

[www.e-Dialogues.ca](http://www.e-Dialogues.ca)

Royal Roads University

### **Regional Governance**

June 24, 2008

Moderated by Ann Dale

#### **Participants**

**Ann Dale**, Canada Research Chair in Sustainable Community Development, Royal Roads University

**Ken Cameron**, Chief Executive Officer of the Homeowner Protection Office

**Luis Fragomeni**, Senior Fellow, PLUS Network for Sustainable Cities, Professor, Urban and Regional Planning, Federal University of Parana

**Alfonso Iracheta**, Senior Fellow at El Colegio Mexiquense and member of the Advisory Board of the Global Research Network of Human Settlements (HS-NET) of UNHABITAT

#### **Dialogue**

---

##### **Ann Dale**

I would like to welcome our expert panel as well as our audience to our last conversation in this series on emerging forms of regional governance. Before we go to the first question, could you please introduce yourselves and your interest/experience in this particular topic.

##### **Luis Fragomeni**

---

Hi everyone. This is Luis Fragomeni. I'm from Curitiba, Brazil. I'm a senior fellow of the PLUS Network for Sustainable Cities and I'm a former president of the Planning Institute for Curitiba. I'm a part time professor at the Federal University of Parana on Urban and Regional Planning. I am interested on the issues of land use and transport, as well as long term planning and its relation to short term actions. Beforehand, I would like to apologise for any mistakes in English, as it is not my native language.

## **Ann Dale**

---

Welcome, Luis, the issue of transportation is so crucial, and yet, many communities have heavily invested in less sustainable infrastructure choices, thus, transition strategies and financing options are paramount, and for those scale of decisions we are very dependent on good governance.

## **Alfonso.Iracheta**

---

My name is ALFONSO IRACHETA. I'm a Mexican researcher in urban issues. I'm a Senior Fellow at El Colegio Mexiquense and member of the Advisory Board of the Global Research Network of Human Settlements (HS-NET) of UN-HABITAT. I believe the main question posed by this dialogue is relating the future of great urban concentrations composed by several administrative entities which are not necessarily acting in a coordinated way. On the other hand, what is the role of citizens and their organizations regarding these phenomena? This is the core of modern governance.

## **Ann Dale**

---

Welcome, Alfonso, you pose a seminal introduction into our first question. May I remind everyone that you can include websites, attach documents or power-point presentations in your postings to share with our 'listeners'. Welcome Ken, let's get to our first question, What are some of the governance challenges with a growing city from your experience, and how has your city/region tackled these issues?

## **Ken Cameron**

---

Greetings. This is Ken Cameron, currently Chief Executive Officer of the Homeowner Protection Office, a provincially owned corporation to provide consumer protection for new home buyers in British Columbia.

I have had a long involvement with regional governance, having worked in the Province of Ontario in the 1970s in the establishment of new regional governments there, including an assignment as Executive Director of the Royal Commission on Local Government in Metropolitan Toronto.

For most of the time since my return to my native British Columbia in 1978, I have been involved in senior planning positions with the Greater Vancouver Regional District, most recently as Manager of Policy and Planning with

responsibility for planning for growth management, water, liquid waste, solid waste and air quality. I was Regional Team Leader for CitiesPlus, the gold award winning Canadian entry in the International Gas Union's competition for 100 year sustainability plans.

In September 2007, in partnership with former Vancouver mayor and former British Columbia Premier Mike Harcourt, I published a book entitled "City-Making in Paradise: Nine Decisions that Saved Vancouver" (available at a handsome discount from Amazon.ca, with all authors' proceeds going to the International Centre for Sustainable Cities!).

I believe strongly that the regional scale of urban governance is where the most important work is to be done to secure a sustainable future for the people of our planet. We must manage urban regions better if we are to avoid a future of human misery, environmental degradation and potential extinction of many species, including the human species.

### **Ann Dale**

---

I strongly recommend the book that Ken has referenced, it is a rich history of the development of Vancouver, and what has contributed to making it rank as one of the world's most liveable cities, albeit with problems, as we all struggle with changing roles and accountabilities, which it seems sometimes as if our governments are incapable of addressing in a rational way.

