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## Global value chains and regimes of urban governance: A comparison of four Canadian gateway cities

Dorval Brunelle

*Sociologie, Université du Québec à Montréal*

Claudia De Fuentes\*

*Management, Saint Mary's University*

Peter V. Hall

*Urban Studies, Simon Fraser University*

Jean Michel Montsion

*Canadian Studies, York University*

### *Abstract*

Gateway cities are connected systems of transportation infrastructure that support the insertion of the urban region in international production, distribution and consumption networks. In this article, we propose a framework through which to grasp how the governance of gateway cities shapes their physical positioning in global value chains. We argue that specific urban governance configurations are best understood through the dynamic relationships between global economic requirements, local infrastructure assets, institutional arrangements, and the communities directly implicated. We put urban regimes, which are composed of urban coalitions of public and private actors acting at a variety of scales, and their sets of goals and norms, at the centre of these configurations. Focusing on the case of four Canadian city-regions, we use this framework to compare the ways in which the governance of these gateway cities occurs as it pertains to the development of physical infrastructure in support of international trade and global value chains.

Keywords: Canada, gateway city, global value chain, urban regime

### *Résumé*

Les villes-seuils constituent des systèmes d'infrastructure de transport qui permettent l'intégration de régions spécifiques aux réseaux internationaux de distribution, de production et de consommation. Dans cet article, nous proposons un cadre d'analyse afin de comprendre comment la gouvernance des villes-seuils s'organise relativement à leur positionnement territorial dans les chaînes de valeur mondiales. Nous soutenons que chaque configuration de gouvernance organise des relations dynamiques entre les exigences économiques mondiales, les infrastructures locales, les arrangements institutionnels et les communautés directement impliquées. Nous soulignons l'importance

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des régimes urbains formés de coalitions d'acteurs publics et privés situés à différents niveaux avec leurs normes et objectifs qui sont au cœur de ces configurations. Nous utilisons ce cadre pour comparer comment les questions de développement d'infrastructures à des fins de commerce international s'inscrivent dans les schèmes de gouvernance de quatre villes-seuils canadiennes.

Mots-clés: Canada, chaîne de valeur mondiale, régime urbain, ville seuil.

\*Correspondence to: Claudia De Fuentes, Management, Saint Mary's University Sobey School of Business, 923 Robie Street, Halifax NS B3H 3C3 (902) 420-5851 Email: Claudia.DeFuentes@smu.ca

## Introduction

Gateway cities are physical locations that specialize in the business of moving goods, people, and services. Scholars such as A. F. Burghardt (1971), James Bird (1983), Peter J. Taylor (2004) and Boris Vormann (2015) have made the argument that gateway cities are connection nodes linking specific locations to international markets; hence demonstrating the logistical importance of physical locations serving as communication, transportation and distribution hubs in economic, technical, political, and financial world integration. More specifically, these urban nodes play a key role in providing the infrastructure necessary to physically connect to global value chains (GVC), so that local, regional and national production and distribution networks are integrated into international investment, production and trade structures (Wiese and Thierstein 2014).

While international and national interests in trade expansion might be self-evident, the stakes and net benefits to gateway cities are typically less obvious, especially since local governance structures are neither neatly codified nor well understood. Local governance configurations have to deal with the challenges of positioning the city in relation to translocal or international actors, while dealing with the negative externalities of heightened goods movement, interdependency and integration (Hall 2007). Gateway city governments, which may take the form of regional district, municipal and other local government authorities, often lack the necessary fiscal resources and political powers to directly address the related physical infrastructure needs; hence illustrating well the vulnerability of locations that seek to serve as connectors between local, regional, national and international networks (Fillion 1995). Canadian gateway cities have, for instance, recently been affected by rail blockades as part of solidarity protests to support hereditary chiefs opposing a Federal-government pipeline and faced disruptions linked to the global Covid-19 pandemic. Such extra-local disruptions echo previous ones such as the labour strikes that paralyzed Canada's Asia Pacific gateway in Vancouver and British Columbia (BC) Lower Mainland (Montsion 2011). While gateway cities are key for international distribution and production networks, it remains to be seen if and to what degree they can exert influence in such ongoing economic processes, how their urban political institutions are able to influence their development, and what governance schemes contribute to establishing local priorities.

In this article, we examine the ways in which the governance of gateway cities occurs as it pertains to the development of physical infrastructure to support international trade and GVCs. Our intent is to propose a framework to understand gateway city governance configurations in various cases, notably by focusing on how the strategic positioning of cities as facilitators of GVCs intersects with local urban politics. We argue that these governance configurations are best explained through the evolving dynamic relationships between global economic requirements, local infrastructure assets, institutional arrangements and government actions, and the communities directly implicated. More specifically, we maintain that urban regimes—which include a given group of public and private actors acting at a variety of scales with shared goals and a set of norms that regulate their interactions—are at the centre of such configurations. In a context of relatively weak municipal government, urban regimes that typically include provincial and regional district government actors as well as private actors, have formed to mobilize stakeholders in ways that support a heightened role and deeper physical integration of gateway city locations in GVCs.

In Canada, the recent (re-)branding of city-regions as gateways was formalized by the federal government, notably with its 2007 *National Policy Framework*, “which was developed to improve the capacity and efficiency of the country's transportation system to support international trade, thereby advancing the competitiveness of the Canadian economy” (Transport Canada 2017). The federal government identified “three strategic regions: the Asia-Pacific Gateway and Corridor, the Ontario-Quebec Continental Gateway, and the Atlantic Gateway and Trade

Corridor,” and supported them differently: “[a]s each gateway is unique, specific strategies aim to reflect each region’s local realities, opportunities and challenges, while recognizing that these gateways are complementary to one another” (Transport Canada 2017). In light of our proposed theoretical framework, we examine the four Canadian gateway cities targeted by the federal strategy in their respective provincial contexts: Halifax, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. We focus on the city-region as the primary unit of analysis—recognizing that city-regions are themselves comprised of separate local government jurisdictions, governing coalitions and multiple actors—and their interactions with provincial, federal and international stakeholders, all of which seek to influence the positioning of these gateway cities in competing GVCs. Drawing from primary and secondary data, we compare how governance configurations for GVC purposes have evolved in all four locations at a time during which the federal government is investing once again in gateway locations through its 2019 *National Trade Corridors Fund* (Transport Canada 2019). Interestingly, these gateway cities have yet to acquire much formal autonomy when facing the competing demands and expectations coming from capital, senior governments, and citizens, hence making the ways in which each urban regime work, even more crucial to understand.

