REGIONAL AND TRANSNATIONAL DISCOURSE: THE POLITICS OF IDEAS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN CASCADIA

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Abstract

Two features distinguish local economic development initiatives in this new century: they are situated in the gap or disjuncture of economic power and political authority and they increasingly extend across scales. Gaps in the ability of national governments to control global and transnational economic processes (Pierson, 1996; Wallace, 1996)--- stemming from the logic of new competition and production processes at a global scale as well as limited national sovereignty--direct the attention and activities of political and economic interests to subnational levels. In turn, conditions of interdependence, indivisibilities, and uncertainty lead to greater efforts to coordinate actors and to channel decisions at subnational levels (Storper, 1997). When these conditions and the consequent need for coordination spill over multiple scales, effective policy initiatives become contingent on establishing multi-level governance arrangements. Even in the absence of formal plans or political union, governance strategies that extend beyond individual communities and, in some cases, across borders are emerging in North America. Recognizing the significance of these multi-level governance strategies will be the cornerstone to understanding local economic development issues in the next decade.

According to Storper (1997), this will entail analyzing both the conventions and relations constituting governance processes. From this perspective, the capacity for multi-level governance is a product both of the ideas that frame different ways of understanding development problems and solutions as well as of the networks and regimes mobilized through these new frames. Using this approach, this paper maps the conventions and relations supporting the notion of regional, multi-level governance arrangements as a solution to disjunctures in the "Cascadia" region in the Pacific Northwest[1]. Given the institutional disincentives for cooperation

created by the constitutional and fiscal structures binding local governments in Canada and the United States, acceptance of the legitimacy of inter-jurisdictional, cross-border cooperation is a precondition for formation of trans-border and regional regimes.

The analysis draws on archival research as well as interviews with local and state officials (1998-1999) and participants in new bi-national and regional institutions. It is based on interviews with local and state officials and participants in new organizations and institutional structures in Cascadia[2]. Along with consideration of newspaper and archival materials[3], these interviews provide a micro-foundation for analysis of the motivations of participants in multi-level governance processes. This empirical strategy improves on inferring policy and institutional preferences from post hoc analysis of policy decisions (Pierson, 1996).

Briefly, I find that building greater regional governance capacity for economic development in Cascadia is hampered by competing definitions of the "problem" solved by Cascadia. Nevertheless, there is some evidence of the emergence of regional governance capacity on transportation issues: there is a coherent, multi-state and bi-national policy community active on regional transportation issues and transportation initiatives are framed as regional solutions to environmental and economic competition concerns.

I. INTRODUCTION

Globalization trends have produced disjunctures, indeed, non-congruence, of scale between politics and economic activities. In particular, economic activities increasingly are conducted at transnational and global scales while political decision making authority remains situated in national and subnational settings. These scale incongruities produce familiar governance issues in North America and Europe and elicit similar responses: establishing regional and transnational decision making structures and civic organizations to deal with the structural tensions of relations between transnational, national, state, and local governments[4].

Regional Governance Capacity

The regional governance concept centers on political processes and decisional capacities. It begins with the proposition that a new political space is emerging at the regional level--in response to the incentives of

extra-national institutions such as NAFTA and the European Union as well as to the broader impacts of globalization and economic restructuring. This new political space is characterized by complexity, fragmentation, interdependence, ambiguity, and risk (e.g.; LeGales, 1998; Storper, 1997; Jacobs, 1997; Jessop, 1995). In this context, the governance issue is clear: under what conditions actors at this scale, in this political space, mobilize and coordinate resources sufficient to act purposively and collectively on mutual interests.

As Storper puts it (1997), the construction of governance processes is contingent on both conventions and relations. That is, territorial linkages are shaped by conventions--ideas and expectations-- as well as calculations by actors and organizations of material gains and economies of scale. By recognizing the importance of ideas, as well as interests and institutions (Heclo, 1994), attention is directed to the role of problem-oriented policy communities in generating alternative policy paradigms. These different paradigms set boundaries for political action, create channels for dialogue and decision, and establish the grounds for collective action among diverse interests. In this sense, ideas – along with interests, and institutions – can be seen to have causal roles in contributing to governance capacity at different scales.