### **Luis Fragomeni**

---

Our governance challenge in the Metropolitan Region of Curitiba (3.3 million inhabitants) is that the metropolitan plan is not a mandatory plan, it's a reference for local authorities to consider in their own local plans. It depends very much on the political relationship between State (regional government) and local government. E.g.: integrated management of public transport. Curitiba's local company contributes to metropolitan planning supported by a very thin agreement between State and other metropolitan municipalities.

I believe the future will be the merge of all local authorities into a metropolitan public transport company. An obstacle to that is the political "distance" between governor and mayors.

### **Alfonso Iracheta**

---

Alfonso, when a city has been planned around cars, what are the transition

strategies for governments to move to more sustainable development. I believe there was a city in the United States that tore up its freeway, but at a cost of billions and billions of dollars?

## **Ann Dale**

---

Luis, are you saying then, that large urban centres need centralized planning? On Vancouver Island, for example, we have 13 municipalities, all with their own services?

## **Luis Fragomeni**

---

Curitiba has 14 municipalities in the first metropolitan ring. A service such as transport needs to have a regional rationale. Local authorities have the attribution to manage their own local transport. The issue becomes how to organise a system, or an environment, where the basic rules for transport operation are taken as a pact and the level of local authorities individual decision-making ability. This is an exercise that happens in Curitiba today, although in a very thin line.

PS: Alfonso, when were you in Edinburgh? I was there in 78-79.

## **Alfonso Iracheta**

---

Perhaps Luis comment about Curitiba's planning system limitations (even though Curitiba is one of the best in LA) and Anne comment on centralized planning allow me to pose the question of INSTITUTIONS to govern great cities. We have not reached in Mexico a national agreement so each municipality coordinates itself with neighbours in order to attend metropolitan issues and services. Therefore, I believe that more than centralized planning it needs a strong agreement, incentives and instruments for all municipalities cooperate; it also needs a long term view of the metropolis shared by authorities and by social actors, especially those who built and rebuilt cities.

## **Ken Cameron**

---

Before we get too far, I'd like to share the concept of the "organic" city that we develop in the book.

If you mentally erase all the political boundaries in an urban region, you find a functioning entity that can be understood as a whole as well as a series of interdependent parts. Its boundaries are where the markets for land, housing, labour, urban transportation and commerce intersect. Like a plant or animal, this organic entity has different parts that perform different functions, all necessary to the success of the whole.

Governance for such an entity is not exclusively the function of any individual authority, even a local government. It is rather the interaction of a variety of local, regional, state/provincial, national and even private and non-governmental decision-makers in a matrix of inter-related authorities.

The primary need of such entities is to have the capability to develop and pursue widely-accepted plans, plans that not only integrate growth management and transportation, but also provide for environmental protection, protection of natural areas, public security and so on. Such plans provide a common focus for decision-makers and reference points for leaders throughout the system over the long periods of time necessary to bring plans to fruition.

## **Ann Dale**

---

Ken, any lessons we can take from the Greater Vancouver Regional District?

## **Ken Cameron**

---

I would say the main lessons are:

- build collaborative processes based on voluntary cooperation at the local level focused on shared values
- recognize and exploit interdependencies to find solutions that are the answer to more than one problem: eg. promotion of regional town centres brings origins and destinations together, which makes non-auto transportation solutions more viable, improves air quality, reduces greenhouse gas emissions and increases housing choice and affordability.
- actively seek the participation of other key actors in the regional governance matrix

## **Alfonso.Iracheta**

---

PS. Porra, Fragomeni amigo. We were classmates at Edinburg's University (78-79).

Ken. Excellent analysis. The question of the whole (functioning entity) and its parts, being each one a whole by itself poses the question of RELATIONSHIPS, because each part relates with others in a different fashion and intensity (sectorial and spatial). My worries relate with politics, because municipalities ruled by different political parties do not recognize these relationships and less recognize being part of a whole (the metropolis). That's why we need strong intermunicipal agreements and a general view (plan) for the whole.

## **Luis Fragomeni**

---

Colleagues, are we talking about more fluid political boundaries based on function and scale of the problem?