After a brief overview of scholarly insights on gateway city-regions, integrative trade and GVCs, we focus on local governance in order to propose a framework that highlights the role which urban regimes play to connect global economic requirements, the physicality of transportation hubs, and institutional arrangements in specific communities. We then turn to a discussion on the federal gateway strategy and a brief comparison of the four Canadian gateway cities to highlight some similarities and differences in their governance configurations. In each location, we can see the contours of distinct urban coalitions looking to reconcile infrastructural requirements of global integration with local considerations based on shared goals and norms.

## **Towards a gateway city governance framework**

While scholarship on gateway cities has documented and theorized the role of global economic processes and the impact of transnational capital on such cities since at least the 19th century (Andersson and Andersson 2000), Neil Brenner (2004: 3) observes a major shift in how city-regions more generally have been governed since the end of the Cold War: “[t]he postwar project of national territorial equalization and sociospatial redistribution has thus been superseded by qualitatively new national, regional, and local state strategies to position major urban economies optimally within global and supranational circuits of capital.” In this new era, governance strategies are designed to situate urban economies advantageously in relation to global economic processes, with significant impact on national actors. Brenner (2004, 16) further explains that “through the deployment of urban locational policies, state space is now being re-differentiated and rescaled so as to correspond more directly to the (actual or projected) imprint of transnational capital’s locational preferences within each national territory.” In this section, we propose a framework to understand and compare the various governance configurations and related schemes for gateway cities. We start with a discussion on city-regions, international trade and GVCs, and the physical infrastructures which connect them, to examine the role of local and urban governance. This leads us to propose a framework centered around the notion of urban regime.

## **The governance challenge of city-regions**

City-regions, as urban zones composed of different administrative jurisdictions but with common socio-economic realities like a regional labour and housing market, are locations that are shaped by their integration in transnational production, distribution and consumption networks, as well as to knowledge-based economies (Wiese and Thierstein 2014). City-regions have become key spatial units through which to map out the vitality of global economic processes in specific contexts. Their multiplication has led scholars such as Pierre Veltz (2000) to reframe their object of study around the “metropolitanization” of the world economy, as these larger metropolitan areas draw in a significant and ever-growing share of economic growth, knowledge, wealth and power. Metropolitan economies are becoming disconnected from their own traditional zones of influence, generating a decline in the importance of provincial and national networks, which tied them to their proximate neighbours, to the benefit of closer relationships and networks between geographically more distant megacities and global city-regions (Scott 2001). Becoming “gigantic switches” on a global scale, city-regions thrive to some extent as semi-independent economic entities because of a “disarticulation” between local and inter-metropolitan networks (Veltz 2000, 61–64).

Nonetheless, the same disconnect is also indicative of the agentive economic potential of city-regions. Jane Jacobs (1985: 47) has stressed how a city can create “economic change on its own” and can be an engine for growth for an entire (national) economy. In contrast to “the potpourris we call national economies,” they “are important not only for getting a grip on realities; they are of the essence where practical attempts to reshape economic life are concerned” (Jacobs 1985: 35). Successful cities, in her view, have notably focused on “the all-important function of import-replacing or import-substitution [which] is in real life specifically a city function” (Jacobs 1985: 35). More generally, they are required to become active economies in order to fulfil their overall economic potential and to “create economic change” in a proactive way (Jacobs 1985: 34), which highlights the necessity to dispose of a margin of economic and political autonomy, a status that many larger (non-Canadian) city-regions have now obtained (Wiese and Thierstein 2014).

The main challenge for city-regions is therefore to engage with the requirements of the global economy, and to reconcile them with local economic, physical and social conditions (Borja and Castells 1997). Ben Derudder and Frank Witlox (2010) recognize this challenge by highlighting the necessity to develop a conceptual framework that combines service-industry needs, as highlighted in the literature on world city networks, to a focus on physical goods, as provided by discussions on global commodities chains. This emphasis put on understanding production, consumption, investment and trade from the perspective of global networks, processes and factors can be combined to a necessary acknowledgement of the role of path-dependency and territorial positionality in analyzing the attractiveness and capability to adapt to manage and redirect flows in global networks from specific physical locations (Derudder and Witlox 2010; Hesse 2010).

As such, urban authorities can engage directly and explicitly with GVCs, but this requires a deep understanding of the complex economic processes affecting cities. They must address advances in information technology, flexible capital equipment enabling the pooling of technology, supply-chain management tools facilitating the relocation of labour intensive industries, and increased outsourcing and involvement in product definition by retailers (Sturgeon 2006). As Timothy Sturgeon (2006: 5) observed,

an earlier era of ‘internationalization,’ characterized by the simple geographic spread of economic activities across national boundaries, is giving way to an era of ‘globalization,’ which involves the functional integration of these internationally dispersed activities. It is this functional integration that drives our growing interest in ‘integrative trade.’

GVCs count as the main feature of integrative trade and internationalization strategies. Engaging with them becomes crucial for any city-region looking into creating economic opportunities (Henderson et al. 2002); including strategies to procure the infrastructures that permit physical transportation.