Bringing ideational and cultural factors into the analysis of regional governance is not intended to privilege them as causal factors in a constructivist process where material factors have no independent existence outside the interpretations of them (Berman and McNamara, 1998). Although some might see regional governance capacity as a direct function of the degree of regional identity, regional cultural values, and other ideational and cultural factors, it is important to ground these factors in material conditions. Regional governance capacity is not determined--much less explained-- by the networks, partnerships, and other governance arrangements found in some areas and not others. Ideas can be used to cloak self-interest but there are many instances where policymakers are seeking solutions rather than merely pursuing interests; here, the play of ideas is as important in shaping outcomes as is the weight of political influence (Hall, 1993, 289). Thus, we can not analyze the role of ideas, interests, and institutions as independent and distinct political processes; rather, they are interdependent. The most important political questions--including the prospects for regional governance capacity-- have to do with the intersect of

these factors   (Heclo, 1994). Treating any as residual categories leads to incomplete understandings of important political processes.

This essay examines the role of conventions--ideas and expectations—in undergirding the calculations by actors and organizations of material gains and economies of scale (Storper, 1997). Ideas about regional cooperation are considered preconditions for successful mobilization and formation of regional coalitions. To analyze the politics of scale (Delaney and Leitner, 1997), I examine a North American region displaying relatively vibrant efforts at constructing regional governance capacity: the Pacific Northwest.

The Reinvention of Cascadia

The commonality and interdependence of environmental interests in the Georgia Basin-Puget Sound bioregion ("one forest, one waterway, one airshed") is prompting the creation of new institutional structures to protect the quality of life and the competitiveness of the economy in "Cascadia" (Kaplan, 1998; Artibise, 1995; Economist 1993). The Cascadia bioregion runs from Eugene OR along the Cascade Range up to Vancouver BC, distinguished by a temperate coastal rainforest and a vast watershed. Cascadia is promoted as the tenth largest economic center in the world with an economic base including high-tech firms such as Microsoft, McCaw Cellular and Boeing along side logging, fishing, farming, and tourism. Claims that a Cascadia region could constitute a giant high-tech trading bloc, with major bulk-shipping ports in Portland and Vancouver and container-shipping ports in the Seattle-Tacoma area (Kaplan, 1998, 58) exemplify predictions that "in the 21st century, economically integrated and cooperating regions, rather than nation-states or individual enterprises, will be the greatest generators of wealth" (Gold, 1994: 14). Trade within the region is strong historically but with the advent of NAFTA, the North/South trade links through Cascadia increased: British Columbia exports 40% of its goods to the Pacific Rim and 50% to the United States (Kaplan, 1998). These North-South flows contrast sharply with the traditional Canadian pattern of East-West interior trade.

These North-South ties spurred the growth of binational alliances and transgovernmental organizations: the Cascadia Project, a regional alliance coordinating growth management and strategic planning efforts in Alaska, British Columbia, Yukon, Alberta, Oregon, Washington, Montana, and

Idaho; the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region group formed (1989) by 60 British Columbia and North American legislators; the British Columbia/ Washington Environmental Cooperation Council (1993) to bring together regional government groups for cooperation on environmental and growth management strategies; the Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council established (1990) by over 200 British Columbia, Alberta and North American business leaders; and the Cascadia Planning Group of planners and policymakers among others.

These organizations mobilize regional identities and interests for collective projects and, on occasion, they represent regional interests in negotiations with Canadian and American national, provincial, and state governments. "Cascadia", therefore, appears to be more than a myth or marketing device: it suggests a regional "institutional fix" emerging in response to global competition and interdependence. To planners and citizens groups, these new institutions were essential: traditional structures of government appeared less effective in dealing with issues of interdependence and coordination and in responding to the demands of global competition.