It seems we all agree it is necessary to have a regional reference, vision, be it a plan or a set of values that local authorities should take into account on their own planning system. When I mention planning system, community is included. If this vision is accepted, then, the issue is complying with the metropolitan plan because it's mandatory or because the city has decided to adhere to it? The last format is being more the case in Brazil where municipalities associations are being formed to perform metropolitan functions and services. E.g.: metropolitan waste management, water supply, transport, ...

PS: Pô!! Alfonso, viejo amigo! Saudades dos bons tempos!! Escreva depois: [lhfragomeni@vertrag.com.br](mailto:lhfragomeni@vertrag.com.br)

## **Ken Cameron**

---

I can't overstate the importance of leadership and how the culture of leadership is developed. Because the Greater Vancouver Regional District is a federation model in which power is delegated upward from the local level, leaders need to emerge from local municipalities who can champion the broader planning processes as being the best way for each locality to secure its own future. Development of such leadership is not a systematic process, and so it is sometimes there and sometimes not there. I am impressed with several US cities

(eg Seattle, Atlanta), which have leadership development programs where large delegations (up to 100) representing all sectors have intensive study sessions to see how other cities work. Ironically, many of these groups come to Vancouver to look at our successes, even though leadership development is not one of them.

As to regional governance trends, I think the megacity trend (forced amalgamations) is over in Canada, if only because most of our major cities have been through that experience. Certainly another trend here is the creation of special purpose bodies for transportation (or modification of existing bodies) that are more and more separated from growth management planning, local government and the transportation system users.

### **Luis Fragomeni**

---

Shared values is visioning, which requires leadership for continuity without self-assurance. Rigid administrative boundaries do not necessarily reflect the real boundaries of the functions and services required in a metropolitan region, so they need to be fluid, that means, politicians could talk to different politicians for the performance of specific services and functions.

### **Ann Dale**

---

Integrated, systems approach, co-ordination are some of the themes I heard. Let's now move to our second question of the day, What are some of the emerging trends in regional governance? Another central question for me is how to ensure that plans are actually implemented on the ground, and elected officials accountable for their implementation, any suggestions?

### **Alfonso Iracheta**

---

Emerging trends in regional governance are not clear in Mexico because neither national nor state governments have a clear idea of territorial impact of development; that is to say, they are clearly occupied in investing and creating new sources for the economy which are new roads, new cities, ports, beach resorts and so forth. The question is what environmental and spatial price are we paying? who is in control of the spatial and environmental outcomes? As a local response to these pressures, many Mexican cities have developed a proper governance scheme through the so called Local Planning Institutes which have at least 3 orientations: 1. Are ruled by a social council WITH the local government; 2. Have an integrated regional view of planning. 3. Have a long term

development plan. They are very young but we are supporting them because they are emerging from a more clear governance idea.

### **Luis Fragomeni**

---

Alfonso, are you talking about institutions such as "INPLAN" in Chihuahua?

### **Alfonso.Iracheta**

---

Exactly Luis. I'm helping Chihuahuas IMPLAN and many others so they can accomplish the 3 orientations I suggested.

### **Ann Dale**

---

Let me ask you then, pretend you have a blank slate to design a governance model for a large urban sustainable city, what would your ideal model look like?

### **Luis Fragomeni**

---

I believe a model for a large urban sustainable city should have as basis an strategic plan, focused on environment, transport and land use. It should provide support to local community plans, and the strategic plan should also be monitored and assessed by an independent community body.

### **Ken Cameron**

---

What a challenging question, Ann!

I would approach it this way. Local governance has two functions: representation and service delivery, and efficiency and effectiveness of the two functions can get out of synch with each other in large conurbations. Having said that, if starting from scratch I would go for a single political entity for the urban region and look to mechanisms, perhaps including modern technology, to allow effective representation of citizens and neighbourhoods. The mandate and expectation of this entity would reflect the importance of planning within the concept of a

decision-making matrix that involves all other parties.