Focusing on integrative trade highlights two critical aspects of the present-day global economy that are not usually put in relation to urban governance: the importance of power and coordination in the global economy, and the establishment of governance schemes oriented toward modular value chain management (Strange and Humphrey 2019). Here, the concept of global production networks is a helpful elaboration of the GVC idea, as it sheds light on the interplays among stakeholders, and it decenters the role of national states in shaping contemporary economic development outcomes; hence moving beyond the linear and hierarchical assumptions that come with some variants of the GVC model. Defined as “an organization arrangement, comprising interconnected economic and non-economic actors, coordinated by a global lead firm, and producing goods and services across multiple geographical locations for worldwide markets,” global production networks help connect explicitly the need for extraterritorial coordination to the pragmatic and physical realities of organizing sector-based production and distribution, in specific city-regions (Coe and Yeung 2015: 1–2).

### The changing functions of stakeholders

A plethora of stakeholders are involved in supporting GVCs and global production networks in specific locations and through distinct governance schemes, which have led to significant changes in how they interact since the 1980s (Fillion 1995). With trade liberalization, which covers a complex process of revising, adjusting, or repealing norms and regulations—entrusted to national governments—we witness a growing centralization of power in the executive branches of governments to the detriment of the legislative power (Brunelle 2020). Moreover, once new rules and regulations liberalizing the market economy are established under free trade agreements, power shifts to

those benefiting from them, most notably private enterprise interests. These constraints are strengthened following the implementation of integrative trade strategies, which calls for further revising, adjusting, or repealing of norms and regulations coming under urban and local governments' jurisdiction. Although such a process comforts executive branches to the detriment of open deliberative powers, they may lead to the implementation of innovative forms of collaboration between different levels of government and private sector actors (Fillion 1995; Sutcliffe 2014). Despite their own independent activities and governance schemes, private sector actors rely on both upstream levels of government to liberalize the national economy and provide the necessary legal, investment and infrastructure environments, and on downstream governance configurations that put into practice the ongoing liberalizing process at regional and city levels (Brunelle 2012). While federal and provincial authorities are called upon to redraw rules and regulations in collaboration with private sector actors and expert practitioners, local governments at the city-regional scale urban and city authorities are asked to do the same at their respective levels in order to come up with concrete decisions and solutions facilitating GVCs operations at city-region level (Fillion 1995; Sutcliffe 2014).

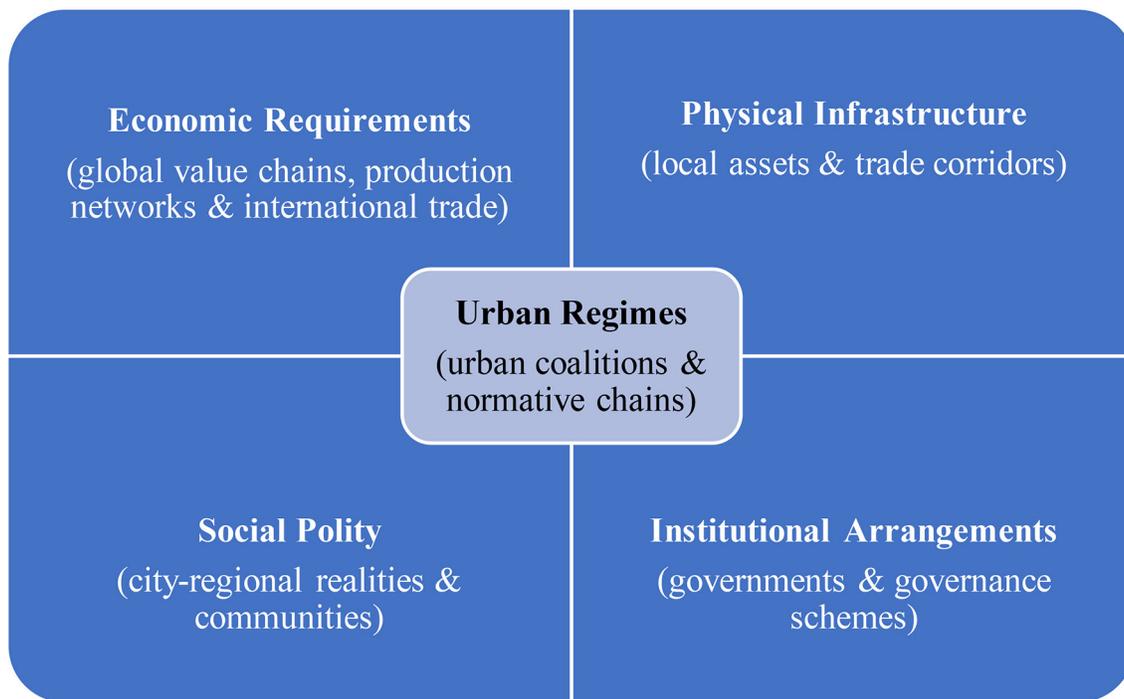
Integrative trade strategies in gateway cities require massive public investments in infrastructure for port and airport facilities, transportation, technology and logistics services, artificial intelligence investments and so forth, in order to have functioning nodes and hubs in GVCs. As Sturgeon (2008, 3) indicates, states remain significant actors if only to compose with "the concerns of workers, communities, and industries that are in the midst of wrenching change or which remain completely severed from the global economy." While policymakers in national and provincial governments are reengaged in the negotiation of trade-offs coming under their jurisdictions, urban-level policymakers are also involved in similar activities. A feature of city-regional governance in North America is therefore their role in what David Wachsmuth (2017: 44) calls infrastructure alliances: "[n]ew multi-city growth coalitions" which are "united by a shared interest in supply-chain expansion—the extension of effective supply chains and the intensification of circulatory possibilities in regional transportation networks." Coalitions of stakeholders at the city-region level are key to organizing specific locales in Canada and to connecting them to GVCs. The context in which these coalitions operate include the resources and assets available, the physicality of said location and the infrastructures already in place that the coalitions can use to advance their projects (Eckhardt and Poletti 2018; Hamel 2017).