II. REGIONAL AND TRANSNATIONAL DISCOURSE: THE POLITICS OF IDEAS IN NORTH AMERICA

The reinvention of Cascadia exemplifies responses to apparent gaps in the ability of national governments to control global and transnational economic processes (e.g. Pierson, 1996; Wallace, 1996; Jessop, 1997; Keating and Loughlin, 1997; LeGales and Lequesne, 1998). These efforts to coordinate actors and to channel decisions are contingent on the perceived legitimacy of greater interjurisdictional cooperation. To understand these processes, we need to map the discourse--the ideas or conventions-- legitimating regional governance notions over different issue areas.

Constructing Cascadia

Stories, frames, and arguments about regional identity and the prospects for cross-jurisdictional alliances are critical elements of policymaking. Ripe contextual conditions and even "windows of opportunity" are not enough for regional governance to build: causal stories and policy paradigms that indicate appropriate responses to these changing conditions must be available.

The interviews underscored the problematic and contested status of the "Cascadia" construct noted by other scholars (Blatter, 1994; Artibise, 1997).   When asked to characterize their mental map of Cascadia, respondents ranged from using geographic and geologic referents to ecological, to economic, to cultural and lifestyle distinctions. Nearly all the respondents refer to Cascadia as the transborder region including British Columbia as well as Oregon and Washington. The name is traced back to Native American references to the mountains near the Columbia River cascades; early geological maps define it by tectonic plates as well as by water. There is a self-conscious awareness of the economic region, especially relative to other prospective regions and especially now as it is vulnerable to downturns in the Pacific Rim economy.

III. Policy Communities and Competing Problem Definitions

But there is a lack of consensus on what problem Cascadia would solve. This struggle over problem ownership pits those seeing Cascadia as an ecological system against those advocating Cascadia as a regional trade bloc competing in a global economy and against those who use the Cascadia notion to legitimate decentralization projects and greater subnational autonomy.

Bioregionalist Activists and the Sustainability Paradigm. To many, the character of place in Cascadia stems from the temperate rainforest and the water, not the mountains or the transportation corridors or economic flows. Environmental activists in the area split between those with a more conventional focus on protecting natural resources, those advocating sustainable development in the use of resources, and those distinguishing themselves as part of a bioregionalist, grassroots social movement stretching back nearly 20 years. The bioregionalist label denotes an alternative sustainable development paradigm: it incorporates a cultural dimension linking the environment, economy, and community with political mobilization around watershed districts as a basis for representation. They blame the free marketeers for the dualisms of environment v. the economy, visionaries v. the pragmatists that tend to infuse the issue. In Cascadia, the bioregionalists describe a deliberate strategy over the past 15-20 years to diffuse Cascadia symbols and rhetoric.. The first university course on Cascadia was taught in Seattle in 1978; an informal network of local activists met and discussed the issues throughout the late 1970s. A webzine,

the Cascadia Times, disseminates sustainable development, bioregionalist, and citistate views.

The governance prescriptions in the policy paradigm advocated by bioregionalists and, to some extent, the broader sustainable development community, would change the rules of the political game. In some ways, their cultural and place-based focus directs their attention and efforts to civil society rather than public institutions. Their definition of the problem precludes satisfactory resolution by existing institutional structures.. To some, there is a need to prepare for a new social order in the region; to others, at a minimum, there is a need to incorporate consensual, collaborative decision making into regional decision making. Some urge territorial representation and collaborative decision making through the institution of watershed districts. Other, less radical, governance precedents include several models of bi-state and transborder environmental cooperation (Ingram, 1997; Ingram and White, 1993); bioregionalists characterize these as legitimating "stakeholder" representation rather than models of collaborative decision making.

