). This allows for the use of new, flexible relations in order to deal with policy-specific issues that may arise for local governments.

Some criticism of multi-level governance has arisen and should be examined briefly in relation to the objectives of this paper. Peters and Pierre raise some critiques regarding the nature of study and application of multi-level governance in politics. Their concerns mainly revolve around the difficulties that appear when one assumes that informality rules over institutional concerns (Peters and Pierre 2004). Although MLG is in many ways more about process than institution, the role of institutions cannot and should not be ignored in multi-level governance (Peters and Pierre 2004). While multi-level governance does imply that formal rules and institutions are not the only important factor in governance, the theory does not presuppose that institutions exert *no* control. Instead, this control is not necessarily the driving factor behind decisions, but may colour and shape how informal relationships work. Specifically, they note that this informality may in fact breed inequality between actors and bargaining is not necessarily non-conflictual or easy, both of which are likely true. In addition, there is no reason on their part to assume that formal and informal processes are mutually exclusive. Instead, as

most literature recognises (Weaver and Rockman 1993), the processes are intertwined and feed off each other, and multi-level governance represents a way to study the outcome of this interplay and makes no claim to separate institutional effects from more informal ones.

One other notable critique of MLG is that it is a descriptive rather than analytical tool, with even proponents of the idea admitting that it is more of an organisational framework than a theoretical perspective (Bache and Flinders 2004). However, if one considers *how and why* government leaders have been willing to cede some control over governmental affairs, multi-level governance may be used to aid in explaining this factor. There are generally three reasons why governments have relinquished some decision-making power. Governments may wish to cede some power, they may see strategic value in ceding some power even if they do not want to, or they may have no choice in the matter (George 2004). If they have a choice in the matter, the government may wish to give up some power for three reasons. Interestingly and somewhat paradoxically, governments may actually cede some power in an effort to increase their leverage in domestic and international politics. If a government must consider the demands of numerous actors when negotiating, the number of acceptable solutions will shrink, forcing other players to make more concessions to achieve a policy acceptable to the nation (and sub-national actors) in question. Second, the government may wish to limit the power of its political successors, as once power is given to another level it is often difficult to regain. Finally, diffusion of power fragments accountability, allowing governments to make (or stand by) unpopular decisions without necessarily facing all of the political ramifications that they would face had they been the sole purveyors of an unpopular policy (George 2004). Framed in this manner, MLG can act as an approach to answer the question of why governments cede control. However, this misses another key question related to this that can be addressed by the study of MLG: *on what basis* do governments cede control? Here, Hooghe and Marks' typology comes into play by providing options – and testable reasons – for how governments cede control.

In order to fully develop these types and deal with some of the critiques of MLG it is necessary to outline an actor-centric approach to the policy and governance process. Therefore, this work draws on the idea of networks to place the real world of politics into the theoretical structure of governance typology. In politics, the idea of networks has often vacillated between the soft confines of policy networks and the hard edged science of network analysis (Eulau and Siegel 1981; Kenis and Schneider 1991). This work will draw on some other work in the area and attempt to steer a middle course through the rocks of the two extremes. Adshead's approach combines the base of policy networks with a disciplined approach to examining actors that does not necessarily follow the rigour – or pitfalls – of applying the hard science of network analysis to the difficult-to-measure area (Adshead 2002). Adshead's arguments for using 'policy network analysis' is useful in this context. As Adshead says,

Policy network analysis represents the relations between different policy actors in a given policy area, without resorting to descriptions of unique country-specific institutions and agents. It can be used to characterize the policy process along a number of dimensions: the number of participants and the type of interests they represent; the relations between policy actors in terms of the frequency, quality and continuity of their interactions; the

distribution of resources amongst them, in terms of the finances, status, access to information or authority; and finally, the distribution of power or policy authority between key policy actors and institutions (Adshead 2002).