### The central role of urban regimes

Political authorities in city-regions are proximate to understanding and assessing economic and social issues, since they are closely connected with private sector actors and understand their needs. As Margit Mayer (2017, 170) argues, "the point of urban policy has become to facilitate the unfettered operation of 'the market'." Urban and local governments resort to various initiatives in order to facilitate the integration of GVCs and global production networks to their locality, while striving to mitigate their negative impact on the region. They offer distinct governance schemes to do so, because of local and public concerns that are external to value chains. Their main objective is to contend with two sets of externalities: economic fallout, and political and social acceptance levels. Many local governance schemes are flexible, adaptable and focused on practical deliverables for further support to GVCs and global production networks, involving political authorities at various levels, business interests and civil society—or at least some social stakeholders' participation. Interestingly, these schemes are setting the stage for a form of deliberative or citizen democracy that could supersede elective democracy, an eventuality which raises questions about their respective merits and demerits (Brunelle 2020).

Urban policy agendas are increasingly shaped by dominant urban regimes, emerging from institutional, formal and informal arrangements that stakeholders with complementary strengths and resources are creating to achieve shared goals (Hamel 2017). Urban regimes are best understood as the coalitions shaping, in situated ways, the development of integrative trade and integration to GVCs and global production networks. According to Karen Mossberger and Gerry Stoker (2001, 829), "urban regimes are coalitions based on informal networks as well as formal relationships," with "partners drawn from government and nongovernmental sources, requiring but not limited to business participation," as they "bring together fragmented resources for the power to accomplish tasks" and identify "policy agendas" through "a longstanding pattern of cooperation rather than a temporary coalition. These coalitions strongly influence how a vision can be developed and implemented, especially in gateway city locations where international mobility is key to development goals.

Urban regimes are more than a coalition of stakeholders working towards predefined and shared goals; they are made cohesive and stabilized over time by shared sets of norms, rules and regulations that cut across the scales at which individual stakeholders operate. Their interactions, negotiations and deliverables are made possible by nor-



**Figure 1**  
Gateway city governance framework  
Source: Authors' own

mative chains (Brunelle 2020). A broader interpretation of the notion of normative chain-derived from legal anthropology—accounts for how stakeholders at each level, in various sectors, and at different stages in a given process come together to redefine rules and regulations (Truffin 2006). Put differently, normative chains shed light on how stakeholders organize and consult to produce deliverables, and to make specific governance schemes work.

A way to grasp and compare how urban governance is organized in city—regions, and notably for the purposes of this paper, in gateway city—regions, is to put urban regimes front-and-centre, as the main site where discussions and actions towards reconciling global economic requirements and local social considerations are mobilized within a specific institutional context. As Figure 1 suggests, urban regimes, composed of coalitions and normative chains, are central to the workings of governance configurations originating at city-regional scale, even though they inform and are informed by stakeholders and governance schemes emerging from other scales. Urban regimes are not evolving in a vacuum; hence the framework takes into consideration the dynamic relationships between requirements to support specific GVCs and global production networks, the physical infrastructure and assets of the gateway and its related corridors, the social concerns of communities living in the city-region, as well as government priorities and policies. Prior to advocating and acting, urban regimes structure, prioritize and balance these relationships as well as they filter them through the shared interests of its stakeholders.

### Canada's gateway cities

Integration schemes to meet global economic requirements are contextually designed and organized. In this section we turn to a brief comparison of the governance configuration of four Canadian gateway cities as it pertains to the physical infrastructure needed to support international trade and GVCs. Seen from a national viewpoint, the development of gateway locations may be understood as being shaped by the federal government's approach which—highlights “the symbiotic relationship between global value chains and transportation,” and which makes explicit “how the geographical extent of global production hinges on efficient transportation and logistics” (Transport Canada 2017). In this section, we use the proposed framework to shed light on the Canadian context. We start with the establishment of Canada's gateway cities from a federal perspective, and then discuss how urban regimes operating

in the four city-regions have navigated their insertion in international distribution and production networks. We compare their positioning in GVCs by discussing their distinct governance configurations.

### The federal strategy in four contexts

The identification by the federal government of four gateway locations in Halifax, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver does not match the popular policy and scholarly definitions of mega-regions or global city-regions. However, each of these Canadian cities is an “essential spatial node of the global economy” (Scott 2001, 11), as defined by the federal government. Simply put, the intent of the Government of Canada is as follows,

With global supply chains evolving, trade movement on the rise and new markets emerging, the Government of Canada is working to ensure Canada’s ongoing trade competitiveness through the implementation of long-term policies, strategic planning, and focused investment in the transportation system (Transport Canada 2017).

As Figure 2 indicates, Canada’s gateway cities are locations that connect parts of the Canadian economy to international distribution and production networks. They each have their own fundamental connections to external markets and network, which have been fuelled by punctual investments in transportation infrastructure, a gradual embrace of regional trade agreements throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and the development of integrative trade strategies (Brunelle 2020).

