Institutional creation and death: Urban Development Agreements in Canada

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Abstract

Urban development agreements (UDAs) in Canada represented an innovative governance approach that involved all three levels of government and civil society organizations jointly deliberating and setting policy to address enduring and seemingly intractable issues like homelessness and economic development. By 2010, however, all UDAs in Canada have been terminated. This article applies a new institutionalism framework to analyse and explain the creation and termination of UDAs in Canada. First, I argue that the creation and termination of these institutions are most productively explained by applying both historical institutional and discursive institutional analytical frameworks. Second, I examine the specific UDAs in Vancouver and Winnipeg to illustrate the historical, institutional and ideational context under which they emerged. Finally, I consider the institutional termination literature to frame a discursive institutional analysis of the 'death' of UDAs in Canada, concluding that there was an ideational or discursive turn stemming not simply from political turnover, but cognitive (how to do it) and normative (what is appropriate) ideas.

Introduction

Public policy issues in urban settings typically involve intersecting governance mandates with several levels of government—homelessness and economic development are clear examples in which multiple orders of government possess legitimate claims of jurisdiction and policy interest. Urban development agreements (UDAs) in Canada represented an innovative governance approach that involved all three levels of government and civil society organizations jointly deliberating and setting policy to address enduring and seemingly intractable issues. By 2010, all UDAs in Canada have been terminated. This article applies a new institutionalism framework to analyse and explain the creation and termination of UDAs in Canada. First, I argue that the creation and termination of these institutions are most productively explained by applying both historical institutional and discursive institutional analytical frameworks, as several scholars have recently advanced. Second, I examine the specific UDAs in Vancouver and Winnipeg to illustrate the historical, institutional and ideational context under which they emerged. Finally, I consider the institutional termination literature to frame a discursive institutional analysis of the 'death' of UDAs in Canada. The central task of this article is thus to offer a contextualized explanation for why such innovative (and celebrated) governance arrangements were universally abandoned in Canada by 2010. In the current political science climate that privileges path dependence and 'increasing returns processes' to explain institutional resilience, we are left without a convincing explanation for institutional termination. I argue that there was an ideational or discursive turn stemming not simply from political turnover, but cognitive (how to do it) and normative (what is appropriate) ideas.

Urban development agreements (UDAs) in Canada were first introduced in the 1980s as mechanisms to address problems posed by urban development, as well as to provide an opening to a more substantive federal role in urban affairs. Municipal governments in Canada have no independent constitutional powers, but rather are creations of the provincial governments by ordinary legislation, which for the most part precludes a federal government role and tends to be a policy domain that is jealously guarded by provincial governments. UDAs are tri-partite agreements of Canada's three levels of government (local, provincial and federal), in which formal partnerships, structures and funding arrangements are created with the purpose of tackling complex and intersecting social and economic problems in an urban context. The resources provided in support of UDAs are a mix of 'new' contributions and those assembled through coordination and the redirection of existing financial allocations of municipal, provincial and federal governments. The impetus for UDAs in Canada stems from spatially concentrated poverty, crime, health issues and social exclusion in inner city neighbourhoods, where individuals faced numerous obstacles related to labour, housing and access to social services (Bradford, 2008). UDAs were only ever fully implemented in the Western cities of Vancouver, Edmonton, Regina, Saskatoon and Winnipeg, although other cities (most notably Toronto) were eager to sign similar agreements prior to their institutional termination, the explanation of which is a focus of this article.

The policy perspective among the UDA proponents is that solutions to such 'wicked' urban problems require the mobilization of all relevant government partners, not only to marshal resources but also expertise (see Pierre, 1998 for review of UK and US local partnerships). For

example in Vancouver, the UDA focused primarily on the Downtown Eastside (DTES), a neighbourhood that faces health crises related to HIV and drug use, highly concentrated poverty, infrastructure decay and crime. Social policy planners in the City of Vancouver argued that the policy levers they possessed alone would be inadequate given the severity of urban problems, and thus required the active and coordinated involvement of relevant provincial and federal partners (Mason, 2006). The complexity of the social and economic problems is reflected in the number of government agencies and departments with legitimate claims to jurisdiction and historical involvement in the neighbourhood: 12 federal departments, 19 provincial ministries or agencies and 14 municipal departments have a stake in the policy envelope of the DTES (Mason, 2006). Thus from an administrative standpoint, an agreement by the three levels of government to share information and resources and jointly negotiate and implement strategic policy was viewed as the only way to make progress with respect to the problems facing the area (Carrigg, 2009). In all of the UDAs, consultation with civil society and business groups was also viewed as important—although to varying degrees—to generate buy-in and continued commitment from as many stakeholders as possible (Doblias and Battye, 2005).

An important feature of the UDAs in Canada is that they were tailor-made to the specific urban context in question. There was an acknowledgement that local conditions and needs vary, and thus each UDA was unique in terms of content, decision-making rules, funding arrangements, and structures established for implementation. In terms of content, for example, the Winnipeg UDA focused on Aboriginal economic and social development, downtown renewal and supporting innovation and technology (for economic development), whereas the Vancouver UDA focused on the health issues related to drug use and sexual exploitation, affordable housing, and community capacity building (Doblias and Battye, 2005). As such, there was considerable local agency in shaping the terms of the UDAs, particularly from Mayor Owen and civil society groups in the Downtown Eastside in the case of the Vancouver Agreement (Simpson, 2001; Dube, 2000). The Vancouver Agreement was smaller in terms of levels of funding and narrower in focus than the Winnipeg UDA. Given the nature of the institutional framework of policymaking in Canada, the problems to be addressed, and the governance theory that supports these types of arrangements, they were flexible and time-limited—typically 5 years in length, but commonly renewed. Likewise, in terms of structures of implementation, the UDAs tended to have similar models of decision-making, with a management committee for the day-to-day operations of the agreements (consisting of civil servants) and a policy committee to provide direction and final decision-making (consisting of the relevant senior elected officials).