There is reason to believe that this comprehensive approach may be useful in situations of both type I and type II multi-level governance, where actors in the process can be placed in relation to hierarchy versus heterarchy and their roles vis a vis formal and informal power structures. Cases of federalism or type I MLG systems provide a strong body of cases for analysis, and type II systems also are easily analysed on a policy basis. However, the nature of the networks will likely differ depending under which type of MLG the process falls. For instance, type I networks will likely be structured around traditional governmental levels, with a density of actors at each governmental level. In contrast, networks with type II characteristics will tend to be organised around policy areas, with most connections evident based on policy rather than governmental level. This provides a useful way of determining the type of process at work in specific cases and these differences will be visually and measurably evident in network maps. In this way, Hooghe and Marks' types of governance can be revealed, as can the formal/informal and hierarchy/heterarchy dimensions outlined in this new approach. However, it does not require the *assumption* of hierarchy, as some critics of MLG claim the idea does (Stubbs 2005), nor does it completely ignore the role of institutions, an argument against some actor-centric approaches.

One additional factor needs to be introduced to more clearly portray the range of governance processes. The role of the policy process in determining the style of governance is significant (Howlett and Ramesh 1995). Policies go through 5 distinct stages in the cycle: agenda setting, policy formulation, decision-making, policy implementation and policy evaluation. Different actors may be involved in different stages of the policy process and in different capacities, and this is increasingly becoming the case in multi-level polities such as the European Union, where the principle of subsidiarity means the implementers (usually the lowest form of government that can accomplish the task) are often not the same actors who formulated the policy. The policy cycle represents a strong starting point for examining MLG relations, but care must be taken in combining the two processes without losing the benefits of either approach. Power at the policy formulation and decision-making stages does not necessarily equate to strong influence in policy implementation. This has become more the case as power is devolved downwards and moved upwards, and central governments, willingly or not, cede control over certain policy issues (Howlett and Ramesh 1995; Rhodes 1997). This may result in significant differences in actor constellations depending on the stage of policy development, and introduces an interesting variable that must be incorporated into the idea of MLG. Multi-level governance can, as it is currently developed, deal with the differing roles of actors over the policy process, and this work will attempt to move MLG as a concept to one that provides a broader view of the policy cycle, rather than focusing on the implementation stage.

While other stages can be incorporated, it remains a difficult decision as to whether one should treat the stages as separate or interlinked. While actor constellations may change from stage to stage, many other factors (be they institutional, resource-based, or some other process) may still link the stages. Even apart from governance studies,

many studies treat the separate stages of the policy cycle as independent and autonomous processes, which does not necessarily mirror the interconnectedness of the stages in real policy making. This work examines the policy stages into two different categories: policy development (agenda-setting, formulation, decision-making) and policy delivery (implementation and evaluation). This approach creates a less messy analysis of the policy process as it relates to the central concern of governance while not precluding more in-depth study of specific processes. As this work focusses on the governance question, some inevitable reduction of policy terms must be undertaken, and similar distinctions have some precedent in organizational sociology and implementation studies (Brunsson 1989; Hill and Hupe 2002). As Howlett and Ramesh point out, the policy stages 'can be investigated alone, or in terms of its relationship to any or all the other stages of the cycle' (Howlett and Ramesh 1995). This work examines these relations in a simplified manner that allows for clearer understanding of the underlying concept of governance.

#### *Multi-Level Governance, Local Politics and the Urban/Rural Divide*

Nuanced analysis of the urban/rural divide is surprisingly sparse, and most of the work that deals with this issue looks at it in developing countries (Montgomery, Stren et al. 2003; Tacoli 2006). While this provides some context for application of this issue in developed countries such as Canada, many of the issues that play a role in the cleavage between urban and rural dynamics in developing countries do not have the same impact in developed nations. That being said, some work has been done on the idea of exploiting urban/rural linkages in developing policy and development and practice in England (Caffyn and Dahlstrom 2005). Issues such as resource dependence (of urban areas on rural areas), market dependence (of rural areas on urban areas) and economic bases and diversity of both areas can play an important role in developing policy at a local, regional or (in Canada's case) provincial level (Tacoli 2006).