The 2006 *Asia-Pacific Gateway and Corridor Initiative* (APGCI) is the first federal government recognition and investment in a national gateway strategy, building in this specific case of advocacy by a transport industry coalition (Hall and Clarke 2010) and the British Columbia Provincial Government’s earlier plans, including the 2003 *Opening Up BC* and 2005 *Asia Pacific Gateway* (APF Canada 2019). The APGCI’s objective was “to strengthen Canada’s



**Figure 2**  
Map of Canada showing major transportation hubs

competitive position by establishing the best transportation network between Asia and North America,” with an explicit intent to connect “the ports of Vancouver and Prince Rupert with the inland supply chain and the rest of the continent” (Transport Canada 2017). While the *Atlantic Gateway and Trade Corridors Strategy* was launched in 2011 in partnership with all four Atlantic Canada provinces to support a “transportation network that connects North America to markets in Europe, the Caribbean, Latin America, and Asia via the Suez Canal,” the 2007 *Ontario-Quebec Continental Gateway and Trade Corridor* combined the city-regions of Montreal and Toronto as part of the same “vital component of Canada’s multimodal transportation system,” together, in distribution networks, they provide “a critical link between all key gateway facilities and also to Canada-U.S. border crossings” (Transport Canada 2017). In each case, the federal government offered support to the development of these gateway strategies through various policy instruments. While almost six billion dollars were committed through various sources to invest in such infrastructure, including the *Gateways and Border Crossing Fund* created in 2008 and the 2019 *National Trade Corridors Fund* (Transport Canada 2019), non-infrastructure investments have also been made “to reduce policy, regulatory and financial barriers” and “to improve the business environment for trade growth,” notably through amendments to the *Canada Marine Act* (Transport Canada 2017).

The primary aim of all these initiatives was to provide the local transportation infrastructure and physical assets necessary to facilitate Canada’s integration to international distribution and production networks, while contributing to regional economic development with sector-based strategies positioning the gateway city-region in knowledge-based economies (Brunelle 2012; Montsion 2011). However, these gateway strategies contribute to the territorial dispersion of city-regional networks and the disarticulation of all four larger cities from their hinterland, as theorized by Veltz (2000). They build on and exacerbate growing disconnect between these Canadian cities and their hinterland, which, in the Canadian case, raises conventional anxieties about the relationships between (colonial) metropolises and extractive spaces in their various regional contexts, and about the trading relationships between Canadian regions and those in other countries (Norcliffe 2001; Hall and Clarke 2010). Certainly, there is a perception among urban scholars that major Canadian cities have loosened their intra- and inter-provincial ties at the same time that they have strengthened their North American and trans-Pacific connections, and this double movement is directly supported by federal investments in transportation infrastructure projects (Hall 2015).

In Vancouver, such disconnect revolves around a decisive turn since the early 1980s towards the Asia-Pacific region both with respect to the provision of urban amenities for transnational capital, and to the reorientation of the resource economy away from its longstanding reliance on North American markets (Hutton 1997; Montsion 2011). The federal government has constantly supported this turn, more recently with three investments in port, rail and auto infrastructure for the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority (Transport Canada 2020).

In Halifax, declining local economic development trends have led to an increased importance of international transportation and trade considerations. In collaboration with the other Atlantic provinces, a stronger integration to international distribution networks between the United States and other continents deepens a schism between local priorities, and the requirements of international connectivity in terms of transport, production and immigration (APEC 2013; CPCS 2016). The federal government is contributing to this schism by recently funding three Halifax-specific infrastructure projects, including an expansion of air cargo facilities (Transport Canada 2020).

As for the continental gateway, Jean-Claude Lasserre (2006) explains that one of the factors that led to the downgrading of Montreal as Canada’s first metropolis during the 1950s and 1960s to the benefit of Toronto was the fact that the latter disposed of a more important network of larger cities in Canada and internationally than the former did. Notwithstanding the failure of the continental gateway strategy to improve coordination among and within both city-regions, the federal attention has enabled investments in infrastructure projects in support of international trade, including an aero-logistics and a freight mobility projects in Montreal and three initiatives in Hamilton to support increased efficiency of Toronto’s regional transportation system (Transport Canada 2020).

### Local conditions and integrative trade strategies

The evolving Canadian political context influences and shapes local political configurations, including differences in the provincial context of each of these city-regions, looms large in explaining their distinct modes of going global. Despite the fact that all four gateway cities play an essential role in the economy of their respective province, this role varies considerably in each of the four cases because of the important differences in population, employment, and other indicators. Table 1 provides a portrait of the distinct characteristics of each gateway city. Each location’s distinct

**Table 1**  
Portrait of four gateway city-regions (CMA<sup>\*\*\*</sup>)

	Vancouver CMA	Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area	Montreal CMA	Halifax CMA
Province	British Columbia	Ontario	Quebec	Nova Scotia
Province population - 2016	4,648,055	13,448,494	8,164,361	923,598
CMA Area (sq km)	2,882.68	8,244	4,604.26	5,496.31
CMA population - 2016	2,463,431	6,954,433	4,098,927	403,390
CMA population - 2006	2,116,581	6,060,471	3,635,571	372,858
CMA population growth 2006 - 2016 %	16.4	14.8	12.7	8.2
CMA employment - 2016	1,276,900	3,486,350	2,026,050	209,350
CMA employment - 2006	1,104,760	3,111,255	1,835,840	199,555
CMA employment growth 2006 - 2016 %	15.6	12.1	10.4	4.9
% Employment in extraction, processing, manufacturing, construction	15.6	16.6	16.7	12.5
% Employment in wholesale and retail trade	15.5	15.5	16.8	15.2
% Employment in transport	5.6	5.2	4.9	4.5
% Employment in private services	41.3	41.5	37.1	36.1
% Employment in education, health and government.	22.0	21.1	24.6	31.5
Largest municipality	City of Vancouver	City of Toronto	City of Montreal	Halifax Regional Municipality
Population largest municipality	631,486	2,731,571	1,704,694	403,131
Port Tonnage 2018 (metric tonnes)	147,093,000	14,128,318	38,925,026	4,769,550
Port Containers 2018 (TEU)	3,396,000	-	1,679,352	547,445
Airport Passengers 2018	25,267,409	48,269,345	18,749,586	4,236,898
Airport Cargo 2018 (tonnes)	321,318	586,847 **	208,054 *	28,118

Sources: Statistics Canada (2017, 2020a, 2020b), Port of Vancouver (2018), Port of Toronto (2018), Port of Hamilton Oshawa (2018), Port of Halifax (2018), Port of Montreal (2018).

