

Intergovernmental relations and polyscalar social mobilization: The cases of Montreal and Toronto

Julie-Anne Boudreau
Assistant-Professor, Department of Political Science, York University
jab@yorku.ca

Prepared for a conference on Federal-Municipal-Provincial Relations
Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, Queen's University, May 9-10, 2003

Beginning in the mid-1990s, municipal amalgamations were implemented by provincial legislation in Montreal, Toronto, and many other Canadian cities. Interesting work has been written in trying to understand the motivations behind these institutional and territorial reforms (see Sancton in this volume for a critical synthesis). This paper is less concerned with explaining why provincial governments imposed mergers than analyzing the significance of local autonomy movements that re-emerged in reaction to these municipal reforms.

Resistance to municipal consolidation is certainly not a new phenomenon. Already at the turn of the 20th century, residents reacted to the wave of annexations that swept North America. Similarly, suburbanites on Montreal Island were adamantly opposed to Mayor Drapeau's dream of "One Island, One City" in the 1960s. With the new wave of regionalism in the 1990s, we are witnessing the resurgence of local autonomy movements throughout North America. These movements take the form of resistance to mergers, calls for a reorganization of intergovernmental relations, or local secession. They have increased in numbers and have seemingly been more successful in capturing the political agenda than in previous attempts.¹ While resistance to consolidation in Montreal and Toronto did not ultimately prevent mergers, local autonomy movements have had a significant impact on the political process. In thinking about Canadian intergovernmental relations, it is thus important to understand how and why do these local autonomy movements contribute to an overall redefinition of political autonomy.

¹ In the United States, local secessionism rose in the 1990s with active movements in more than 15 cities, the most prominent being in the populous (1.4 million) San Fernando Valley of the City of Los Angeles. To provide a point of comparison, the aggregate population of all territories detached from all municipalities in the U.S. as a whole between 1970 and 1985 was only 119,000 (Briffault, 1992: 777). In Canada, local autonomy movements tend to take a wider range of forms (from resistance to mergers to a Canadian Charter movement), but the California procedure for secession has directly influenced Quebec Liberal Party's procedure for "de-mergers" (interview with Roch Cholette, June 4, 2001). Secession was also briefly on the agenda of Toronto activists in the aftermath of amalgamation.

Indeed, in both Montreal and Toronto, opponents to mergers and coalitions claiming a general reform of intergovernmental relations in Canada, have developed a series of mobilizing strategies at multiple scales, striking alliances with various levels of government and pitting them against one another. While rarely directly discussed in intergovernmental relations studies, these types of polyscalar outlooks exploited by civil society actors have an important impact on the kinds of institutional and territorial reorganizations undertaken by state actors, particularly in a context where decision-making processes have been opened to a variety of non-state actors.

Four interrelated research questions are at the roots of this paper:

1. Do local autonomy movements resurging in many North American city-regions today represent an overall trend which tends to redefine relations between different scales of government?
2. Do claims for political autonomy at the local level, expressed in the form of secessionist movements or resistance to mergers, represent a more general phenomenon of the rescaling of political authority in the contemporary world?
3. Does this have any relation with the general globalization processes affecting major city-regional areas?
4. Why do some social and urban political movements express themselves through claims for territorial political autonomy, while others do not?

It is impossible to discuss all four in the scope of this paper; what follows focuses on the first two questions (for a detailed discussion of all four questions, see Boudreau, 2003a). The paper begins with a general discussion of the concepts of rescaling and autonomy, before turning to specific examples of mobilizing strategies in Montreal and Toronto.

A rescaling of autonomy?

Intergovernmental relations and local autonomy movements

In the past decade, states have undergone important territorial and institutional restructurings, which have emphasized the importance of the city-regional and supranational, more than the national level (Marks, 1996; Brenner, 1997; Clarke and Gaile, 1998; Keating, 1998; Keil, 1998; Le Galès and Harding, 1998). Brenner argues that a new scalar division of regulatory capacities is being implemented as state functions are pushed upward towards the supranational level,

downwards towards the regional and local levels, and outwards towards private or semi-private agencies. This has meant increasing policy responsibilities at these governmental levels, the proliferation of city-regional and supranational institutions, and a number of bilateral and multilateral initiatives coming directly from these levels of government without passing through the national government.

The hypothesis put forward by Brenner is that the rise of neoliberal policies in the 1980s has created what Soja would call a "restructuring-generated crisis" (Soja, 2000). In this context, a complex set of actors, including policy-makers and elected representatives, are (sometimes explicitly, but many times unintentionally) redefining authority and policy at different territorial scales. This is what Brenner calls a process of "rescaling." Indeed, the end result of this chaotic, unplanned process, is perhaps some rather important overall changes in the scales at which governance and policy-making now works.