Significantly more time has been spent examining the idea of *urban* governance on its own. Arguably, this emphasis has emerged simply because governance often does play a more integral role in government when numerous actors are present in the equation. Phares identifies the room for many metropolitan governments to utilise formal and informal arrangements to deal with policy problems under their jurisdiction (Phares 2004). Here, presumably, one could argue that 'formal government' is more prevalent in rural cases, whereas 'informal governance' has a bit more free reign in urban contexts where there are enough players in the game to develop these informal arrangements. However, his distinction between 'formal government' and 'informal governance' suggests a dichotomy that simply doesn't exist (Phares 2004). The two bleed together in a manner that doesn't allow such distinctions. He concedes that there is a blending of the two processes in almost all cases, which parallels Hooghe and Marks' approach to Type I multi-level governance (also termed by some as multi-level *government*) and Type II multi-level governance (which resembles Phares' use of the broader term *governance*). Some confusion seems to exist as to whether these are two separate ideas or if government is simply a subset of governance, a view held in this particular work but unaddressed in some books. The use of 'governance' in this specific municipal context is further muddied by his examination of St. Louis and their use of governance processes that are "formal *government* in nature but...dealt with a single function" (Phares 2004) (emphasis his). This 'government' approach fits more closely with Hooghe and Marks'



more fluid, function specific approach to governance seen in type II systems. A lot of this confusion stems from difficulties inherent in a lot of urban politics, with municipal and regional governments cooperating and competing with themselves (often in the same area) and myriad other senior governments, private interests, business interests and anybody else who feels like wading into the quagmire (Phares 2004). Some work has also been done on towns and villages in Canada, but again this was done separately from governance research. Hodge and Qadeer produced a comprehensive overview of towns and villages in Canada, but the work is now 25 years old (Hodge and Qadeer 1983). Despite their use of certain terms, these are works clearly more indebted to urban political discourse than governance literature. These approaches makes implicit sense for those more interested in urban politics than governance theory, but this work will approach urban politics *from* a governance perspective and hopefully provide some fresh insight into the literature. Even if these discrepancies may not be as important as has been developed in this work, the concept of governance is clearly one in need of some clarification. The aim of this paper is not to provide a comprehensive dissection of urban and rural similarities and differences, it is simply to examine whether differences in urban and rural politics exist at the level of governance structures, something not necessarily covered by work dealing with urban governance, urban/rural cleavages or rural politics.

Some basic conceptions of the urban/rural divide in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can be teased out of these literatures in an effort to contextualize this work. First, “the durable urban-rural shift has contributed to a ‘blurring’ of urban and rural characteristics” (Caffyn and Dahlstrom 2005). The growth of suburbanisation and the increasing ease of transport, communication and movement of people have created a situation where the distinction between urban and rural is much less obvious than it has been in the past. Second, and somewhat related, the perceived need to develop regional contexts to local government has resulted in an increased dependence on network linkages of local governments to the wider regional context (Murdoch 2000). This increased interdependence has also made any ‘divide’ between urban and rural much less obvious from the perspective of power and politics, most evident in the flow of physical goods but also seen, more interestingly, in the flow of information (Stead 2002). Finally, this increased interdependence has resulted in an increased level of flexibility in developing partnerships and linkages between urban and rural areas, with context-specific relations arising based on policy area or geography, depending on the required response (Caffyn and Dahlstrom 2005). This closely fits in with the idea of types of multi-level governance.

### **A New Framework for Multi-Level Governance**

This section will very briefly outline a slightly modified approach to MLG and its types in order to contextualize it for the British Columbian case. Hooghe and Marks’ framework for governance provides for a spectrum of types of governance, ranging from pure Type I forms (such as strict federalism) to pure Type II forms (which would be harder to measure, but involve situations with much flexibility in actor relations).