\* Montreal cargo includes Pierre Elliott Trudeau and Mirabel.

\*\* Toronto cargo includes Hamilton and Lester B Pearson.

\*\*\* Census Metropolitan Area (CMA).

internationalization strategy and related metropolitanization, or the “internal reconstitution of the political sphere,” reflect these key contextual differences (Boudreau et al. 2007, 39).

In Vancouver, internationalization pressures led to the development of advocacy networks of stakeholders involved in international transportation and trade, many of whom are from the private sector and the not-for-profit sector. These networks formed well before the creation of the Asia-Pacific gateway, most notably with the establishment of the Greater Vancouver Gateway Council in 1994 (Hall and Clark 2010; APF Canada 2019). For Halifax, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), which is the federal regional economic development organization for the east coast, has been active in convening and coalescing private and public interests across all four Atlantic Canada provinces. From international trade to supporting key strategic sectors and talent recruitment, ACOA has helped brand Halifax at the centre of the 2011 Atlantic gateway, hence contributing to a regional process of metropolitanization (ACOA 2012). In contrast, internationalization and metropolitanization have led to separate dynamics in Toronto and Montreal, even though they are notionally part of the same gateway strategy. The political differences of both provincial contexts have resulted in distinct, even opposite, political configurations. Whereas Ontario’s *laissez-faire* approach to managing Toronto brought business elites and proxies in leadership roles for various sectorial projects, Quebec’s nationalist history and social-democratic tradition have produced a more interventionist political culture in which Montreal’s development is inherently linked to provincial and public interests (Boudreau et al. 2007; Lasserre 2006).

More specifically, all four gateway cities have engaged in integrative trade strategies, which involved a plethora of stakeholders in the necessity to reconcile the requirements of integrating GVCs and global production networks to local conditions and assets. Figure 2 reminds us of the distinct physical and jurisdictional contexts in which these interplays between stakeholders occur to assemble local assets and design local economic development goals to achieve their internationalization strategies (Henderson et al. 2002; Strange and Humphrey 2019). It highlights that, to the extent that local governments do play a role in the trade-promoting gateway regime, it is the upper tier of local government—often called regional districts, rather than the municipal or lower tier—that is most directly involved alongside the respective provincial government.

With the Asia-Pacific gateway, the Vancouver city-region plays on its geographical, historical and demographic proximity to Asia to frame its international advantage through the physical movement of goods and immigrant flows, with a keen interest from the region's municipal governments in immigration, if only to fuel the growth of local real estate, advanced services, and commercial industries (Hutton 1997). A key focus of local governments has been international education and business delegations, as the intercultural and people-to-people connections are seen as necessary for supporting local economic growth in specific sectors (Montsion 2011). Strategic economic development priorities in management services, clean technology, digital and mobile media as well as life sciences have guided the city-region's positioning in knowledge-based economies (VIFSSC 2010).

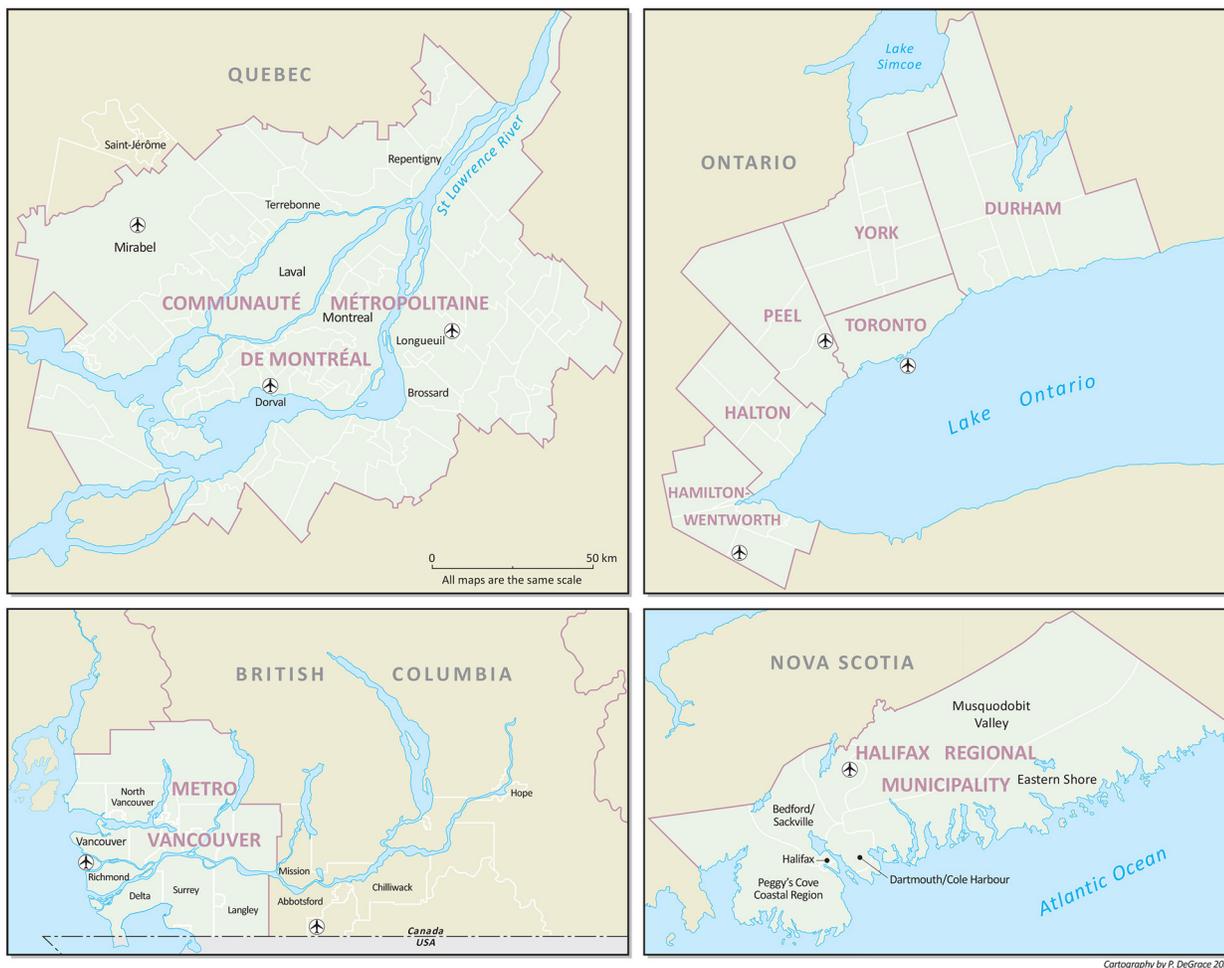
In contrast, Halifax is seen as a historical immigration and trade gateway to Europe, but also to the rest of the Americas and parts of Asia. As one of the most important cities in Atlantic Canada in terms of population and economic activity, the focus has been on strengthening Halifax's position in knowledge-based economies, notably in the sectors of software development, life sciences, aquaculture and ocean technologies (NSBI 2020). Post-secondary education institutions have been mobilized to support the local development of these sectors, to retain talent and to grow local research endeavours. By framing educational and research partnerships as part of a regional business innovation strategy, Halifax is supported cohesively by federal, provincial and municipal initiatives (OECD 2007, 139). This has notably led the development of Canada's ocean supercluster as "an industry-led partnership with Government, small-to-large sized companies, and innovators from across ocean sectors" to position "Canada as a leader in the global ocean economy" and "to create high-value jobs, invest in high-impact projects, and bolster the performance of Canada's ocean industries" (NSBI 2020).