When discussing UDAs it is useful to think of them as institutions. Peters (1998) likewise argues that "examining partnerships as institutions provides a useful starting point for understanding their behaviour and role in the policy process" (19). Despite their time-limited nature, UDAs had all the attributes of what we traditionally label 'institutions': formal working relationships among government agencies, with accompanying rules, hierarchy and decision-making mechanisms that govern behaviour and shape the policymaking context (Atkinson, 1993). They were of sufficiently high profile and 'permanent' such that interest groups and civil society mobilized around them, adapted their policy strategies, and aligned themselves to receive policy benefits and windfalls. The Winnipeg UDA (in its various 5-year incarnations), for example, was effectively institutionalized with an operational period of over 20 years (Leo,

2006). Likewise the Vancouver UDA was 10 years in duration, and like the other UDAs, had a dedicated secretariat of officials working under the mandate of the respective agreements.

UDAs are also examples of what Leo (2006) calls 'deep federalism', which is typified by intergovernmental relations or 'multi-level governance' not as constitutional hierarchy, but as a process, and one in which cities exist as prominent players (see also Young and Leuprecht, 2004; Smith and Stewart, 2004). Vincent and Elinor Ostrom (1998) classify such a policy context as 'polycentric' to signify the multiple centers of decision-making that are more or less independent from one another. Arrangements under which these multiple 'centers' work in conjunction are flexible, often task-specific, and aim to resolve complex social problems that one level of government of organization cannot do alone, though tend to involve more substantial coordination and transaction costs (Hooghe and Marks, 2003). It is thus characterized by an expansion of our conception of the federal system to include cities and by flexible arrangements to pursue national priorities while accounting for local differences. UDAs are therefore clearly 'institutions' in the sense that they are structures and mechanisms of cooperation, but also a 'process' that is flexible, informal and innovative. Given the complete institutional termination of UDAs in Canada by 2010, it is useful to look to the new institutionalism literature to ascertain how it may (or may not) help us explain institutional change.

New institutionalism and institutional change

The 'new institutionalism' movement in political science advances a view of institutions as primarily constraining in nature. Whether it is rational choice institutionalism, in which actors appear to pursue preferences within a specific incentive structure, or historical institutionalism, in which path dependence shapes institutional and policy development, a common complaint directed towards the new institutionalism literature is the implication that institutions are static, constraining structures on human agency (Schmidt, 2010). In this view, institutions are external to the political actor, exerting a force on them from another source or collection of sources. Institutional change is thus mainly explained as a result of an exogenous shock, with crises or changing government coalitions as typical explanations. Indeed, exogenous shocks are surely responsible for some major institutional and policy changes (for example, September 11 attacks), but there is increasing recognition among new institutionalist scholars that institutional change can also result from endogenous processes (Grief and Laitin, 2004; Thelen, 2004; Lieberman, 2002). With varying levels of success, scholars have endogenized institutional change within the rational choice or historical institutionalist traditions (see Schmidt, 2006 for review).

Part of the challenge the 'new institutionalisms' face, however, with respect to institutional change is a weakly developed sense of how the micro-foundations of actor behaviour relate to macro-historical patterns.[1] Action within institutions follows a rule-based logic: rational choice institutionalism gives us an interest-based logic of calculation and historical institutionalism gives us historically based logic of path dependence. We are thus left with the impression of "unthinking actors" who all follow the rules, thus providing limited explanation for institutional change (Schmidt, 2008a: 313). As a result of the weakness in

[1] Of course, rational choice institutionalism does not suffer from this particular problem, but faces perhaps more significant (and well-documented) problems with respect to assumptions of fixed exogenous preferences, a functionalist view of institutions, and an inability to explain change (Green and Shapiro, 1996).

historical institutionalist accounts in specifying a convincing micro theory for human behaviour (and linking it to macro-historical-institutional forces), endogenous institutional change becomes very difficult to theorize. Given the widely acknowledged need to endogenize institutional change and the inability of the two 'new institutionalisms' to convincingly account for it, other scholars have developed and advanced an additional 'new institutionalism'—discursive institutionalism—which they argue most powerfully explains institutional change.

Discursive institutionalism views institutions not only as structures that constrain actor behaviour, but also as constructs that are created and changed by actors (Schmidt, 2008: 314). For the other 'new institutionalisms', institutions are external to the actor, but for discursive institutions they are also internalized. That is, institutions are constructs created by actors using what Schmidt (2008a) calls their "background ideational abilities" (how they interpret their context and the meaning within) and are changed by using their "foreground discursive abilities" (in which actors can think outside of institutions while existing in them and to persuade others to change them with ideas) (314). Given its namesake, ideas play a central role in discursive institutionalism. The 'ideational turn' in political science in the last several decades was a response to both the limitations of institutionalism (old and 'new') on one side of the spectrum and behaviourism on the other (Blyth, 1997). The ideational literature is diverse, with scholars applying them in various analytical frameworks, from rational choice to historical institutionalism to political economy to critical approaches (see Berman, 2001 for review). The primary pursuits in the ideational literature seek to answer how new ideas rise to prominence (see for example Stone, 1998; Schneider and Ingram, 1993), how they become embedded in organizations or patterns of discourse (see Blyth, 2001; White, 2002), and how ideas influence political behaviour (see Blyth, 2002; Weingast, 1995).

'Discourse' in the discursive institutionalism literature is a generic term covering not only the substantive content of ideas and forms of ideas (frames, narratives, myths and images), but also the interactive processes through which ideas are transmitted. Injecting the role of ideas in political research necessarily pulls attention to actor behaviour, a well-documented weakness of the overly structuralist accounts of historical and sociological institutionalists. Actor behaviour is a central concern in discursive institutionalism since, as Berman (2001) notes, new ideas do not become politically salient on their own but must be advanced by carriers; that is, individuals or groups persuade others to reconsider the ways they think. Attention to discourse allows us the possibility of answering some perennial questions in political science, like how ideas relate to political action and how interests and beliefs are constructed and modified. The turn to ideas corrects for the static and overly deterministic nature of institutions in their explanations (Schmidt, 2008a).