### **Insert Figure 1 About Here**

This spectrum is a useful starting point for unpacking the concept of governance and the nature of its structures. Howlett, Rayner and Tollefson (Howlett, Rayner et al. 2008), drawing on the work of March and Olsen (March and Olsen 1996), Weaver and Rockman (Weaver and Rockman 1993), Offe (Offe 2006) (Offe 2006) and Scharpf (Scharpf 1991), develop an institutional framework that can also help to place the ‘institutional’ side of

governance into context. This work, when developed slightly differently, can also help to tease out separate strands of Hooghe and Marks' typology.

**Insert Figure 2 About Here**

This institutional differentiation allows for further development of Hooghe and Marks' approach to multi-level governance by separating the nature of the organisation of governance (hierarchy versus heterarchy) and the nature of *control* over the organisation of these relations (formal versus informal structures). Some discussion on the distinctions should be made as means of clarification. First, both axes can be seen as spectrums, with real political systems placed anywhere on the two dimensional plane. Second, the concepts delineating the two axes are, of course, ideal types and distinguishing between the two is not always easy. However, what is generally meant by hierarchy is a clear distinction between levels of decision making, whereas heterarchy involves many players with equal decision-making powers. The more political ideas of formal and informal structures are used here in place of Howlett, Rayner and Tollefson's preferred distinction between hard and soft law, and the regulatory, political and institutional factors they identify are collapsed into one political/institutional approach to work with this research. The reason for the difference is, mainly, the focus of this work. For these purposes, informal structures refer to those processes that are not clearly codified or firmly entrenched (such as negotiation, informal relationships), formal structures refer to codified and entrenched structures (such as laws and legislation), with policy documents, memoranda of understanding and other processes falling somewhere in between the two extremes. By separating out two different facets of 'structure' from Hooghe and Marks' idea of multi-level governance, this approach reveals two additional types of governance that were previously under-analysed, namely hierarchical, informal structures and heterarchical, formal structures. As the next section shows, there is reason to think that room should be made in governance study for these alternate types of governance.

This approach helps to deal with some of the critiques levelled against multi-level governance by providing a cogent framework for answering the questions of how, why and in what way governance has taken hold in different contexts. This approach also allows for the clear incorporation of institutional and non-institutional, informal approaches to governance by separating that from the existence or non-existence of hierarchy. In addition, it allows for the *roles* played by actors to be more clearly incorporated, which reduces the strength of critiques of MLG that hold it still assumes government centrality. In this framework, governments can be involved either through direct control (manifested through the hierarchy axis) or through regulatory mechanisms with little direct control (manifested through the formal/informal axis).

Finally, it is important to note that the term 'governance structures' should not necessarily be equated with any sort of institutionalist position. While institutions (in both their broad and narrow conceptions) do have a significant effect on the governance process, governance structures encompass a wider view of 'structure' than mere institutions. Most germane to this work is the inclusion of actor networks into the process (Marshall 2005). The relations between different actors, both formal and informal, make up a significant and meaningful part of determining governance structure. It is this constellation of actors, guided and influenced by the broader institutional context, to which the concept of 'governance structure' refers.

## **Connecting Theory with Reality – The British Columbia Case**

There is empirical reason to suggest that adopting this more nuanced approach to typologising governance is useful and, indeed, necessary. Preliminary research in this area suggests that clear situations exist where heterarchy is met with rigid structure and hierarchy is dealt with informally.<sup>3</sup> Just because one *can* apply such a framework does not necessarily mean one *should* apply such a framework however, so this section will outline why this work will prove useful from a political study perspective.

From an analytical perspective, the combination of actor-centric networks with both structural and multi-level approaches allows for an organisational base to analyse whether this idea of multi-level governance (as one pushing decision-making power vertically (upwards and downwards) and horizontally (outwards)) has indeed taken hold and how and why different types of governance relations have developed. This can lead to more sophisticated questions about the nature of governance in many systems, moving the debate from a simple assumption that it does, in fact, exist, to an argument about the nature of this process. This can examine political (governmental and non-governmental) players and look not only at their *place* in the policy process, as typified by formal placement, but also their *role* in the process and the nature of their actual involvement by separating out these functions. By understanding the nature of these processes (and whether or not they complement each other), the nature of the governance system can then be tested as a gauge of outcomes of political processes.