Within the continental gateway, integrative trade strategies differ between Montreal and Toronto. In the former case, the development of a "national" political economy, based on historical, cultural and geographical factors, has brought Montreal in line with the province's strategy, and, in doing so, had the city turn its back – partially at least – on Canada, in the wake of the concentration of industrialization in the Great Lakes region (Lasserre 2006). Montreal's continental gateway functions were reinforced by the provincial government notably through its 2014 *Stratégie maritime*, which confirms Montreal's strategy which relies on ten key clusters in transport, agriculture, clean technology, digital technology and life sciences, among others (Government of Quebec 2015). More importantly, Montreal-based business interests acting with provincial support have targeted the development of a unique expertise in transportation logistics with CargoM, which serves as both a transportation innovation supercluster and a way to enable the growth of the other economic development priorities through increased efficiency and reliability in distribution networks (Brunelle 2020).

In the latter case, Toronto is branded as Canada's global city-region, a national gateway for goods, services and people, and serving key functions for the province of Ontario. As local regional growth throughout the Golden Horseshoe builds on close relationships with American markets, private sector actors and their proxies like the Toronto Region Board of Trade envisioned a series of innovation corridors to support high technology, financial, food, and health industries (Montsion 2019). By focusing on attracting and retaining global capital and talent, this vision has led to the development of the Toronto-Waterloo Innovation Corridor, with a direct interest in developing a global reputation in artificial intelligence and high technology industries (TRBOT 2017).

### The contours of four urban regimes

In the Halifax, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver cases, the core of their gateway city regimes is based on pro-GVC coalitions. These coalitions have similarly sought influence and alliance with independent government agencies and private sector actors, rather than with representatives of urban governments. Vancouver's gateway coalition has been relatively stable since the 1990s. It is built around private sector interests in transportation logistics since the establishment of the Greater Vancouver Gateway Council, and has expanded to port, rail and commercial transportation



**Figure 3**  
Four Canadian city-regions

discussions and improvements over the years. With the amalgamation of three Vancouver-based port authorities to the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority in 2007 and the creation of a Greater Vancouver Urban Freight Forum (GVUFF) in 2017, the influence of the coalition has recently been solidified through an increasing coordination role in managing the Lower Mainland transport assets and facilities, and a consolidated effort of positioning their priorities within local and municipal plans. This coalition surpasses the transportation logistics sector to include the GVUFF, the BC Business Council, local boards of trade, TransLink and Metro Vancouver (also known as the Greater Vancouver Regional District, see Figure 3).

On the other side of the country, the urban coalition leading the positioning of Halifax in GVCs is newer, less stable and harder to identify. The Halifax Gateway Council was originally created with members from the private sector and governments to identify infrastructure projects and provide advice. While the coalition depends in large part on public stakeholders and activities, including the province, ACOA as well as port and airport authorities, Halifax Partnership has emerged as a key stakeholder to reconcile global economic requirements with local conditions (Halifax Regional Council 2017). Due to the small size of the gateway, other public stakeholders like universities, think tanks, and community actors, have been mobilized to support various dimensions of local economic priorities, resulting in a small group of influential people directing and managing key organizations across sectors.

In Montreal, a unique model has emerged to advocate for and implement shared goals amid a plethora of public entities and priorities. In this model, the collaboration between public and private interests is led by ten industrial clusters set up by the Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal (see Figure 3) in which partnerships occur *inter alia* with Montréal International, Conseil Emploi Métropole, the Governments of Canada and of Québec as well as local chambers of commerce. This structure is meant to provide a bottom-up, sector-based coherence to local efforts

to integrate GVCs with multifold support from public sector stakeholders, especially for co-financing purposes. Montreal's international positioning is led by an urban coalition under the guise of provincial priorities, notably Transports Québec, which, with private sector support, influence how municipal governments and entities get involved (Brunelle 2020).