These changing intergovernmental relations are particularly striking in the case of the development of the European Union. A number of research projects have demonstrated the proliferation of new institutions and political mobilization at the European level, on the one hand, and at the subnational level on the other hand.² While this work is becoming very important in Europe, similar trends are observable in North America as well. The most obvious are devolution of responsibilities to the subnational level and the increasingly proactive role of city-regional institutions in local and regional economic development, as demonstrated by Clarke and Gaile for the United States (Clarke and Gaile, 1998). At the supranational level, NAFTA institutions do not have the same political weight on national sovereignty as European institutions. Nevertheless, Keating for example, has shown how Canadian provinces and U.S. states have developed bilateral cooperative agreements without passing through their respective federal government. For instance, in the 1980s only, Ontario and U.S. states have signed 25 agreements, while Quebec had negotiated 101 agreements with U.S. states between 1980 and 1993 (Keating, 1996). With the ratification of NAFTA in 1994, these trends were reinforced. This "multi-level governance" system is characterized by:

² For excellent empirical analyses of these phenomena in Europe, please refer to three edited books: (Balme, 1996; Le Galès and Lequesne, 1997; Balme, Chabanet et al., 2002). In the latter book, Balme, Chabanet, and Wright have asked contributors to reflect not only on the proliferation of institutions at the supranational and subnational levels, but also on the europeanization of social and political mobilization, that is, on the appearance of the EU as a target of political mobilization, on the proliferation of EU interest groups and the impact of the construction of Europe on national interest groups, and on the access to European institutions for subnational authorities.

continuous negotiations among nested governments at several territorial tiers—supranational, national, regional, and local—as a result of the broad process of institutional creation and decisional reallocation that has pulled some previously centralized functions of the state up to the supranational level and some down to the local/regional (Marks, 1993, quoted in John, 2000).

The question this empirical literature begs is to what degree is there, not only proliferation of institutions at the supranational and subnational levels, but a rescaling of the *exercise of power*. There is no definitive answer, as rescaling processes involve diverse actors interacting in complex ways. This research is inscribed in this debate, asking if demands for political autonomy at various territorial levels may be signs of a substantive rescaling of political power.

This hypothesis rests on the conception of the territory as a malleable, rather than static element. The literature of territorial state restructuring is particularly enlightening in pointing to the fact that the spatial and institutional organization of the polity is determined by a political process, by what Jones calls a process of "spatial selectivity," whereby specific functions are secured spatially and provide differential privileges to actors in their access to state power (Jones, 1997; Keating, 1998). Because control over territory, as Sack reminds us, is a "means to power," this territorial and institutional restructuring has profound implications on who decides and where decisions are made, what kinds of policies are implemented and through what channels, and what access citizens have to institutions at various scales (Sack, 1986; Mann, 1997).

One of the hypotheses explored in this research is that there has been a strategic reterritorialization of citizen mobilization in the past decade and that this has explicitly politicized state territorial restructuring processes. It is suggested that the intensification of intergovernmental reform processes has created a situation of territorial flux, which has opened opportunities for citizens to develop their own territorial mobilization strategies, and thus challenging the state's monopoly over decisions on the territorial organization of the polity. Claims for local autonomy could be conceptualized as one manifestation of this strategic territorialization of civil society movements.

While local autonomy movements in Montreal and Toronto were shaped by their respective local and provincial context, and thus differ in important ways, analyzing them in relation to one another sheds light on important processes occurring in different city-regions. Moreover, these

relations are based on empirically-observable networking practices between activists. This is not to downplay the specific “political opportunity structures” favoring the resurgence of local autonomy movements in each city-region (Tarrow, 1998). But it is useful to recognize this general trend towards a rescaling of social movement mobilization, which in turn interacts with reforms in intergovernmental relations.

While familiar to students of intergovernmental relations and federalism, this field of research on changing scales of political practices is also rapidly evolving in many disciplines (geography, sociology, political science, urban planning). As mentioned by Sancton in this volume, more research on the policy-making and decision-making process leading to pushing state functions to supranational and subnational levels would help clarifying how reforms of intergovernmental relations actually happen. Most crucially for this paper, this field would gain enormously by looking at rescaling as more than state-centered, but as a transformation of political autonomy and of the scales of political struggles more generally.

The analytical lens proposed here to understand local autonomy movements requires going beyond the literature on metropolitan fragmentation versus consolidation developed since the beginning of the 20th century (for excellent overviews, see Keating, 1995; Stephens and Wikstrom, 2000; Brenner, 2002). By comparing two separate cases in great details and situating them in the broader context of an increase in the number of similar claims, I suggest that the resurgence of local autonomy movements in the 1990s is due to a much more complex set of factors, both structural and contextual, than what the metropolitan consolidation vs. fragmentation literature suggests. These movements are related to a general redefinition of supranational and federal-provincial-municipal relations in Canada and elsewhere.

Jurisdictional and territorial strategies of mobilization

Toronto is wealthy, hard-working, and creative –the entrepreneurial engine of the country. Our resources are essential to the rest of Ontario and indeed the nation—reportedly \$3 billion in taxes goes out of the city annually. A fair share from this city to help equalize opportunities and support our common life as Canadians is a reasonable demand from federal and provincial governments. But all around us in the city we see ugly unmet needs –homelessness, lack of affordable housing, the highest child poverty rate in the country. These unmet needs underline the fact that the present structures and division of powers are unsustainable. We cannot go on lacking the means and the powers to tackle our grave problems. (Creighton, 2000)

When reading the Quebec Government's Bill 170 [merger bill], I began feeling physically ill. Nervous flutters, a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach....symptoms I recognized from the weeks prior to the 1995 Quebec referendum. The feeling I had when I felt that I might lose my country was one that I will never forget. Now I feel that the PQ Government wants to take away my town, my home, my community and my way of life (Housefather, 2000).

In these two statements, activists in Montreal and Toronto express how they envision political autonomy as nested in intergovernmental relations, and how they sense the need to mobilize using these various levels of governments strategically. The point here is not to argue that this polyscalar outlook on social movement mobilization is a new phenomenon. Strategically striking alliances with various levels of government has long been common practice, whereby the specificity of local contexts and political opportunities factor in mobilization tactics. The objective of this paper is to highlight these often unnoticed polyscalar strategies and interrogate their influence on reforms of intergovernmental relations in a context where such reorganizations occur (in various forms) in many different countries. If we accept the premises of the work on rescaling and multi-level governance discussed above, it is important to open up the argument to a non-state-centered analysis and thus to explore rescaling processes from the standpoint of social movements as well. The interaction between intergovernmental reforms and polyscalar social movement mobilization strategies point towards what could perhaps be termed a rescaling of political struggles.