Discursive institutionalism is not without its own challenges, however. Like the other new institutionalisms, causal mechanisms are rarely specified, thus resulting in few explicit hypotheses on how ideas relate to political action, and even less empirical testing. Likewise, similar to the exogenous shocks in the other new institutionalisms, sometimes discourse matters and sometimes it does not. Note that discursive institutionalists do not believe that ideas trump issues such as power, position or history, but seek to demonstrate when/where/why ideas and discourse seem to 'matter' over rationalist interests and historical paths. Also, some ideas become prominent because of the carrier (via resources or credibility), but also important is the

congruency between the idea and the environment from which it emerges. Berman (2001) suggests we look to how the logic of the idea, the institutional context it encounters and the interests of actors interact to influence whether a new idea is accepted. Finally, Schmidt (2006) implies that discursive institutionalism may not be able to stand alone as an analytical framework, as it is rather voluntaristic unless the structural constraints offered by the other new institutionalisms are included (which are often thought to be overly deterministic).

Consistent with the ideational turn to new institutionalism found with discursive institutionalism, there are important contributions from the literature on organizational behaviour in sociology and political science. Particularly relevant for this analysis of institutional creation and death are the concepts of organizational legitimacy and image. Institutions like UDAs are created and sustained based on normative legitimizations "explaining or justifying the social order in such a way to make [them] subjectively plausible" (Powell and DiMaggio, 1991). That is, legitimacy of the institution relates to the degree of consensus regarding the policy goals, the 'appropriate' policy instruments and the roles of various actors in the institutional arrangement (Scott, 1991). The loss of legitimacy, either by actors within the institution or by external actors, significantly increases the likelihood of institutional atrophy or death (Scott, 1991).

It is critical to note, however, that institutional legitimacy and image is "not a formalized entity", but rather is a complex construct subject to multiple (and potentially evolving) interpretations and understandings by various audiences (Carpenter, 2010). According to Carpenter, who analyzed the legitimacy and reputation of U.S. Federal Drug Administration (FDA) as an institution, there is a "multidimensional politics of legitimacy" in which subjective understanding by various audiences—bureaucratic, civil society, academic and even political parties—can empower or weaken the institution (Carpenter, 2010: 33). The policy decisions and even decision-making process within the institution can be inconsistent with the expectations by certain audiences based on their constructed 'images' of the desirable means and ends of the policy process and thus call into question the legitimacy of the institution in important political or policy circles. The importance of legitimacy, and in particular, supporting policy images is echoed by prominent theories of institutional change—for example, Baumgardner and Jones' (1993) punctuated equilibrium—and likewise complements the historical and discursive institutional analysis of UDA creation and death in this article.

The objective here is not to advance another survey of the 'new institutionalisms', but to suggest that the most productive approach to analyze the creation and death of UDAs in Canada is by using both historical and discursive institutionalist analytical frameworks. This position echoes the argument advanced by Schmidt (2008b) that while historical and discursive institutionalism have differing ontologies (what 'are' institutions) and epistemologies (what makes them continue or change), they are indeed complementary in many scenarios (for additional examples see Hay, 2001; Kjaer and Pederson, 2001). This article suggests that in the analysis of UDAs in Canada, the simultaneous application of both analytical frameworks is in fact necessary: discursive institutionalism can assist the explanation of the dynamics of change in formal institutional structures, and historical institutionalism can assist the explanation of formal institutional contexts that shape interactive patterns of discourse. The organizational political science literature, with its emphasis on institutional legitimacy and image, helps structure the discursive analysis of institutional creation and death.

Theoretical considerations

This article is principally concerned with institutional termination, but in order to understand how institutions die, we must first consider how they were born. Historical institutionalism contains several central tenets with respect to understanding institutional creation. First, institutions do not necessarily emerge or evolve in functionalist terms (Hall and Taylor, 1996). Second, historical institutionalists tend to offer multi-causal explanations, allowing room for institutions, ideas and socioeconomics to account for particular political phenomena. Third, given its namesake, there is recognition of the historical contingency of political phenomena—that is, the alignment of factors a particular period in time produced this observation, and that similar alignment in a different period may produce different outcomes. The historical and discursive institutionalist theoretical frameworks are applied to the considerations of both institutional creation and termination, however critics suggest that the historical institutional framework will be less helpful in terms of explaining institutional change (Hay and Wincott, 1998). Thus when the historical institutionalist framework is applied to the creation of UDAs in Canada, there is an acknowledgement that institutions emerge out of particular historical-social context, and thus from a methodological point of view we look to relevant institutions of government (level of government, party system, federalism), socio-economic conditions (urban poverty, globalization, health crises), and prevailing policy ideas (coordination, horizontal management, 'governance'). As Schmidt (2008b) argues, a historical institutionalist framework can provide us with the 'background knowledge' or set the political and ideational context, which can then be complemented by the discursive institutionalist approach, useful for both explaining UDA creation and termination.

It is important to be explicit about what is meant by applying discourse theory to empirical work, as there remains considerable scepticism in the political science community about the robustness of such an approach. Discourse is not simply analyzing speeches or texts without recognition of the context, and certainly does not assume "reality is all words and not deeds", but rather 'discourse' applied here is *what* is said but also where, when, why, how and to whom it was said (Schmidt, 2008a: 305). Applying the concept of 'discourse' allows us to develop a more contextual and complex understanding of the role of ideas in political world, which most scholars accept as relevant, but fail to incorporate into their analysis in a systematic fashion. As Milliken (1999) suggests, discourse theory can be applied in a manner consistent with generally accepted or conventional social science standards of data collection, empirical analysis and falsifiability of claims. As with other frameworks or methodologies, the theoretical commitments serve as an internally established basis for critically evaluating the claims resulting from discourse analysis, and are discussed in the following paragraphs.

There are certain assumptions that must be made clear with respect to discourse theory. First, 'discourses' are social and political constructions that structure relations between different objects and practices. Consequently, discourse theorists reject rationalist approaches to political analysis, which presume that social actors have given interests and preferences; instead, actors' perceptions of their interests and the systems within which they operate undergo constant historical and social change as a result of political practices (Howard and Stavrakakis, 2000). Second, discourse theorists tend to reject purely positivist conceptions of knowledge and method, but this does not imply an unsystematic approach to generation and evaluation of empirical

evidence. Falsifiability is governed by "the degree to which its accounts provide plausible and convincing explanations of carefully problematized phenomena for the community of social scientists" (Howard and Stavrakakis, 2000: 7). Third, discourse theorists examine the way social practices articulate and challenge dominant discourses, which is possible because systems of meaning are contingent and thus they are always vulnerable to political forces that were outside their production. Milliken (1999) suggests that dominant discourses are "grids of intelligibility" for people, but are unstable, thus requiring work "to articulate and rearticulate their knowledges and identities, making discourses changeable and in fact historically contingent" (230).