In contrast, Toronto is characterized by multiple sector-based urban coalitions that span throughout the Golden Horseshoe region, thriving in suburbia where proximity brings private sector actors to congregate (Jacubicek and Woudsma 2011). The Southern Ontario Gateway Council, which was created as an advocacy network across the region, especially for transportation logistics stakeholders, was disbanded in 2015, due to more sector-specific and sub-regional groupings. Whereas the City of Hamilton and the Durham region have been mobilizing public and private sector stakeholders around advanced manufacturing, Peel region (which contains Pearson International Airport, see Figure 2) has led efforts to support transportation logistics for the city-region, while Waterloo's has focused on artificial intelligence and high technology industries. There is not one urban coalition for Toronto but a series of coalitions which are similarly led by a public sector stakeholder that mobilizes local, provincial and federal governments to support private sector interests (Montsion 2019).

These pro-GVC coalitions operate with specific sets of norms and rules, most notably two normative chains moving in parallel but in opposite directions in all four locations. Whereas a vertical chain extending itself from one level of government down to another, a parallel one is moving from the bottom-up from upper tier local governments, cities, city-regions and beyond. For instance, the negotiation and ratification of free trade agreements have enabled the federal and provincial governments to request Canadian cities to abide by such new policies, while at the same time, local public stakeholders and private sector actors have required the federal and provincial governments to facilitate their commercial initiatives and activities.

In Vancouver, the norms of the urban coalition have allowed continued advocacy and consultation work in concert with top-down initiatives designed to enable Asia-Pacific integration, including the creation of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada in 1984, Expo 1986 and the Asia Pacific Economic Council Summit in 1997. This normative chain is met with bottom-up efforts, notably around the Greater Vancouver Gateway Council and other round tables established since then, to push for the necessary infrastructure investments and changes to the legal, labour and financial environments to support the private sector's international economic activities (Hall and Clark 2010; Montsion 2011). Such actions extend to strategies designed to overcome local opposition based around environmental and livability concerns (Hall 2007).

In Halifax, the role of ACOA, as a federally mandated agency, in disseminating to lower level governments specific normative frameworks has already been noted, but it builds on other federal and provincial efforts to influence local economic priorities, notably through Nova Scotia Business Inc. This normative chain is met by local efforts to stimulate economic growth, including, besides post-secondary education institutions, organizations like Halifax Partnership, the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies, the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council, and the Halifax port and airport authorities (APEC 2013).

While Montreal's interventionist model of governance makes for direct normative inputs from the provincial government at various stages, notably through its *Stratégie maritime*, provincial interests are linked to compatible federal initiatives, such as those of Chantiers Canada. In terms of bottom-up normative chain, Brunelle (2020) notes that requirements for a more socially and ecologically oriented use of industrial lots by the Port of Montreal in the city's Assomption Sud sector came from citizens organizations. They are the ones who requested an open consultation which was organized by the Office de consultation publique de Montréal whose recommendations were tabled in September 2019.

In Toronto, governmental support for reliable distribution networks links normative considerations about international trade to local priorities for economic growth and proximity requirements, like alleviating road congestion around multimodal facilities (Jacubicek and Woudsma 2011). These issues have been adopted by many Toronto-based civil society stakeholders like the Greater Toronto Civic Action Alliance but a growing disconnect emerges from the gradual isolation of urban freight issues away from local concerns, especially in suburban communities. The inability of the bottom-up normative chain centered in Toronto to obtain social buy-in in the periphery has led to citizen opposition to projects such as the Canadian National intermodal terminal in Milton (Boudreau et al. 2006; Montsion 2019).

## Conclusion

In order to understand how various local governance configurations have shaped how Canadian gateway cities are positioned in GVCs and global production networks, we proposed a framework that builds on the evolving relationships between global economic requirements, local infrastructure assets, institutional arrangements, and local communities, as experienced in specific locations. Urban regimes are at the centre of these governance configurations, and they are ‘successful’ when they are able to move forward the integration of gateway city locations in GVCs with local social buy-in. In the case of the four Canadian gateway cities discussed in this article, distinct urban regimes emerge from the work of local urban coalitions in advancing common pro-GVC goals. We found that whereas Canada’s Asia Pacific gateway solidified Vancouver’s international connections in the Asia-Pacific region and consolidated long-standing economic ties to the western Canadian resource hinterland, Halifax was put at the centre of the Atlantic gateway, which supported its positioning as a connection node to Europe, Asia, and the Americas and as an international hub for specific high value industries in knowledge-based economies. In contrast to Montreal’s location in global production networks which is tied to provincial economic goals and framed through an interventionist political culture, Toronto’s integration is intrinsically linked to North American markets through the Great Lakes region, as a global gateway city-region that rely on suburban coalitions of the Greater Golden Horseshoe for sector-based integration. Across Canada, provincial and regional district governments play a greater role in these pro-GVC governing regimes than do municipal governments.

In each of the four cases, urban regimes are also influenced by various local dynamics and community priorities that form their social polity, as well as local institutional arrangements. As our intention in this article was to provide a comparative framework for understanding city-regional governance, these two dimensions of the framework were discussed less fully. However, they remain central to tracing the evolution of urban regimes since city-regional governance has resulted in a growing inability for conventional democratic institutions to connect citizen voices to discussions on how best to integrate international distribution and production networks to local conditions (Brunelle 2020). Whether it is about integrating environmental or organized labour concerns to the management of gateway cities as has been the case in Vancouver and in Montreal, or how to best reconcile local transit demands with freight movement as seen in Halifax and Toronto, such local negotiations and necessary compromises impact how stakeholders maintain their coalitions. More emphasis put on the role of these two dimensions of our framework can help keep track of more subtle local evolutions of these four urban regimes over time. They can also help further develop the framework to extend its contribution to understanding the governance configurations of secondary inland gateway cities such as Calgary and Winnipeg.

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