Free Marketeers and the Competition Paradigm: As a geographic and ecological term, Cascadia now has evolved (or been reconstructed) into an economic and political concept. To the bioregionalists, the concept has been "hijacked" to serve the aspirations of transnational interests in competing in the global economy. As they see it, their mobilization of interest around the Cascadia notion--their "softening up" of receptivity to a regional identity as Cascadia-- is being capitalized on by groups with very different prescriptive ends. In contrast to the eco-cultural model used by bioregionalists to encourage cooperation, the free marketeers define the problem in terms of global competition; thus they frame regionalism in an international context of competitive growth (Keating, 1997, 24). They use the language of efficiencies and markets as rationale for encouraging greater regional and transnational cooperation. This is more familiar, less threatening rhetoric to most citizens; it is also a shared language of businesses and investors who enjoy a common understanding of the rules of the game, as well as patterns of trust, and reciprocity rooted in years of iterative interactions.

The governance prescriptions in the policy paradigm advocated by the free marketeers are unremarkable. They are not seeking a change in the rules of the game per se but argue for expanding the scope and scale of deliberation

and sharing of authoritative decisions to include multi-levels of government in Canada and the United States as well as business and civic leaders. They define the governance problem as the lack of any mechanism to coordinate the many organizational initiatives and governmental agreements structuring regional cooperation (Artibise, 1997; NPC, 1990). The limitations of traditional government structures in responding to economic interdependency are well understood but there is also awareness that the real challenge is "to make the Cascadia agenda the agenda of traditional governments." (Artibise, 1997, 25).

By assuming existing institutional channels will continue to make critical decisions about Cascadia, they define problems in ways amenable to solution through those channels. This increases the odds that some version of their issues will reach the legislative agendas in Canada and the United States. To some extent, they are calling for a "regionalized state" (Keating, 1997): they have many bi-lateral precedents and analogs to point to in rationalizing their push for regional governance capacity. The lack of political leadership in promoting the Cascadia agenda within existing governments, much less advocating new institutional arrangements, is seen as critical barrier to further evolution of Cascadia as a coherent collective actor (ibid).

Citistate Advocates and the Devolution Paradigm: Both Canadian and American activists claim that national governments in Ottawa and Washington DC are too distant and favor "one-size-fits all" policy designs. This belief that national politicians "just didn't understand how it is in the West" and that "we just cannot rely on the federal government…They just don't understand BC." (Cohn and Smith, 1996, 33)"is classic, long-standing rhetoric in the Western United States and Canada. It now resonates with arguments about the hollowing out of the state (Jessop, 1997) and advocacy for greater decentralization on economic and political grounds. To some, the future belongs to citistates: devolving further political authority and autonomy to city entities is seen as the key to organizing integrated regional economies (Mazza, 1996; Jacobs, 1989) and the most likely arena for democratic citizenship.

The governance prescriptions in the policy paradigm advocated by citistate activists assume the persistence of federal institutions but prescribe significant devolution of authority to the regional levels. By defining the problem as distant government and the lack of context-sensitive policies,

the solution is to change the rules of the game and the scale of authoritative decision making. The focus of citistate politics is creating a sense of the need to devolve authority in order to achieve other goals such as greater competitiveness, more responsive decision processes, and more contextualized decisions. Citistate advocates claim decentralization also would encourage greater social capital and democratic practice at a smaller scale within a national framework.

Although the paradigm prescribes substantial devolution, most citistate demands are closer to the "regionalized state" notion; this would require shifting of authority downward by current government leaders and sharing of some policy capacity with horizontal networks of nongovernmental actors. There is obviously overlap--common ground-- between the free marketeer and citistate paradigms; few free marketeers would see the citistate paradigm as a means of removing trade barriers although they would support the regionalized state as a second-best option. But most city-state activists would also support a regionalized state as a second-best option and see the citistate paradigm as supporting more flexibility and enhanced economic competitiveness.