As pointed out above, there are many difficulties in defining the distinction between urban and rural centres.<sup>4</sup> Most of these can be overcome by drawing the cases from the same political unit, and the distinction was further highlighted in this case by drawing the examples from extremely disparate cases, using British Columbia's largest urban centre (Metro Vancouver, with a population of 2.25 million) and one of its smallest regional districts (Skeena-Queen Charlotte Regional District, with a population of approximately 20,000). This research is still at the preliminary stages, and thus this case study is not yet presented as a solid application of this approach to governance, but rather as an illustration of why this more nuanced approach to governance is necessary in studying 'multi-level governance' in the Canadian case.

Although Hooghe and Marks explicitly allow for type I and type II approaches to governance to coexist in one political system, their conceptions of types of governance are tied into a macro view of societal and cultural impetus for the development of predominantly type I or type II systems (Hooghe and Marks 2003). While this can arguably be seen in Canada as a whole (with the federal structure creating a distinct type I base), it does little to account for type II approaches to governance that are increasingly being used, or when type I or type II systems can be seen when both coexist. In the British Columbian case, there do seem to be clear distinctions between governance processes at play in the policy process, but these differences are derived more from the move from policy development to policy delivery than from any sort of urban/rural

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<sup>3</sup> Forthcoming research on this topic and as part of this research project will include detailed analyses of governance as a theoretical and analytical construct, governance processes in Scotland and more work on governance in British Columbia.

<sup>4</sup> For an in-depth look at this, see Satterthwaite's introductory chapter in Tacoli, C., Ed. (2006). Rural-Urban Linkages. London, Earthscan.. However, some of the issues identified by Satterthwaite don't matter when the comparison is done within one political unit, such as cross-national comparative issues in population.

cleavage. During policy development, the process fits into a hierarchical, formal mould. On the axis of formal versus informal structures, many formal structures exist in determining the role of municipalities in British Columbia, most notably the Local Government Act (1996), Community Charter (2003) and the Vancouver Charter (applying only to the City of Vancouver) (1953). These acts paint a picture of a formal enumeration of power to municipal governments, with the Community Charter recognising local governments as an 'order of government' and giving the municipalities a range of powers that are extensive compared to other provinces (Lidstone 2007). However, pro-municipal legality only tells one side of the story, and many municipal leaders feel that the Community Charter has not had any *real* effect on municipal politics in the province, with municipalities being given increased responsibility without a comparable increase in control or financial capacity (Briglio 2008; Cadman 2008; Corrigan 2008; Royer 2008). Municipalities are 'very dependent upon senior governments – federal, provincial, county, and regional – to provide both the stimulus for economic development and much of the funding for physical infrastructure and community services (Hodge and Qadeer 1983), and without that increase in capacity any legislative reforms will have little effect.

The province has favoured a legal approach to *removing* municipalities' power too. For example, the recent shift of control of Translink from Metro Vancouver's (indirect) authority to provincial control was done through legislative means (2007). The axis between hierarchy and heterarchy is less clear cut. The hierarchical approach is clearly illustrated constitutionally, as municipalities, both urban and rural, are creatures of the province. The provincial government has been less clear on their stance in practice. The Community Charter seems to show that the province is willing to allow a more heterarchical approach to governance. However, decisions such as the Translink example show that the process is, political posturing aside, still very much hierarchical, with the province at the top. In fact, many municipal officials liken their role in policy development to lobbyists rather than political actors (Cadman 2008; Corrigan 2008). It appears that despite attempts at reform in order to provide a more heterarchical structure, the provincial government is maintaining formal, hierarchical approaches to governance in terms of policy development, which fits into Hooghe and Marks' type I MLG.