The starting point is that these generalized (yet locally-specific) processes of state jurisdictional reorganizations have created a situation of territorial flux that opened opportunities for social movements to develop their own competing territorial and jurisdictional strategies. In the cases of Montreal and Toronto, claims for local autonomy are not the ultimate aim, but rather an *instrument* developed for affirming cultural differences in the case of Anglo-Montrealers, or for sustaining a specific vision of urbanity in the case of Torontonians. In other words, these local autonomy movements are not simply ad hoc reactions to municipal mergers; the reason why they were able to mobilize effectively was that they were part of broader struggles specific to each city. The immediate threat of municipal amalgamation was taken as a rallying point, but one has to place this mobilization in the wider context of struggles for cultural affirmation in Montreal and for a reformist view of urbanity in Toronto. Significant here is that seen from the perspective of these wider social movements, resistance to mergers do not represent independent new movements, but rather a mobilizing strategy embedded in larger struggles. In

this sense, resistance to mergers can be interpreted as a territorial and jurisdictional strategy for the Anglophone rights and reformist movements.

An analysis of the types mobilizing strategies developed by these movements in Toronto and Montreal uncovers a certain trend towards an increase of jurisdictional and territorial compared to sectoral strategies.³ Sectoral strategies of political claims channel efforts in a specific policy sectors (housing, language, health, education, etc.). Jurisdictional and territorial strategies of political claims are attempts by social movements to use one level of government against another, or to create a new level of government all together by asking for a remapping of political and administrative boundaries.

This trend towards the use of jurisdictional and territorial strategies of mobilization in the Anglophone rights and reformist movements in Montreal and Toronto has also been noticed in two streams of political science and geography literatures. Firstly, in the wake of decentralization policies in France, many authors speak of a "territorialization of policy-making and political decision-making," which means a certain shift from an emphasis on sectoral policies to policy packages designed for particular territories (Balme, Faure et al., 1999; Behar, Korsu et al., 2001; Coutard, 2001). Implied in this debate is the idea that state decentralization comes hand in hand with providing local and regional institutions with the tools to devise policies in a number of sectors, thinking about their jurisdiction as a coherent unit rather than thinking a-territorially in terms of separate policy sectors.

Secondly, as Soja argues, the 1990s brought a "spatial turn" in every aspects of social life (Soja, 1996). A number of geographers have produced research on how social movements develop spatial strategies. Concepts such as "spatial justice," "regional democracy," "geographies of dissent," or "terrains of resistance" try to capture social movements' spatial strategies (for example: Steinberg, 1994; Routledge, 1996; Marden, 1997; Soja, 2000; Dikeç, 2001). This work mostly stresses spatial practices developed by the most disadvantaged (in what is called "the margins"). With goals such as neighborhood or community self-

³ The analysis of mobilizing strategies appearing in this article consisted in the compilation of a list of actions and issues undertaken by the Anglophone rights and reformist movement in the 1990s (obviously this list cannot be exhaustive). Information on strategies came from documents produced by the movement's main organizations, from interviews, from media coverage, from direct observations, and from secondary studies. The list was then categorized according to the variables 1) sectoral, 2) territorial and jurisdictional to determine the dominant type of strategy at a specific period (Boudreau, 2003a; Boudreau, 2003b).

empowerment, this type of mobilization rarely seeks, however, to challenge intergovernmental relations. Perhaps the most sophisticated account of social movement jurisdictional strategies directly related to creatively using the intergovernmental structure can be found in Miller's work on the nuclear-freeze movement of the 1980s in the U.S (Miller, 1994; Miller, 1997; Miller, 2000). Miller demonstrates that federally-elected representatives in Massachusetts in the 1980s have a record of supporting pacifist legislation, while quietly also supporting increase in defense-related investment in their districts to revitalize the economy. Miller suggests that this was possible because these representatives framed their arguments for these contradictory measures by relating each policy to a different government level. The revival of the economy was presented as stemming from *local* actors' entrepreneurship and innovation, not *federal* defense spending. Furthermore, the peace movement was able to mobilize people for *local* nuclear free zones without linking these purely symbolic referendums to *federal* defense-based investment in those localities.

In what follows, examples of mobilizing strategies in the Anglophone rights and reformist movements of Montreal and Toronto are discussed with the goal of interrogating the use of jurisdictional and territorial strategies by social movements and their relation with intergovernmental reorganization. But first, it is useful to present a brief historic overview of these two movements and their role in each city's amalgamation debate.

Anglo-Montrealers' struggles:

From Bill 22 to partitionism and resistance to mergers

Throughout the 19th and much of the 20th century, Anglo-Montrealers' interest laid in organizing economic development in the city and in the whole St. Lawrence basin. Their influence thus radiated beyond the city throughout Canada. In creating municipalities with a majority of Anglophone, middle and upper class residents concentrated on the West Island, they did not think in terms of local autonomy. This residential pattern was more the result of elite separation based on language than a claim for local autonomy. By the 1970s, a significant shift of power affected Anglo-Montrealers. First with Bill 22 declaring French the only official language of the province of Quebec (1974) and then with Bill 101 (1977) regulating access to Anglophone schools, workplace language use, and public signs, Anglophones began to see themselves as a minority within Quebec. From a situation in which they did not need to claim political autonomy because of their economic and cultural influence, they found themselves wanting to mark their

territory and gaining power over these spaces. This situation was further exacerbated by the gains Toronto was making over Montreal as Canada's economic engine, as well as the many departures of Anglo-Montrealers towards other provinces. With the Quiet revolution, as Quebec was gaining more power over social policy (transferred from both the Churches and the federal government), Anglo-Montrealers became more isolated from their compatriots in the rest of Canada. They became active in securing services in English, asserting their rights as a minority and fighting discrimination, and protecting a good quality of life in their local environments.