IV. Linking Ideas, Interests and Institutions: Regional Governance Capacity on Transportation Issues

As in the past, the lack of consensus on problem definition and appropriate regional governance solutions hampers a more full-blown regionalism movement in the Pacific Northwest. But some regional and transborder issues appear more successful in gaining agenda status and policy response: there is tangible evidence of regional and transnational cooperation to construct a "seamless link" of ports and road networks in Cascadia. In fall 1998, British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon signed a Memorandum of Understanding on establishing a Northwest International Trade Corridor to qualify for United States TEA-21 funding. This established a Joint Technical Working Group (JTWG) to manage the trade corridor acquisition program and to provide leadership of the public/private stakeholders in the corridor program. These efforts capitalized on a series of transportation projects that gained momentum in the early 1990s. In particular, Cascadia advocates pushed the notion that the I5 corridor constituted the "Main Street" linking the NAFTA partners. As one activist explained it, their Gateways and Corridors notion provided a "larger tent" capable of incorporating a range of complex transportation issues. The

designation of the Cascadia corridor (from Eugene to Vancouver BC) as one of five high speed rail corridors in the United States eligible for national funding for upgrades and the 1998 MOU for TEA-21 planning funds signaled victories for transborder transportation initiatives of Cascadia promoters.

If regional governance capacity potentially is issue-specific, we need to identify the necessary conditions for its occurrence. For transportation issues, regional governance capacity appears to be contingent on the importance of workable ideas, the potential for reframing transportation issues, the ability to incorporate diverse interests within new problem definitions, and the availability of institutional channels for making decisions and directing resources.

Workable Ideas. Good ideas are needed to justify the existence and goals of new organizations and institutional priorities. In Cascadia, the "seamless link" of Gateways and Corridors networks meets Kingdon's (1995) criteria for successful ideas: they tend to be technically feasible, have value acceptability within the policy community, have tolerable costs, are seen as acceptable to the public, and meet the needs of elected officials. To many officials in the Pacific Northwest, the increased competitiveness of European economies could be traced to the deregulation of borders and the European Union's subsidization of transportation infrastructure linking producers and markets through air, sea, and rail connections. However accurate this perception, the idea of a "seamless link" of transportation corridors in Cascadia was tantalizing: these transportation initiatives could be constructed as regional solutions to both environmental sustainability and economic competition concerns.

The opportunity to move ahead on this initiative occurred with the United States' reauthorization of transportation funding (TEA-21). For the first time, this legislation allows American domestic program funds to be spent outside the United States in support of cross-border transportation planning. Regionalism activists termed this a "breakthrough" and both Canadian and American policy entrepreneurs made it clear that the funds were contingent on cross-border cooperation. By providing funds for cooperative transborder initiatives, the TEA-21 avoided substantial reallocation or reprioritization of existing budgets in operating agencies. This clears the road for moving beyond information sharing and networking to crafting new planning and organizational structures.

Problem Definitions and Issue Attributes. Another factor contributing to greater regional and transborder cooperation on transportation issues is issue specific: these transportation issues were relatively well defined and could tap into a range of values and sentiments. Increasing high-speed rail capacity resonated with environmental concerns about providing alternatives to the auto and with small town anxieties over access to trade and tourism developments. In developing the I5 corridor, legislators could promise access links to interior communities not directly benefiting from the corridor as well as alternative transit funds to those communities in the area.

In providing discrete and divisible benefits to a wide range of groups, transportation policy offered the "small opportunities" and side payments necessary to hold a coalition together. These increased dramatically with the advent of TEA-21 and the promise of cross-border payments for cooperative efforts. The side payments for regional and transborder cooperation available through the US TEA-21 transportation legislation brought the actors necessary for "sufficient" regional cooperation to the table. This included elected officials, business leaders, transportation experts, state and provincial bureaucrats, and local officials from throughout the state and their state Congressional and legislative representatives. Although not all would benefit directly from creating a Cascadia "Main Street" on the I5 corridor, nearly all were promised access links, grading upgrades, more bus service, more bike paths, and other benefits.