'Discourse analysis' is the practice of analysing empirical raw materials and information as discursive forms; this includes a wide range of linguistic and non-linguistic data, like speeches, reports, party platforms, historical events, interviews, policies, ideas, even organizations and institutions, as 'texts'.[2] Newspaper coverage, political speeches and official press releases serve as useful indicators of the policy discourses that may influence institutional creation, evolution and termination. These sources of data allow us to detect the discourse that "specifies not only the goals of policy and the kind of instruments that can be used to attain them, but also the very nature of the problems [policymakers] are meant to be addressing" (Hall, 1993: 279). Indeed, for institutional scholars like Baumgardner and Jones (1993) and Powell and DiMaggio (1991), institutions are supported by powerful policy images and other cognitive constructions and thus analyzing discourse becomes a critical method to understanding institutional creation and change. 'Discourses' are concrete systems of social relations and practices that are inherently 'political', as their formation involves the construction of antagonisms and the drawing of political frontiers. They are intimately related to the exercise of power, as their construction excludes certain possibilities, structures the relations between social agents, and naturalizes certain behaviours, actor's roles or institutional settings (Milliken, 1999).

Institutional creation of UDAs

While the various place-based tri-partite arrangements in Canada since the 1980s were classified here similarly in the introduction, each have unique attributes with respect to funding, decision-making style and policy objectives, and of course arose out of a unique historical-social-political context. The successive Winnipeg and Vancouver agreements will serve as illustrations, using historical and discursive institutionalist frameworks to analyse the origins of the respective institutions. Consistent with typical historical institutionalist analyses (see for example Hall, 1992), historical-socioeconomic conditions and institutions of government, including levels of government, the party system and federalism are critical to consider. Using the discursive institutionalist analytical framework, essential to examine is the role of ideas and discourse that influence how social problems become defined, the 'appropriate' interventions of government, and the prevailing academic and bureaucratic notions of effective governance. Despite the analytical separation here, there is an acknowledgement that socioeconomics, institutions, and ideas are mutually influential and interactive in nature (Heclo, 1994).

[2] UDAs in Canada were not terribly high profile institutions and thus media coverage was not nearly as extensive as other government initiatives. Consistent with established norms of discourse analysis, though I read hundreds of documents in researching this article, space limits the number I can cite to support my arguments (Hall, 2003; Milliken, 1999; Howard and Stavrakakis, 1991). That said, this discourse analysis offers a high diversity of sources, ranging from government news releases, to policy platforms, to political speeches and to newspaper media coverage.

Historical-socioeconomic conditions

The Winnipeg and Vancouver UDAs were created under different historical, political and social contexts, despite similarities such as the urban development focus, the tri-partite nature of the institution and aim of civil society and community engagement. Several scholars have provided excellent historical reviews of the Winnipeg and Vancouver UDAs—see Bradford (2008), Mason (2006) or Layne (2000)—so the goal here is not to review once again, but rather to consider the origins of these institutions as a necessary precursor to analysing their termination. From a historical and socioeconomic perspective, the Winnipeg case is one of suburban flight from the core, leaving the downtown "commercially stagnant, decaying aesthetically and rife with social ills" (Krotz, 1983). Thus problems of adequate housing, economic development and employment were much more evident in the downtown core, and served as the primary impetus for the first incarnation of the tri-partite relationship in Winnipeg (Layne, 2000). Likewise, the growing influx of Aboriginal persons into central Winnipeg added another layer of unique challenges to the city (and later became a focus for the last UDA from 2004-2009).

Vancouver is a rather different story: urban poverty, underdevelopment and crime are indeed key features of the UDA (similar to Winnipeg), but the primary policy objectives relate to an HIV/AIDS health crisis in a specific neighbourhood (the 'Downtown Eastside'- DTES) from widespread drug abuse and prostitution. At the time of the UDA negotiations, there were thousands of homeless persons, even more addicted to drugs, in a relatively concentrated area adjacent to Vancouver's downtown core (Dube, 2000). The DTES has a rich history of civil society service provision and advocacy, and as such, they exercised particularly strong local agency to shape not only Mayor Owen's policy goals, but also made demands to be included in decision-making. The historical and socioeconomic context in the DTES in the 1990s was driven by the provincial and federal spending cuts and social policy restructuring related to mental health services, social assistance and affordable housing (Bradford, 2008; Yaffe, 2007). Like Winnipeg, however, the socioeconomic context in this depressed neighbourhood in Vancouver represents the new urban geography of poverty, related to macroeconomic sources of inequality and exclusion associated with globalization and lowered demand for unskilled labour in industrialized countries (OECD, 1998).

Institutions of government

As its namesake suggests, historical institutionalism takes seriously the need to analyse the broader institutional context of policymaking when considering the origins and evolution of specific institutions (Hall, 1992). The institutional context with respect to the origins of UDAs in Canada includes both the constitutional provision of jurisdiction and informal traditions of power sharing (ie. federalism), the party system (at all levels of government), and how these influence individual actors in urban policymaking. First, in terms of division of powers, jurisdiction for municipal affairs is one of the few areas in which the constitution clearly affords power to one level of senior government; in this case, the provinces have sole policymaking powers to all matters local in nature, as municipalities are legal creations of the provinces with no independent constitutional status of their own. That said, the federal government through its other envelopes of responsibility have legitimate interests in the affairs of cities, with crime, immigration, health and economic development chief among them. Second, institutional

arrangements of cooperation and collaboration between the provinces and the federal government, while more prevalent in some decades over others (see Simeon, 2002), are common in nearly all policy fields for which each level of government has a legitimate policy interest. Additionally, in recent decades these federal-provincial agreements have increasingly been province-specific or 'asymmetrical', rather than the federal government and all provinces coming to a single agreement in a policy area (for example, immigration policy in Quebec; harmonized sales taxes in Ontario and British Columbia). Such asymmetrical federalism has the consequence of legitimizing the notion of place-based policymaking in the urban context.