When they first began to act as an organized political force, they turned to the Quebec Liberal Party (PLQ) as their natural allies against French nationalism. But when the PLQ was unable to prevent the adoption of many linguistic policies, they turned to Alliance Quebec (AQ), a lobby organization created in 1981 and funded by the federal government to protect minority language rights. Tired of AQ's conciliatory lobbying strategies, the Equality Party was created in 1989. They gain four seats in the provincial legislative assembly, but the momentum faded away. Anglophone rights activists then retrenched to their local communities, developing strategies of conflict avoidance. The rule of the thumb was to "avoid language politics" and focus instead on local volunteerism and community activities.

With the 1995 referendum, partitionism came forcefully on the agenda, starting a chain of jurisdictional and territorial mobilizing strategies as discussed below. The goals of securing services in English, fighting language discrimination and protecting a good quality of life remained. Strategies to get there evolved. Many Anglophone leaders seem to have diminished their involvement in professional lobbying, party politics, or even community development, and chose to emphasize territorial autonomy. They conceive the territory as a tool to exert political pressures on the Quebec government for more political power. Municipalities are used to pass motions on partition or de-merger in the name of local autonomy, but clearly aiming at cultural affirmation. This is well illustrated in the argument for the legal challenge to the merger bill developed by partitionist lawyer Guy Bertrand:

The existence of a non-sovereign local government in Baie d'Urfe has served and must serve again as a rampart against an important reduction of the anglophone minority rights, if not against its pure and simple assimilation to the francophone majority of Quebec (Guy Bertrand et Associés, 2001: 48).

The Anglophone rights movement is certainly not the only active in resisting mergers and pushing for de-mergers, but it is one of the most vocal element of this local autonomy coalition.

Similarly, cultural affirmation is not the only issue at stake in the struggle against mergers. More traditional fears easily identifiable in the consolidation versus fragmentation debate, such as the will to protect suburban lifestyles, a fear of decreasing service levels, or of higher taxes, were also part of the debate. Nevertheless, the question this paper asks is: Why did the Anglophone rights movement get involved in this struggle against mergers? A response is that it was a logical continuation of the trend towards territorial and jurisdictional mobilizing strategies that began in the 1990s.

Toronto's reformists:

From the Spadina Expressway to C4LD and local self-government

Aided by a remapping of the City of Toronto's ward boundaries in 1968, a loose alliance of "reformists" won the 1972 municipal elections. Reformists came from more conservative and more radical backgrounds and introduced a new planning ideology in the central city, exacerbating tensions with pro-development suburbs. They rejected the 'growth at any cost' philosophy that was prevailing at the time. Reformists fought inner-city expressways such as the Spadina Expressway, car dependence, private apartment redevelopment, urban renewal and housing segregation. They also resented the increasing pressure of office space in central neighborhoods. Indeed, between 1962 and 1973, office space more than doubled.⁴ Reformists rejected low-density suburbs and favored medium-density and mixed use planning. They did not like high rise buildings and advocated instead for conversion of houses into apartments, while promoting outlying office centers (such as in North York) in order to protect central neighborhoods.

These reformists never formed a municipal party, but would vote together on certain common issues. Their main concern was to encourage recognition that planning is a political exercise and that citizens ought to have a say (Lorimer, 1970; Sewell, 1972; Harris, 1987; Caulfield, 1988b; Sewell, 1993; Caulfield, 1994; Allen, 1997). They created citizen advisory boards and decentralized some city employees to site offices. With a higher proportion of renters in the City of Toronto than in the rest of the region, they were able to focus attention on issues other than property values, yet young urban professionals and new gentrifying homeowners were still very concerned with property values. For one stream of reformists, it was not development per se

⁴ Between 1970 and 1980, there was an increase of 78%, and a further 71% between 1980-1993 (Lemon, 1996: 274; Filion, 2000: 173).

that was seen as a problem, but its pace and style, as well as the preservation of lively central city (middle-class) neighborhoods. As Caulfield notes, "it is not accidental that the principal early hotbeds of middle-class reform were gentrifying neighbourhoods" (Caulfield, 1988a). Other reformists were more concerned with the distributive consequences of housing development, the lack of affordable housing, the profits made and the control exercised by development mega-corporations.

This reformist planning ideology came to be integrated in the City of Toronto practices and formed the basis of an urban progressive middle class regime. As Caulfield noted in 1988, "[c]oncerns of middle-class reform, have, today, been sufficiently absorbed into municipal orthodoxy that there is no imminent danger of another uprising of restless bourgeois" (Caulfield, 1988a: 482). When amalgamation was imposed in Metro Toronto, reformists felt threatened.⁵ They coalesced in a movement called Citizens for Local Democracy (C4LD), led by former reformist mayor John Sewell (1978-80). In the first five months of the struggle to defeat Bill 103 imposing amalgamation in Toronto, many groups gravitated around the movement. C4LD saw its role as a catalyst to attract energy and mobilize for maintaining a reformist regime in Toronto.⁶ Its meetings attracted more than a thousand people in peak times. With local autonomy threatened, reformists had to turn to jurisdictional and territorial strategies of mobilization.