The picture changes during policy delivery. Here, both provincial and municipal governments, through design or necessity, are more open to heterarchical arrangements in theory and in practice. This can be seen in the increased reliance on public-private partnerships, public-public partnerships and other policy-specific arrangements that involve many actors in actually delivering the policies previously decided upon, processes that are both promoted by the province and accepted by the municipalities (2002; 2007). In addition, these processes rely much more on informal partnerships and approaches to structuring relationships. It should be pointed out that legislation in certain sectors does open the door to more heterarchical relations (2002), but the actual nature of these relations is forged informally. This creates a governance system that clearly fits into a heterarchical, informal mode of conduct. This paints a vastly different picture of policy when it is being delivered, as opposed to developed, in British Columbia.

These processes, to various degrees, apply across the province, with examples drawn from both urban and rural contexts. The difference between urban and rural governance appears not to be as much in the structure as it is in the actors centrally

involved in the process. At the policy development stage, urban governments and rural governments may rely on different organisations or actors in order to convey their position to key decision-makers in the development process. For instance, while both small and large municipalities may make use of organisations such as the Union of British Columbia Municipalities to press their concerns (Briglio 2008; Cadman 2008; Crawford 2008), urban actors may feel they can also work, with greater or lesser success, through their own governments (at a municipal or regional level) (Corrigan 2008). This takes place at the policy delivery stage too, with different actors involved in projects at the urban or rural levels, and different partnerships or emphasis placed on partnerships – ranging from international relations to intermunicipal relations to business relations – depending on the municipal situation (Briglio 2008; Cadman 2008). This shows that differences in governance between urban and rural contexts are not so much based on any sort of structural designs or issues but rather simply on changing actors in the process. Instead, changes in governance structure are more contingent on the policy process, with clear distinctions drawn between policy development and policy delivery.

This importance of changing actors in the urban/rural divide in British Columbia rather than any structural difference is hardly a revelation given the fact that they both exist in similar institutional bounds, but the context of this finding does help to further the study of governance, and to a certain extent governance in the Canadian context. Firstly, this research shows that the concept of multi-level governance, originated in study of the European Union, has a place in Canadian studies and can be applied in a systematic and deep way that takes Canadian political study beyond the traditional reliance on federal ideas of governance structure. However, it also shows that, despite much talk about governance and governmental ‘steering’, rather than ‘rowing’, the British Columbian case remains a fairly straightforward example of Hooghe and Marks’ more rigid type I of MLG, more hierarchical than amorphous and flexible, and more government than governance. In other words, the reports of the death of hierarchical, government-centred governance have been greatly exaggerated. For all the talk of new governance and practice, central governmental actors still greatly control the process.

However, this type I structure is definitely more evident when it comes to policy development than when it comes to policy delivery, where heterarchy and ‘governance’ processes are given more emphasis. Whether this is a significant *change* in governance structures or simply a continuation (and possible expansion) of previous practices is a question best left to other research, but the simple fact that this cleavage exists is relevant and important to this research, both on the question of impact of the urban/rural divide on governance structures and the general structure of governance both theoretically and in the British Columbian case.

### **Conclusions**

This structural difference in governance approaches has been shown to be more related to stage in the policy cycle than to size of municipality, but the split in processes can have a significant effect on the governance and government of municipalities. Previous research has pointed out the difficulty in reconciling different orientations in democratic practice (Flinders and Curry 2008) and the same appears to be true to a certain extent in dealing with different governance orientations in establishing policy. This misfit between governance orientations may result in a poor application of ideas related to both type I and type II systems or a de facto shift towards one or the other form.