### **Alfonso Iracheta**

---

Firstly, should emerge from a real participatory process. I mean a co-responsible agreement among social actors and the government. The outcome of such an agreement should be a compromise to do each one of the stakeholders what has signed up. If everyone gains because of the agreement, its potential of implementation is very high. Secondly, a clear and shared long term view of the city / metropolis / urban region. This view stated in a plan (the strategic plan proposed by Luis) will become the guidance for all social actors when investing and taking decisions.

To attain these we have to put spatial-environmental planning in the highest level of politics, so it becomes part of every day political decision making processes.

Dear friends. Unfortunately I have to quit the dialogue because a situation I have to attend to in this precise moment. It has been a great pleasure and a beautiful challenge to talk with you. I hope we will meet again.  
My best regards to you Ann, Luis, Ken.

### **Ann Dale**

---

The time frame for such a strategic plan, 100 years? My own research in sustainable community development shows that those communities who seem to be on a more sustainable pathway are those with a 100-year planning horizon.

### **Luis Fragomeni**

---

The time frame has been a topic with a lot of discussion in the Plus Network. Common sense is that long-term is more than 20 years and visioning must be continuously updated based on the intelligence built on short-term experiences and actions.

I think the issue is not the a 100-year cycle, but how you build a vision or a long-term plan with legitimacy and anchored in a sustainable organization.

## **Ken Cameron**

---

Our experience with CitiesPlus was that if our perspective was only 40 years or so, all our existing plans looked rosy. It was only when you added in what we know about the 50 to 100 year time frame that we realized that we have to get on a more sustainable path now.

This is emphasized by the comments from the NASA scientist who identified climate change 20 years ago, who is saying now that we may be reaching (or have passed) some tipping points where the climate system takes control of itself.

## **Ann Dale**

---

Thank you, Alfonso, for your participation. A question from the e-audience to our panel, how do you break down the silos in current government models?

## **Luis Fragomeni**

---

You could break the silos through a participatory visioning and budgeting process. The experience of Porto Alegre in Brazil has shown the benefits of these practices to foster collaborative planning.

## **Ann Dale**

---

Luis, key point, without aligned enabling budgeting processes to support the changes you wish to see, the more things change the more they stay the same.

## **Ken Cameron**

---

Our experience at the Greater Vancouver Regional District was that you have to blow up the functionally based organizations (Water Department, Sewerage and Drainage Department, etc) and replace them units that have comprehensive responsibilities, particularly for planning, but also for other functions such as operations and maintenance.

I reiterate the power of planning as a unifying and coordinating process.

### **Ann Dale**

---

I wonder what transportation systems we would have put in place if we had planned for 100 years. One of the fundamentals may simply be energy, which of course, encompasses transportation, how we move ourselves and goods. To pick up on some earlier comments, effective governance for sustainable community development and leadership would mandate 100-year planning cycles, beginning with all levels of government. I wonder, would this somehow or other break the short-term electoral cycle problem?

### **Ken Cameron**

---

It would certainly help. I note that British Columbia is mandating climate change strategies in official community plans and regional growth strategies. That should help put the right focus on energy, particularly combustion of fossil fuels for transportation, and on the long term view.

### **Ann Dale**

---

Gentlemen, it has been a pleasure talking to you today from our respective communities, and Ken, may I say it has been a delight to talk to you again, I remember meeting you at UBC many, many years ago, and have long wanted to reconnect. Luis and Ken, if you had only one last idea to share with us, what would it be?

### **Chris Ling**

---

We would be grateful if you could complete our post-dialogue survey at:

<http://www.survey.crcresearch.org/?sid=7>

Please answer as soon as possible and thank you in advance for helping us with this work on e-Dialogues.

Also there has been a vibrant discussion in the Audience - this discussion is open for 24 hours, so if you are able please take the time to join them and

continue the discussion with a wider group of people.

**Luis Fragomeni**

---

I has been a pleasure to talk to you all. Regards from Curitiba.

**Ken Cameron**

---

A very stimulating discussion. Best wishes from Vancouver.

**Ann Dale**

---

Thank you, Luis and Ken, Alfonso, for your participation in our conversation today, the discussion has been invaluable. This is not meant to preclude any final comments.