The federal government's interest in urban affairs first originated in the 1970s as a result of the urbanizing pressures of rapid postwar growth, pushing them to consider affordable housing as a national priority (Bradford, 2008). Likewise, under a federal Liberal government, a party that tends to advance a view of the federation with an active central government concerned with establishing national standards with respect to social policy, created a Ministry of State for Urban Affairs (MSUA) with goal to enhance federal-provincial cooperation vis-à-vis a national urban agenda. The Ministry existed only for a decade (administering mainly grants-in-aid programs), as it was viewed suspiciously by some provinces and considered too far removed from the reality 'on the ground'. The UDA model surfaced in the early 1980s as "a new federal policy pathway" into urban affairs, one that offered a more flexible institutional arrangement more finely tuned to local priorities (Layne, 2000). Certainly the top-down policy coordination characterized by the work of the MSUA would be instrumental in creating the first incarnation of the Winnipeg UDAs, but the Vancouver UDA was characterized more accurately as a bottom-up process of mobilization and negotiation to the eventual agreement (Mason, 2006). Even though the Vancouver process originated from the locality, the regional development agency of the federal government for the Western provinces—Western Economic Diversification (WED)—was highly motivated to leverage local initiatives through intergovernmental partnership, particularly in a time of fiscal austerity (McLeod Institute, 2004; Treasury Board of Canada, 2003).

The partisan complexion of the respective governments is likewise relevant from a historical institutionalist perspective, not only as it relates to real and imagined pockets of electoral support, but also the institutional roles of elected officials with an interest in institutionalizing intergovernmental coordination in urban development. It is not a coincidence that the only UDAs in Canada were in the Western provinces. Indeed, the Liberal federal government responsible for the creation of UDA and UDA-style institutions have a historically weak elected presence west of Ontario, and were eager to develop a higher profile for the government and, consequently, the party (Bradford, 2008). Federal government intervention in the West must also be considered in the context of 'Western alienation', which is the historical grievance by some Westerns citizens and provincial premiers that Ontario-Quebec dominate the national political scene and that the resource-based economies of the West are treated less favourably than Ontario and Quebec (Brooks, 2009). Liberal federal governments, whose support is traditionally derived from Ontario and Quebec, are thus highly motivated to demonstrate to Westerners that the federal government is attentive to their polities. In addition to the general partisan climate under which UDAs emerge, active engagement by individual elected officials at the various levels of government is important. Lloyd Axworthy, a member of Parliament for Winnipeg and Cabinet Minister in the Liberal federal government, is recognized as a policy champion of the UDA model from the top-down approach (Layne, 2000). Likewise,

Vancouver mayor Phillip Owen was similarly a key mobilizing figure with respect to the local government and community groups, whose coordination set the stage for senior level government buy-in (Mason, 2006; Toronto Star, 2006). It is also noteworthy, as Bradford (2008) argues, that there was a New Democratic provincial government in British Columbia and Manitoba at the time of initial institutionalization, because it is difficult to imagine a government hostile to federal government intervention in provincial/municipal affairs buying-in to such an institutional arrangement.

Role of ideas in UDA creation

The ideational turn in political science challenges scholars to think of ideas as having independent effects on the development of public policy, and not simply as part of the strategies actors use to realize their exogenously determined interests (Blyth, 1997). Instead, ideas can define perceptions of interests, shaping actors' understanding of their own interests. Additionally, it is widely recognized and easily accepted that choices by governments—significant and insignificant—are premised on ideas as wide ranging as the appropriate role of government, who is a legitimate authority or expert, and perceptions of the causes of poverty and health issues. It is useful to differentiate analytically the ideas that are relevant to the creation of UDAs in Canada into three classifications: ideas that feed into problem definition, programmatic ideas, and political ideas. The case of Vancouver will be used for illustrative purposes.

For several theories of the policy process, issue definition is the driving force behind the creation, stability and change of institutions and policies (see for example Baumgardner and Jones, 1993; Kingdon, 1995). The emergence of policy issues is influenced by how the pubic perceives social, economic and political phenomena, which is subject to the framing of ideas by elites and policy entrepreneurs (Druckman, 2004; Schneider and Ingram, 1993). Thus it is critical to examine, for example, how the DTES in Vancouver became labelled as a "crisis" (Carrigg, 2009; Matas, 2009; Globe and Mail Editorial, 2004; Geddes and Benington, 2001). Interestingly, when the specific goals are articulated more generally, the frequently favoured descriptors for the ultimate goal of the Vancouver UDA are 'revitalization' and 'rehabilitation' of the neighbourhood (National Post, 2002; Carrigg, 2003). Thus the neighbourhood is personified in terms of health of a living being. Likewise, in one article the DTES is referred to as the 'heart' of the city that must be revitalized (Canada Newswire, 2005). While there is clearly real human tragedy among many individuals in the DTES, personifying the neighbourhood as a whole as one with damaged health signifies that the discussion and debate around the issue will have strong moral undertones. The implication is that it is morally objectionable for this neighbourhood, like a friend or family member, to suffer while the rest of us (humans and neighbourhoods) remain healthy.

Programmatic ideas are the causal ideas that facilitate policymaking among elites by specifying how to solve particular policy problems (Campbell, 2002). The early newspaper literature leading up to the announcement of the Vancouver UDA in 2000 generally makes the claim that government policy-making in the DTES was at an 'impasse', suffering simultaneously from both multi-level government 'squabbling' over jurisdiction and policy neglect (Bula, 2000; Macleans Magazine, 2001). A term such as 'neglect' used in this context necessarily implies a sense of responsibility to the object and indicates a failure to meet the assigned obligations (Carrigg, 2009). This rhetoric is buttressed by political leaders like Paul Martin and other federal ministers who emphasized in public addresses the fact that urban areas "need back up" from the

federal government in the face of modern local policy challenges (Martin, 2002; Godfrey, 2004). The local Liberal Member of Parliament suggested that they can "achieve more through cooperation and coordination than [working] individually" (Canada Newswire, 1999). In fact, to many policy actors and observers, "no one level of government alone can alleviate the problem in neighbourhoods such as the Downtown Eastside [of Vancouver]" (Simpson, 2001). The dual descriptors of 'squabbling' and 'neglect' vis-à-vis the DTES structure the discourse and circumscribe very clearly the acceptable policy alternatives to the status quo: the governments must in a concerted fashion and with a long-term commitment to social and economic development. Ideas of coordination, collaboration and horizontal governance are similarly prominent in the academic literature and bureaucratic circles at this time (Vancouver Agreement news release, 2003; Western Economic Diversification, 2000; Hirst, 1994; Trist, 1983). Likewise, Bradford (2008) notes that substantial body of policy research from the OECD and other think tanks at the time about the need for upper level governments to engage in collaborative projects to address complex social problems in urban centres (see Canada West Foundation, 2002).