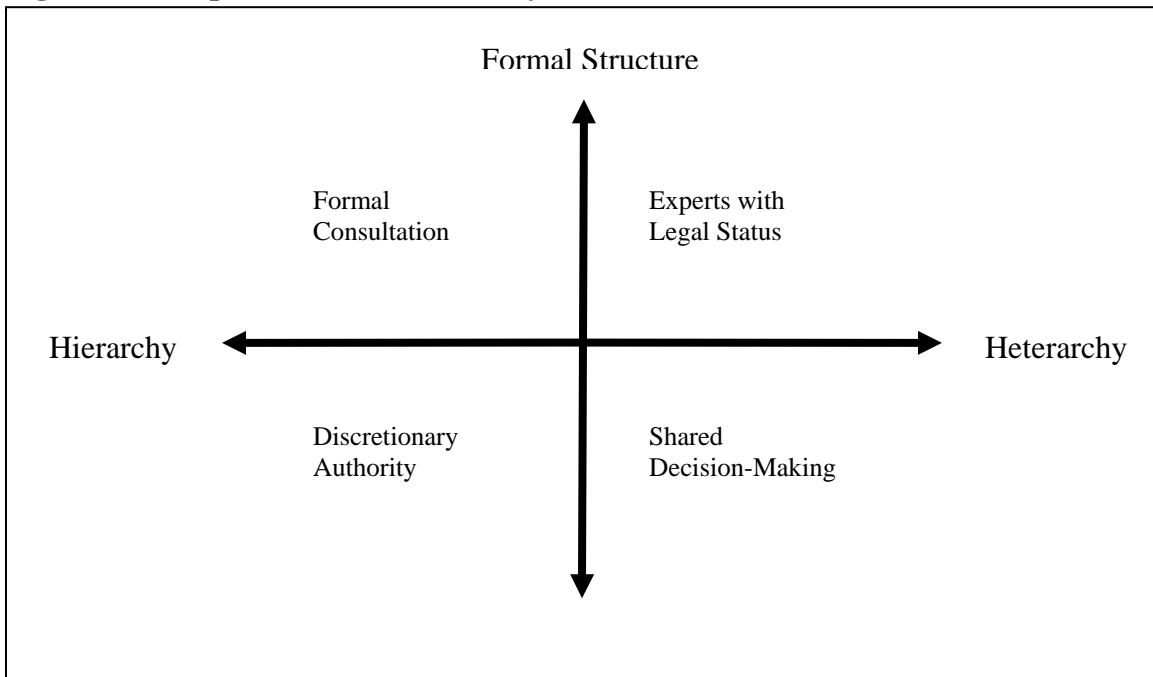
Significant levels of frustration have been voiced by various municipal leaders because of their inability to affect policy development, despite the expectation that they play a significant role in policy delivery (Cadman 2008; Corrigan 2008; Royer 2008). While certain organisations such as the UBCM help to alleviate this perceived lack of power (Crawford 2008), a clear divide still exists between the two policy processes, a divide that may be felt more in certain municipalities than others. Larger municipalities, especially those in Metro Vancouver, who previously had a significant level of control over policy areas such as transit at both the development and delivery stages, feel this loss more than small municipalities, who may never have had this level of autonomy.

This nuanced analysis of possible governance arrangements and its application in the BC case helps to illustrate the difficulties of using two different ideas of multi-level governance in crafting policy, as shown by the frustration of many municipal leaders towards the expectations and responsibilities placed on them as compared to their level of control of the process (Briglio 2008; Cadman 2008; Corrigan 2008; Royer 2008). Although there have been claims of opening up the process to more actors (most notably local governments through the Community Charter, but also non-governmental actors), the reality has not been as much of a shift in governance as some would claim (2008). If Hooghe and Marks' typology is teased apart into separate dimensions delineating formal versus informal structures and hierarchy versus heterarchy, it shows that many formal constraints on municipal power have been removed, leaving more theoretical autonomy for municipalities. However, this autonomy is somewhat toothless without increased financial capacity, something that hasn't been forthcoming to local levels. In addition, these examples of increasing municipal autonomy appear to be discretionary, with the province willing to step in if they disagree with the direction in which a municipality is moving. This does not paint a very positive picture for municipal powers in British Columbia. Although some reform has been attempted in order to provide more of a type II, amorphous and flexible approach to governance, the political misfit with dominant type I, hierarchical structures has resulted in a much more limited embrace of the idea of multi-level governance than municipal leaders would hope, but in academic terms this has produced an opportunity for more sophisticated application of European ideas of governance in the Canadian realm.

**Figure 1 – Adapted from (Hooghe and Marks 2003)**



**Figure 2 – Adapted from (Howlett, Rayner et al. 2008)**



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