C4LD was not successful in preventing amalgamation, yet territorial and jurisdiction mobilizing strategies continued. C4LD remained active in the first years of the new city, acting as a watchdog of the new council and getting involved in a number of other issues. While the immediate purpose of the coalition was not relevant anymore (resisting amalgamation), its activists continued to be mobilized. The appellation C4LD gradually faded, but as a loosely defined network, the reformist movement remained active. Probably the first important issue many C4LDers embarked on, as well as some municipal bureaucrats and politicians, in coalition with some philanthropist business leaders and academics, and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Ontario Municipal Association, the Toronto Board of Trade, and the Toronto Environmental Alliance, was secession (Keil and Young, 2001).

⁵ The term reformist is used here to designate local councilors adhering to reformist ideals, as well as activists.

⁶ The argument against amalgamation was not specifically cast as a will to preserve this regime. This would have alienated suburban potential allies in the struggle to prevent mergers. The argument was rather framed on the more neutral ground of "local democracy" (for a detailed discourse analysis, see Boudreau, 2003a).

A number of variants of secessionist activities emerged fairly simultaneously in different circles. Perhaps the most colorful was a declaration by mayor Lastman at a meeting in Florida in the fall of 1999, that Toronto should be its own province. He later pulled back from his statement, but it had already unleashed waves of ironic and also serious comments back in Toronto (Gwyn, 1999; Sewell, 1999; Benzie, 2000d; Benzie, 2000b; Benzie, 2000c; Benzie, 2000a; Benzie, 2000e; Comeau, 2000; Gollom, 2000; Sewell, 2000b; Welsh, 2000). Most observers knew that constitutionally, the creation of a new city-province would virtually be impossible. But Jane Jacobs had already toyed with the idea, especially during a conference in her honor held in October 1997, but also in her deputation to the hearing committee on Bill 103 (Hume, 1997c; Hume, 1997a; Hume, 1997b; Hume, 1997d; Jacobs, 1997). Proposals varied from the creation of a Province of Southern Ontario to the creation of a new designation of city-states that could also include Montreal and Vancouver.

Some C4LDers formed a Committee for the Province of Toronto as a "community group committed to achieving Provincial Status for Toronto under Canada's Constitution" (Vallance, 2000). They supported a notice of motion to City Council. The notice of motion was presented by Councillor Walker on December 9, 1999 and was officially deposited in February 2000. It built on the wide opposition to amalgamation in 1997 and the wide discontentment with downloading policies to demand to the City of Toronto to 1) "hold a public referendum as part of the 2000 municipal election to determine public support for proceeding with separation from the Province;" and 2) "develop an extensive communications package outlining the argument (financial, social) for and against separation and a plan to provoke full participation and debate on the part of the citizens prior to the referendum" (Walker, 1999). This movement within City Council and with citizens around secession eventually faded and mobilization focused on securing a Charter for the City.

These various citizen activities show continuity with the 1970s reform movement, continuity in the very people involved and in political ideas. But an important difference is the evolution of mobilization strategies. Reformists had been in power in the former City of Toronto for three decades. Threats posed by amalgamation forced these activists and municipal politicians to craft territorialized strategies to maintain a progressive political regime.

Examples of polyscalar mobilization in Montreal and Toronto

In this last section, three examples of jurisdictional and territorial strategies are discussed in order to further illustrate the interaction between intergovernmental reorganization policies and polyscalar social movement mobilization.

Putting urban affairs back on the federal agenda

While municipal affairs are of provincial jurisdiction, in their struggle against amalgamation, movements in Toronto and Montreal attempted to influence federal electoral outcome in order to pressure their respective provincial government. This is a typical jurisdictional social movement strategy. The 2000 federal elections resulted in a significant loss of votes for the Bloc Québécois (BQ) when the federal Liberal Party publicly exhorted Quebecers to vote for them in order to make a statement against the provincial Parti Québécois (PQ). The election supervisor later warned the Liberals to be careful, as anti-merger expenses in Montreal might be tallied as campaign expenses for the federal party. When C4LD in Toronto attempted to put “local democracy” on the agenda during the federal elections of 1997, federal parties refused to get involved. The cultural stakes were obviously different. But this renewed openness towards municipal affairs at the federal level is the result of strategies of mobilization on multiple scales developed since in the 1990s by local autonomy movements across Canada, but particularly in Montreal and Toronto.

This urban pressure at the federal level is slowly making its way as a legitimate federal issue, resulting in a rescaling of the level at which political autonomy is claimed by social movements. For Anglo-Montrealers, it makes much sense to support these municipal-federal alliances, as it decreases the autonomy of the provincial Quebec government controlled by Francophones. These jurisdictional strategies can be traced back at least to the constitutional negotiations leading to the 1987 Meech Lake Accords.⁷ At the time, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) was pushing for having municipalities recognized as a third order to government. Aboriginal peoples were also advocating for self-government. Should they have been enshrined in the Accords, these suggestions would have rescaled autonomy profoundly in Canada, taking away some provincial powers. These two suggestions were not fully integrated in the amendments unanimously approved by all provincial premiers back in June 1987, and the

⁷ The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) had lobbied the federal government for a greater role for Canadian cities already in 1982 when the constitution was patriated to Canada.