Given the identification of the 'problem' in the DTES, early reports of the Vancouver UDA strongly emphasize the potential benefits from the various levels of government working together: terms like 'collaborate', 'coordinate', and 'synergy' are used in virtually all the newspaper articles as justifications for the VA—no doubt influenced by government press releases and political rhetoric (Dube, 2000; Bula, 2000; Canada Newswire, 1999). These terms have important implications with respect to establishing the 'common sense' understanding of the issue (Milliken, 1999: 229). First, the terms imply that local, provincial, and federal governments are jointly responsible for urban issues. Beginning in the late 1990s, the federal government strongly staked a claim to a legitimate federal policy mandate in cities (Martin, 2002; Canada Newswire, 1999). And in fact, big city mayors were clamouring for federal attention on their policy files, arguing that the Vancouver UDA serves as "a model for the kind of cooperation [required to address complex urban issues]" (Toronto Star, 2005; Toronto Star 2005b). This represents a dramatic revision of understanding with respect to the fields of jurisdiction in Canada, as the federal government has no constitutional mandate to make policy in Canadian cities. Second, the notion of 'governments working together' implies that the social and economic problems are so deeply complex and structural that no one government has the jurisdiction or resources to improve the situation alone (Globe and Mail, 2004; Godfrey, 2004). The notion of 'synergy' supports this claim: one level of government may have expertise, the other the jurisdiction, and the third the resources to implement productive policy solutions, but only together can the potential benefits be realized or maximized (Rogers, 2001).

The final important category from an ideational point of view is the role of political ideas in the creation of UDAs in Canada. As mentioned, the Liberal federal government had political objectives relating to electoral prospects and their understanding of the role of the federal government in the federation. The discourse of collaboration, horizontality, and coordination in academic and bureaucratic circles resonated with the political class, as it not only served to legitimize the role of the federal government in a policymaking context which would normally offend the provincial government, but also is consistent with their ideological commitment to an active federal government. As the organizational political science literature suggests, this represents a convergence of the multiple audiences' understanding of the political 'problem' establishes legitimacy with UDAs as an appropriate mechanism for decision-making in this

context (Scott, 1991). The discourse analysis suggests that the programmatic ideas among the policy core (collaboration, community involvement, strategic investments) interacted with the political ideas of the role of the federal government in urban matters (leadership, resources) in such a manner to institutionalize the ideas that constitute the UDAs. It is evident that the local policy core (community activists, municipal officials) was a major discursive force in setting up the UDAs in Canada, as the ideas resonated with the political class in terms of policy objectives and feasibility (see Hall, 1989). These types of institutional arrangements are what Leo (2006) refers to as characteristic of 'deep federalism', a term signifying the institutionalization of ideas relating to federal-provincial-municipal collaborations.

UDA institutional termination

After the Vancouver UDA was implemented in 2000, there was increased interest among other Canadian cities for similar types of arrangements. In 2005, the Vancouver Agreement was renewed for another five years and UDAs were signed in Victoria, Regina, and Saskatoon, and with Toronto's Mayor David Miller pushing very strongly for one as well (Juneau, 2005). Indeed, in late 2005 it was confirmed that all three governments had a nearly finalized UDA for Toronto (Juneau, 2005). The respective local policy actors were responding to an eager federal government, as well as positive evaluations of existing UDAs in bureaucratic circles. A key element of Prime Minister Paul Martin's 'New Deal for Cities and Communities' was to expand tri-level government collaboration for area-based policy making (Godfrey, 2004; Martin, 2002). In bureaucratic circles, the Auditor General of Canada identified the Vancouver Agreement as the most "promising governance model with provincial, municipal, and federal governments working together to meet the needs of the community" (Auditor General, 2005). Likewise the Vancouver UDA was lavishly praised by professional associations, like the Institute for Public Administration in Canada (IPAC), and the United Nations as a model of innovative governance (Vancouver Agreement news release, 2005; Vancouver Sun, 2005). But as Carpenter (2010) argues, "greater legitimacy among one audience may imply less legitimacy among another" (59). As I argue in the concluding section of the article, the bureaucratic and academic interpretation of this innovative governance arrangement powerfully clashed with emergent political ideas offered a distinct view of intergovernmental relations and privileged clear lines of accountability.

Despite increasing interest among additional Canadian cities in obtaining such collaborative institutional relationships and bureaucratic self-congratulation, by 2010 all UDAs in Canada ceased to exist. Upon their election in 2006, the federal Conservative government halted all ongoing negotiations that would expand UDAs to new cities and allowed existing agreements to expire (given the time-limited nature of these institutional arrangements). Before analyzing the political and ideational motivations behind this decision, it is helpful to briefly consider the institutional termination literature to frame the discussion and provide us with the theoretical basis to analyse the 'death' of an institution.

Studying the termination or 'death' of government institutions presents an empirical challenge to scholars because, unlike their private sector counterparts, they are significantly less likely to be disbanded, even in the face of dysfunction (Geva-May, 2004). Institutions are almost by definition 'sticky' in the sense that they are able to resist change, and in many cases are designed to tie the hands of political successors (Atkinson, 1993). Thus there is a dearth of data with respect to institutional termination making theoretical development especially challenging.

Despite this empirical reality, we can nonetheless make some basic assertions about institutional termination. 'Termination' of an organization can be defined as a loss of the organizational identity based on the elimination of all functions of an organization, with no replacement institution (Lewis, 2002; Peters and Hogwood, 1988). In the termination literature, the following factors are argued by scholars to contribute to the death of an institution: political turnover, policy learning, societal pressure, and the internal organizational attributes of the institution. Each is briefly outlined and related to the case of UDAs in Canada.