A Bi-national Policy Community. A coherent, bi-national policy community has been active on regional transportation issues for many years. These groups spent years "softening up" the political climate for regional and transborder transportation projects; when political opportunities arose, they were ready to act. Much of the efforts of these transborder activists centered on using communication and media strategies to influence other economic and political groups (Dobell and Neufeld, 1994). Although clearly not limited to brokering interests, Cascadia policy entrepreneurs also built coalitions and networks to be mobilized at the opportune moment.

Not all Cascadia organizations put transportation as their top priority. But by promoting a policy paradigm emphasizing regional and transnational arrangements as the appropriate solution to global

competition, the Cascadia free marketeers effectively "de-mobilized" the collective action possible around alternative paradigms advocating bioregionalism and citistate politics at smaller scales (e.g., Blyth, 1997). Transportation advocates could draw on this rhetoric and the political space it created. They carefully folded values of sustainability and local autonomy into their cross-border project to broaden its appeal and its constituency but the locus of authority shifted to regional scales.

Electoral Agendas. This policy paradigm also allowed the institutional and political leadership in Canada and the United States to find common ground in advocating cross-border transportation corridors. The lack of a natural political constituency bedevils many transborder initiatives. For bio-regionalists and citistate advocates to be successful, political leadership would have to be willing to champion the diffuse benefits their agendas promise over the specific benefits of more conventional clientelistic politics. In the absence of political leaders with the incentives and capacities to pursue these entrepreneurial policies with diffuse benefits, legislative decision making arenas tend to privilege clientelistic packages (Mucciaroni, 1992).

The extensive efforts of Cascadia free-marketeers to create the competition paradigm and a regionalism agenda allowed state and provincial transportation bureaucrats and policy experts to capitalize on long-standing projects to improve the efficiency of their transportation infrastructure. Existing jurisdictional and bureaucratic channels proved critical in carrying out an approach that envisioned a seamless transborder network. This was also were congruent with the missions and priorities of existing agencies. Although most of these "seamless links" state projects actually centered on moving freight more efficiently, the Cascadia projects emphasized high-speed passenger rail. Politicians saw this as an opportunity to claim credit for dealing with environmental and economic development concerns. It also upgraded railroad tracks primarily used for cargo for passenger use, at the expense of the public sector.

Institutional Channels. Cascadia activists worked in a number of institutional channels to represent their collective interests. Although there are many instances where Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia governments engaged in direct, primary relations with each other across international boundaries, they also acted collectively as mediating actors seeking to influence national legislation (Cohn and Smith, 1996). In both

Canada and the United States, these groups were active on national immigration legislation affecting border crossings as well as the TEA-21 funding of cross-border transportation planning. In particular, PNWER lobbied with Washington for inclusion of these provisions. This complemented intra-state lobbying by subnational governments for a greater share in bi-national transportation policy; regional activists and subnational governments worked along side of and through national policy processes for transnational ends. They also relied on the seniority of Oregon and Washington's Congressional delegation. It is worth noting that the recent retirement of senior senators and representatives in Oregon and Washington appeared to generate some Congressional sentiment for rewarding their service with transit funds for their areas. Thus the good fortune of Washington and Oregon appears to come from working within traditional political channels as well as acting collectively through cross-border coalitions.

VI. CONCLUSION

Overall, competing problem definitions advocated by different policy communities slow building regional governance capacity in Cascadia. There are several policy communities generating discourse and causal stories about why Cascadia is a solution to the problems created by globalization and restructuring. But their competing views on what the problems are that Cascadia will solve hampers the further evolution of broad regional regimes. Thus although policy communities contribute to the "softening up" process (Kingdon, 1995) and create a fertile ground for more regional and transborder arrangements, there is little overarching consensus on what those arrangements should be. Given the place-orientation of bio-regionalists and sustainable development advocates, and the territorial focus of the citistate politicians, it is likely some hybrid version of the free marketeers model will prevail and further demobilize those communities. But the free marketeer community acknowledges the difficulties in gaining a sustained political voice for their views; as yet, there is no stable political constituency ensuring regional issues a place on electoral or legislative agendas. Thus the conventions and discourse are in place but a broad regional regime has yet to emerge.