concessions made in the 1992 Charlottetown Accords were ultimately rejected by citizens. But these ideas made their way and many social movements, including reformists and Anglo-Montrealers, were mobilizing in order to change the locus of political autonomy in Canada. Reformist Toronto Councillor and former FCM President Jack Layton's recent election as the New Democratic Party's leader is a sign of the advances made by this polyscalar mobilization.⁸

Partitionism and de-mergers: Municipal resolutions and federal and provincial policies

Back in 1987, while a recognition of municipalities as a third order of government or aboriginal self-governance were not fully integrated in the Meech Lake Accords, the recognition of Quebec as a distinct society was. Anglophone leaders in Quebec then developed their own competing territorial strategy. As Scowen wrote:

A territorial approach brings important psychological benefits. It will allow the English to see themselves as exercising some real influence in at least a part of the province. It permits and encourages all kinds of local initiatives, a strengthening of local institutions, and political action... A territorial approach to the English community in Quebec does not involve a denial of individual rights. It is the logical extension of these rights into practical collective action. It does not mean that English Quebec is creating a ghetto for itself, any more than Quebec is a ghetto within Canada or North America (Scowen, 1991: 111).

It is in this climate, that in 1995, the PQ launched a referendum campaign on sovereignty in Quebec. Reacting to the very close results, many anglophones rallied for partition. The Equality Party and Alliance Quebec, as well as most anglophone municipalities on the Island of Montreal worked with this territorial strategy in two ways. Firstly, a number of partitionist motions were adopted by local municipal councils stating their will to remain part of Canada should Quebec unilaterally declare its independence. Secondly, a campaign was launched with the federal government and through the court system, led by Guy Bertrand, to obtain a decision on the constitutionality of secession. This Supreme Court decision (1998) states that Quebec's actual territory would be up for negotiation should it go ahead with secession. The federal government, based on this court decision, adopted the Clarity Act, which details the conditions under which Canada would negotiate if a clear majority of Quebecers voted for sovereignty in a future referendum. Should partition be implemented, it would have important territorial consequences,

⁸ Toronto City councillors such as David Miller continue to invite Federal government representatives to come to municipal committee meetings on relevant issues (particularly transportation and immigration), in an effort to build stronger ties between the two levels of government, bypassing the provincial (Interview with David Miller, April 8, 2002).

not the least being a complex redrawing the Quebec's territory according to small units of voter's choice, most probably the ridings.

When the provincial government imposed mergers on the Island of Montreal in 2000, much of this activity on partition, which relied on local municipal boundaries, was threatened. Moreover, even for Anglophones who did not support partition, their traditional mobilization strategies were threatened by the loss of local institutions. This has resulted in a significant turn to territorial and jurisdictional strategies in an effort to preserve these local institutions and boundaries, which were seen as secure spaces for community well-being in the face of increasing urban and linguistic tensions.

Another example of such strategy are de-merger resolutions passed by municipal councils. Westmount's former Mayor Peter Trent and citizen anti-merger group DemocraCite developed the idea of pressuring the Quebec Liberal Party to promise a de-merger policy should they get elected in the April 2003 elections. Several municipal councils in the Montreal area adopted de-merger resolutions immediately after the merger legislation was approved. This gave a clear sign to Charest and the PLQ. The procedure for de-merging is similar to the new California municipal secession policy adopted in 1997 in response to pressures by San Fernando Valley secessionists. Referendum would be held on de-merging should 10% of the population sign a petition against amalgamation.⁹

The Charter movement: Cross-Canadian alliances

While de-merging has not been on the agenda in Ontario, the secession of newly-amalgamated Toronto from the rest of the province was briefly discussed by various citizens and Councillor Walker. These earlier formulations eventually evolved in a Canadian charter movement similar to the US home rule movement of the turn of the 20th century.

In fact, as Keil and Young note, in the Canadian institutional framework, three avenues are possible for providing more autonomy to municipalities: 1) amending the federal constitution to

⁹ While Roch Cholette, urban affairs critique while the PLQ was the opposition party in Quebec, has studied the California secession procedure very closely, the latest de-merger proposal put forward by new Quebec premier Jean Charest is considerably less stringent than California legislation (AB62). For an area to secede from a municipality, a petition of 25% of registered voters in the secessionist area has to be submitted to a state agency, which then undergoes a "feasibility study" that has to prove secession would be revenue-neutral. Then secession is put on the ballot and has to be approved by a double majority: in the secessionist area, and in the city at large.

recognize municipalities as a third order of government, 2) amending provincial Municipal Acts, or 3) a provincially-approved City Charter which would grant municipal autonomy in specific areas under a provincial-municipal contract (Keil and Young, 2001). After the initial flirting with the first two options, several Toronto actors opted to lobby the provincial government for obtaining a City Charter (Chief Administrative Officer, 1999; Chief Administrative Officer, 2000; Chief Administrative Officer and Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer, 2000; Chief Administrator's Office, 2000a; Chief Administrator's Office, 2000b; Grewal, 2000; Rowe, 2000; The Toronto Star, 2000; Welsh and Moloney, 2000).¹⁰ Toronto City Council took over this Charter idea, partly motivated by a budget crisis in 2001-2002, when City Council faced a shortfall which led to service cuts and higher transit fees, while increasing property taxes. Civic-spirited business leader Alan Broadbent also initiated meetings and drafted a charter with a number of academics, ex-mayors, and various city civic leaders (Broadbent, 2000; Rowe, 2000). The Toronto Environmental Alliance also drafted a charter focusing on regional governance (Keil and Young, 2001). This is accompanied by pressures for a change in the provincial Municipal Act, which could provide the city with enhanced revenue sources, regulating abilities, and protections from unilateral provincial changes of municipal boundaries. These various jurisdictional and territorial strategies in Toronto and across Canada are monitored by a network of reformist activists, led by John Sewell, with a web site dedicated the "local self-government" (see www.localgovernment.ca). As the Local Self Government Bulletin No. 3 indicates, "the Toronto debate goes beyond asking for autonomy and respect, and raises the question of the kinds of power which should be exercised by a big city" (Sewell, 2000a). The web site offers a good source of information illustrating the cross-Canadian alliances developing on the issue of local autonomy.