Political turnover has intuitive appeal as a primary impetus for institutional termination. New governments are often elected on the basis of an argument of a change from past governing practices, and thus we expect to find institutional death associated with a change in governing coalition. Lewis (2002) studies political turnover in Congress and the White House and finds that the relationship to agency termination in the U.S. is very strong, suggesting that the causes of agency termination all have political undertones. Central to institutional termination is a discursive struggle of arguments on administrative efficiency and failure (Lewis, 2002). Bradford (2008) echoes this when he argues that political leaders have clear ideas about what they think works and what policy structures conform to their belief systems. Thus whether an institution is perceived as effective or not depends on political orientations. Policy learning is also advanced as contributory to institutional termination, in that elected and bureaucratic officials need time to learn about how a newly created institution performs (Carpenter and Lewis, 2004). May (1992) suggests, however, that it is less important the objective reality of policy failure as an impetus for termination than the perception as such (which can be nurtured by policy entrepreneurs). Bradford (2008) likewise suggests that politicians "learn their own lessons" about policy efficacy to the extent that they provide evidence for preferred policy goals and implementation styles (25).

A third factor found to be important in the termination literature is societal pressure. That is, institutional arrangements are 'stickier' if they cultivate and retain support from powerful societal interests (Adam et al, 2007). This is particularly true for the influence of civil society or interest groups that benefit from the survival of the institution. A final factor prevalent in the termination literature is the internal organizational features of the institution, and how they contribute to long-term stability. Kuipers and Boin (2005) argue that four internal features are particularly important: the length of existence, size (budget and personnel), and political autonomy of the institution. Thus an 'old' institution to which significant resources are devoted and one which is relatively independent from regular political interference is theorized to have significant barriers to institutional termination.

Given the lessons from the termination literature, it becomes evident that UDAs in Canada represent a relatively easy path to institutional death, not the least of which is their time-limited nature (requiring a 'positive' decision to renew every five or ten years). The death of UDAs in Canada is no doubt related to political turnover at multiple levels of government, but most critically at the federal government with the Conservative party in 2006. Despite the context being 'local' in nature, we must not underestimate the critical role played by the federal government; so critical that without their buy-in the UDAs ceased to exist. Bradford (2008) suggests that the federal role was crucial in assembling the parties and framing the key policy issues in both Winnipeg and Vancouver. Civil society and interest group support was indeed

strong for the UDAs, particularly in Vancouver, but it is important to remember that such advocacy groups and service providers typically represent marginalized populations and thus do not have the political muscle that business groups enjoy. As such, civil society and interest groups that benefited from or otherwise supported the UDAs were simply not powerful enough prop up the institution from a termination challenge. Likewise, in terms of internal organizational features, UDAs were relatively young institutional arrangements, represented a moderate amount of resources, and had limited political autonomy. As such, UDAs in Canada were on the easier end of the spectrum in terms of potential for institutional termination, but yet to be demonstrated is *why* they were terminated, which is the concluding section of the article.

Discursive institutionalism and institutional death

As argued earlier, a historical institutionalist framework can better explain institutional origins and stability than it can institutional change and death. It operates based on a logic of path dependence and an 'increasing returns process' of institutional evolution that paints too stable a picture of the political world, and in fact fails to give us the tools in this context to explain in any full sense the death of UDAs. I argue that discursive institutionalism provides a compelling complementary framework to historical institutionalism to understand why UDAs in Canada were terminated. The critical difference is that discursive institutionalism focuses on ideas as explanatory for change—in this case the ideas surrounding 'open federalism'—demonstrating that such ideas do not fit within 'predictable' interests and represent a break with historical paths (Schmidt, 2006). The key change that precipitated the termination of UDAs in Canada was an ideational shift from the federal government; it is more nuanced than simply representing shift in priorities of governing parties, as I seek to demonstrate that there was an ideational or discursive turn stemming not only from political turnover, but cognitive (how to do it) and normative (what is appropriate) ideas.

As critical discourse analysts argue, discourses are never completely cohesive or able to determine social reality totally, and thus always subject to some degree of struggle (Grant et al, 1998). I argue that in the case of UDAs in Canada, they became linked to a broader discursive challenge from Stephen Harper and the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) surrounding federalism in Canada. 'Open federalism' as a discursive frame was advanced to challenge the dominant discourse of what Leo (2006) calls 'deep federalism' that made UDAs appropriate, and in fact, desirable. The CPC employed what Phillips et al. (2004) call 'institutional entrepreneurship', a discursive activity in which policy challengers engage directly in the process of social construction that underlie the institution. This is consistent with Scott's (1991) argument that legitimization of the institution is critical to study because fractures in the consensus regarding policy means and ends within the relevant sector will often precede institutional change. In contrast to the 'deep federalism' discursive frame that buttressed institutional arrangements like UDAs, 'open federalism' represents a dramatic cognitive and normative revision of intergovernmental relations as it relates urban policymaking. Young (2006) describes 'open federalism' as a vague, yet suggestive and powerful concept; a simplified discursive frame that Hay (2001) suggests is "sufficiently flexible [to bring together] a great variety of morbid symptoms while unambiguously apportioning blame" (204). While imprecise in meaning, 'open federalism' is nonetheless associated with concrete institutional and policy proposals, like principled arrangements between governments (no ad-hoc institutional arrangements like UDAs), strict constructionalism in terms of the division of powers, and most

notably for our purposes, that municipalities are the exclusive domain of provincial governments (Young, 2006). With a "renewed respect for the division of powers between federal and provincial governments", the federal government will thus disentangle itself from collaborative institutional arrangements that intrude on provincial jurisdiction and involve them in urban affairs (Harper, 2004).

The dominant discourse of 'deep federalism' was advanced by political leaders via a 'communicative' discourse that emphasized the importance of an "integrated approach" (Godfrey, 2004) that involved "partnership at all levels of government" which recognized that urban problems "are all our problems" (Martin, 2002), and are best addressed by applying "flexible institutional arrangements" (like UDAs) that reflect "what makes sense for specific cities" (Godfrey, 2004). Thus federal government discourse with respect to urban policymaking allowed for the 'messiness' of ad-hoc relationships among governments, with the implicit understanding that this is necessary given the complexity and diversity of social and economic problems faced by Canadian cities. As such, there is a legitimate federal role in urban policymaking, not only because cities demand it, but also that problems faced by cities have intersecting policy implications that require all hands on deck, so to speak. The 'coordinative discourse'—that is, among the policy core of public servants and academics—likewise advanced 'deep federalism' ideas, arguing that tripartite institutional arrangements should be "enhanced" because they allow governments "to combine their resources and expertise to build cohesive policies and programs that will benefit cities" (Canada West Foundation, 2002).