Anticipating a broad-based North American regional governance regime may be unrealistic. Instead it is more likely that sector-specific regional regimes will be created as in the transportation sector. As some

analysts point out, the progress toward regional cooperation is greatest where it is easiest, not necessarily where it is most needed (NPC, 1990). Transportation fits this argument quite well and also meets many of the preconditions for regime formation. As noted above, there were several reasons for the greater success of mobilizing regional and transnational resources around the cross-border transportation initiative. The Gateways and Corridors rhetoric expresses a workable idea and appears to address concerns of environmental sustainability as well as economic competition concerns. There is a coherent, bi-national policy community active on regional transportation issues; institutional and political leadership in Canada and the United States found common ground on cross-border transportation corridors. Furthermore, side payments for regional and transborder cooperation became available through the US TEA-21 transportation legislation; regional and cross-border cooperation on transportation policy allows for restructuring the distributive benefits associated with transportation policy at different scales.

The networked, coalitional, sectorally specific form of these emerging links characterizes North American efforts to overcome coordination problems with a horizontal "fourth tier" of governance. Over time, and independent of the (unlikely) establishment of formal regional government arrangements, it is likely these emerging institutional arrangements will shape new transnational interests and ideas. At this point, the idea of Cascadia remains contested, as does the notion of an imagined North American community (Alper and Loucky, 1996). But as transborder projects become institutionalized, they will influence future political outcomes and policy choices by shaping interests and worldviews as well as by creating institutional incentives and disincentives steering future policy choices. Cascadia will be reinvented not by the triumph of a particular policy paradigm or causal story but through the legacy of the institutions created across different policy areas at different times.

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ENDNOTES

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2."Cascadia" refers to an ecological and economic transborder region in the Pacific Northwest, defined by a shared watershed and temperate coastal rainforest; it centers on four North American cities: Seattle, Tacoma, Portland, and Vancouver BC. These cities share a variety of contextual features (economic base, trade dependency, legal precedents) seen as significant in shaping the propensity to develop regional governance capacities. All of these cities share, to different degrees, most of these characteristics but they differ in terms of engagement in regional and transnational governance arrangements. Vancouver, Seattle and Portland are more engaged in formal and informal transnational and regional alliances, Tacoma less so. Portland's Metro is the only elected regional government in the United States; it was established in 1979 to manage an urban growth boundary surrounding 24 cities and sections of three counties. Metro came under attack by tax reform advocates in 1998 challenging it as an unnecessary "supergovernment" usurping the authority of smaller jurisdictions (Leo, 1998). On-site interviews (16) included stakeholders in multi-level governance arrangements from the business, local government, multi-level governance organizations, and policy communities.

3.The Fall 1998 interviews included 18 state, provincial, and local officials, port officials, organizational activists, and analysts. The interviews addressed the problematic status of the "Cascadia" construct, the relative influence of transnational interests and organizations, and evidence of effectiveness of regional mobilization as a collective actor in pursuit of regional projects. They were complemented by computerized searches of the newspapers in Seattle, Tacoma, Portland, and Vancouver for 1988-98 for articles on Cascadia and regionalism. Finally, access to the archives of the North American Institute at the University of British Columbia permitted analysis of documentary and ephemeral material on the

Cascadia initiatives. I appreciate the generosity of Rod Dobell and Justin Lingo in providing the archival materials.

4.The terms "regional", "transnational," "transborder," and "cross-border" are used in this paper to refer to an imagined community that crosses the international border between Canada and the United States as well as several state lines.