Activists in Montreal and Toronto insisted on the importance of local territorial boundaries, while developing a number of jurisdictional strategies playing one level of government against another (particularly during the 1997 and 2000 federal elections). These strategies have multiplied the scales at which claims to autonomy are made in a country where such claims were long dominated by the provincial level.

¹⁰ Jane Jacobs has also initiated, in May 2001, a meeting of the country's five biggest city mayors to discuss strategies for gaining more autonomy (Coyle, 2001; James, 2001).

Conclusion

This paper has taken a civil society-centered approach to Canadian intergovernmental relations, interrogating how polyscalar mobilization strategies exploited by certain social movements influence the kinds of institutional and territorial reorganizations undertaken by state actors. Do local autonomy movements resurging in many North American city-regions today represent an overall trend which tends to redefine relations between different levels of government? Do claims for political autonomy at the local level, expressed in the form of secessionist movements or resistance to mergers, represent a more general phenomenon of the rescaling of political authority in the contemporary world? The cases of Toronto and Montreal point towards a positive answer to these two research questions.

By situating the struggles against amalgamation in Montreal and Toronto in the context of larger social movements, namely the Anglophone rights movement and the reformist movement, it was possible to see the campaigns against mergers as a jurisdictional and territorial strategies of mobilization. The starting point was that in a context of generalized processes of intergovernmental reforms, a situation of territorial flux has opened opportunities for social movements to develop their own competing territorial and jurisdictional strategies. Claims for local autonomy were thus not the ultimate aim of these social movements, but rather an instrument developed for affirming cultural differences in the case of Anglo-Montrealers, or for sustaining a specific vision of urbanity in the case of Torontonians.

Various examples of jurisdictional and territorial strategies were discussed, from pressures to put urban affairs back on the federal agenda, partitionism and de-merger, to the emergence of a Canadian Charter movement. The objective was to highlight these polyscalar strategies and interrogate their influence on state restructuring in order to explore rescaling processes from the standpoint of social movements as well. The interaction between intergovernmental reforms and the strategic multiplication of the scales at which claims to autonomy are made begin to illustrate that we may be witnessing a rescaling of, not only institutions, but the *exercise of power*.

Bibliography

- Allen, M. (ed.) (1997). *Ideas That Matter: The Worlds of Jane Jacobs*, Owen Sound, The Ginger Press.
- Balme, R. (ed.) (1996). *Les politiques du néo-régionalisme*, Paris, Economica.
- Balme, R., D. Chabanet, et al. (eds) (2002). *L'action collective en Europe, Collective Action in Europe*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po.
- Balme, R., A. Faure, et al. (eds) (1999). *Les nouvelles politiques locales: Dynamiques de l'action publique*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po.
- Behar, D., E. Korsu, et al. (2001). *Inégalités et intercommunalité en Ile-de-France: Pour une territorialisation stratégique de l'action publique*, Paris, Centre de Prospective et de Veille Scientifique, Ministère de l'Équipement, des Transports et du Logement: 48.
- Benzie, R. (2000a). *City to debate referendum on secession*, National Post, Toronto.
- Benzie, R. (2000b). *Harris' stinging letter propels vote on city-state*, National Post, Toronto.
- Benzie, R. (2000c). *Lastman insists he'll fight for Toronto city-state*, National Post, Toronto.
- Benzie, R. (2000d). *Referendum on separation here? Council to decide*, National Post, Toronto.
- Benzie, R. (2000e). *Toronto still plans to seek more control over affairs*, National Post, Toronto.
- Boudreau, J.-A. (2003a). *Local Autonomy Movements in North American City-regions: Territorial Strategies and the "Local Democracy" Argument*, unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Department of Urban Planning, University of California, Los Angeles, 600 pages.
- Boudreau, J.-A. (2003b). "The politics of territorialization: Regionalism, localism and other isms... The case of Montreal", *Journal of Urban Affairs*, vol. 25, no 2, p. 179-199.
- Brenner, N. (1997). "State territorial restructuring and the production of spatial scale: urban and regional planning in the FRG, 1960-1990", *Political Geography*, vol. 16, no 4, p. 273-306.
- Brenner, N. (2002). "Decoding the newest "metropolitan regionalism" in the USA: A critical overview", *Cities*, vol. 19, no 1, p. 3-21.
- Briffault, R. (1992). "Voting Rights, Home Rule, and Metropolitan Governance: The Secession of Staten Island as a Case Study in the Dilemmas of Local Self-Determination", *Columbia Law Review*, vol. 92, no 4, p. 775-850.
- Broadbent, A. (2000). *Towards a Greater Toronto Charter*. Avana Capital Corporation, Toronto, Avana Capital Corporation.
- Caulfield, J. (1988a). "Canadian urban 'reform' and local conditions: an alternative to Harris's 'reinterpretation'", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol. 12, no p. 477-484.
- Caulfield, J. (1988b). "'Reform' as a Chaotic Concept: The Case of Toronto", *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine*, vol. XVII, no 2, p. 107-111.
- Caulfield, J. (1994). *City Form and Everyday Life: Toronto's Gentrification and Critical Social Practice*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press.
- Chief Administrative Officer (1999). *Legislative Proposals for Local Government*, downloaded from the internet on August 22,
- Chief Administrative Officer (2000). *Charter Status for the City of Toronto*, Frequently Asked Questions, Toronto, City of Toronto, Policy and Finance Committee Report 9, Clause 1.
- Chief Administrative Officer and Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer (2000). *Provincial Local Services Realignment - Making it Work*, City of Toronto Staff Report to the Policy and Finance Committee, Toronto, City of Toronto.
- Chief Administrator's Office (2000a). *Towards a new relationship with Ontario and Canada*, Toronto, City of Toronto, Chief Administrative Office, Strategic and Corporate Policy Division, Healthy City Office: 29.