'Open federalism' as a discursive form challenged the very legitimacy of the federal government's role in urban affairs. Prior to forming government, Stephen Harper called for a policymaking approach that "fully respect[s] the exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces" (re: the 'local' belongs to the provinces) to "ensure the accountability of government to the people" in speeches, Conservative Party policy statements, and the election platform (Harper, 2004; CPC, 2005; CPC 2006). Upon becoming Prime Minister, he continued the narrative that "Ottawa has stuck its nose into provincial and local matters…[a]ccordingly, our roles and responsibilities in our respective areas of jurisdiction have become muddled" (Harper, 2006). The Conservative discourse of 'open federalism' is one the rejects institutionalized collaboration in urban policymaking and a contextually specific federal role in cities, but instead urges the "provinces to meet their obligations to municipalities" (Harper, 2006).

It is important to recognize the historical, political and social context under which this paradigm shift took place. The main point is not that the context shaped the discourse, but that the discourse was successfully institutionalized because it was perceived to be logically consistent with the emerging context, which then consequently shaped the context. First, this occurred in the aftermath of the 'sponsorship scandal', which launched concerns of government accountability into the consciousness of the Canadian public.[3] Notions of accountability are

[3] The so-called "sponsorship scandal" was the result of a 'sponsorship program' in Quebec by the federal Liberal government originally established to raise awareness of the Government of Canada's contributions to the Quebec economy in the aftermath of the 1995 referendum in which the province of Quebec unsuccessfully sought to separate from Canada. Corruption was discovered in the funds attributed to this programme, prompting the public and federal opposition parties to consider 'government accountability' to be the most prominent issue facing the country for several years.

critical in the discussion of UDAs and 'deep federalism', as accountability becomes blurred when multiple government and civil society partners jointly craft policy and spend money. Likewise, 'open federalism' is intimately related to Quebec and the role of the federal government (Young, 2006; Harper, 2004). A federal retreat from an explicit urban role in policymaking plays into perhaps the most persistent (potentially explosive) discourse in Canada about intergovernmental relations vis-à-vis Quebec, which jealously guards its provincial powers. As Hay (2001) suggests, paradigm shifts tend not to occur as a result of social learning by experts or civil servants, but are "generally associated with highly politicized and public debates about the desirability and feasibility of contending political goals" (200). The explosive issues of the 'sponsorship scandal' and Quebec's perennial fear of federal government intrusion present a highly politicized climate for intergovernmental affairs, where "an accumulation of perceived policy failures and contradictions may well give rise to a profusion of 'crisis' narratives from political entrepreneurs and the media alike" (Hay, 2001: 202). Third, the Conservatives and UDAs critics were able to advance the idea that not only do such collaborative arrangements invade provincial jurisdiction and cloud accountability, but also they were not terribly effective in terms of meeting policy goals (Goar, 2006). Though the Vancouver UDA, with its modest resources, was never expected to be able to solve the more systemic issues plaguing the Downtown Eastside, the Conservatives could nonetheless point to continued social and economic ills in the area as evidence of policy failure (Howell, 2009). Hay (2001) argues that anomalies within the existing discursive paradigm, where experimental outcomes that do not conform to predictions, provide an opening of a discursive space for an alternative paradigm.

'Deep federalism' represented a discursive space that was characterized by collaboration, cooperation, and the acknowledgement of complexity in modern social problems and consequent policymaking. This discursive space governs both the possibility of social action (ie. which actions count as rational) and the horizon of meaning (ie. which interpretations count as valid and acceptable) in a particular context (Kjaer and Pederson (2001). It thus not only served to support structural institutional arrangements like the UDAs, but was also an internal 'institution' to actors in terms of providing meaning to their actions, influencing how they interpret the policymaking context, who are the relevant actors, and what are the appropriate interventions. In the language of Schmidt (2008a), Harper and the Conservatives were able, as institutional entrepreneurs, to use their 'foreground discursive abilities' to challenge the prevailing discourse of 'deep federalism', and recraft notions of who is and what is 'appropriate' in terms of intergovernmental collaboration (Schmidt, 2008). I argue here that the 'open federalism' ideas were introduced in the Canadian context in ways that were enabled and constrained by the discursive mechanisms operating in the field of federalism and intergovernmental relations, but also in ways that reflected the broader historical and institutional characteristics of the Canadian polity. 'Open federalism' triggered a shift in attention on intergovernmental relations, creating new problems, solutions, and new types of political action, displacing the previous discursive construction that enabled tripartite action in urban affairs. This discursive shift had significant consequences for UDAs in Canada by terminating existing institutional arrangements and preventing the implementation of new ones.

Conclusion

The case of UDAs in Canada provides us with several tentative lessons with respect to discursive institutionalism as an analytical framework. First, discursive shifts always involve

power, and the sometimes-resultant institutional change associated with the shift need not be a collective endeavour, as Schmidt (2008a) suggests. In fact, a keystone political player (in this case the federal government) can overturn dominant paradigms and thus institutions, depending on the discursive harmony with the evolving political context and inherent susceptibility of the institution to change. Second, and related to discursive harmony with the political context, is that if discourses challenging dominant paradigms in a particular policymaking context can be strategically linked to overarching 'national' discourses, the potential for institutionalization of the discursive form appears greater. 'Open federalism' was explicitly linked to another powerful discourse in Canadian politics, namely federal 'intrusion' into the jurisdiction of Quebec, making it very difficult for federal politicians to challenge the Conservative discourse. Finally, it is clear that DI cannot stand on its own, but is complementary to other new institutionalisms, as Schmidt (2008a) suggests. Clearly the electoral turnover was a significant point in the story of the death of UDAs in Canada, as well as the historical context of Quebec and intergovernmental relations; it is the discursive shift, however, that completes the explanation of UDA death, as the Conservative federal government was able to challenge the fundamental premise of urban policymaking in Canada by linking it to historical grievances, perceptions of 'appropriate' modes of governance, and exposing anomalies in performance of the institutions.

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