- Chief Administrator's Office (2000b). *Towards a New Relationship with Ontario and Canada - Staff Report*, Toronto, City of Toronto, Chief Administrative Office: 9.
- Clarke, S. E. and G. L. Gaile (1998). *The Work of Cities*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
- Comeau, P. (2000). *The City-State: More than a state of mind*, Forum: Canada's National Municipal Affairs Magazine: 20-25.
- Coutard, O. (eds) (2001). *Le bricolage organisationnel: Crise des cadres hiérarchiques et innovations dans la gestion des entreprises et des territoires*, Paris, Elsevier.
- Coyle, J. (2001). *Role for cities in Confederation needs to be fixed*, The Toronto Star, Toronto.
- Creighton, P. (2000). *Councillor Michael Walker's motion on Toronto as a future province*, Committee on Policy and Finance, Toronto.
- Dikeç, M. (2001). "Justice and the spatial imagination", *Environment and Planning A*, vol. 33, no p. 1785-1805.
- Filion, P. (2000). "Balancing concentration and dispersion? Public policy and urban structure in Toronto", *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, vol. 18, no p. 163-189.
- Gollom, M. (2000). *City councillors sidestep secession debate again*, National Post, Toronto.
- Grewal, S. (2000). *'Province 416' proposed: Budget spurs call for autonomous Toronto*, The Toronto Star, Toronto.
- Guy Bertrand et Associés (2001). *Argumentaire de Me Guy Bertrand et Me Gratien Boily*. V. d. T. o. B. d. U. e. al., Superior Court of Quebec.
- Gwyn, R. (1999). *Lastman catches attention on city-state*, The Toronto Star, Toronto.
- Harris, R. (1987). "A social movement in urban politics: a reinterpretation of urban reform in Canada", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol. 11, no p. 363-379.
- Housefather, A. (2000). *Municipal Reorganization Is a Disaster*, downloaded from the internet on November 23, www.notomergers.com.
- Hume, C. (1997a). *The city that Jane helped build*, The Toronto Star, Toronto: F1, F5.
- Hume, C. (1997b). *A gentle but frighteningly incisive vision*, The Toronto Star, Toronto: F1, F4.
- Hume, C. (1997c). *Jacobs sees humanity amid urban concrete*, The Toronto Star, Toronto: K10.
- Hume, C. (1997d). *We forget how lucky we are*, The Toronto Star, Toronto: F5.
- Jacobs, J. (1997). *Deputation given to the Standing Committee in General Government conducting hearings on The City of Toronto Act - Bill 103*, Standing Committee on General Government Concerning Bill 103, Toronto, Citizens for Local Democracy.
- James, R. (2001). *Canada risks the death of Big 5 cities, Jacobs warns*, The Toronto Star, Toronto.
- John, P. (2000). "The Europeanisation of Sub-national Governance", *Urban Studies*, vol. 37, no 5-6, p. 877-894.
- Jones, M. R. (1997). "Spatial selectivity of the state? The regulationist enigma and local struggles over economic governance", *Environment and Planning A*, vol. 29, no p. 831-864.
- Keating, M. (1995). "Size, Efficiency and Democracy: Consolidation, Fragmentation and Public Choice", in D. Judge, G. Stoker and H. Wolman (eds), *Theories of Urban Politics*, Thousand Oaks, Sage, p. 117-134.
- Keating, M. (1996). "Les provinces canadiennes dans la concurrence inter-régionale nord-américaine", in R. Balme (eds), *Les politiques du néo-régionalisme*, Paris, Economica, p. 283-301.
- Keating, M. (1998). *The New Regionalism in Western Europe: Territorial Restructuring and Political Change*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar.
- Keil, R. (1998). "Globalization makes states: perspectives of local governance in the age of the world city", *Review of International Political Economy*, vol. 5, no 4, p. 616-646.
- Keil, R. and D. Young (2001). *A Charter for the People? The Debate on Municipal Autonomy in Toronto*. RC 21 Meeting of the International Sociological Association, Amsterdam.

- Le Galès, P. and A. Harding (1998). "Cities and States in Europe", *West European Politics*, vol. 21, no 3, p. 120-145.
- Le Galès, P. and C. Lequesne (eds) (1997). *Les paradoxes des régions en Europe*, Paris, La Découverte.
- Lemon, J. T. (1996). "Toronto, 1975: The Alternative Future", in J. T. Lemon (eds), *Liberal Dreams and Nature's Limits: Great Cities of North America Since 1600*, Toronto, Oxford University Press, p. 242-294.
- Lorimer, J. (1970). *The Real World of City Politics*, Toronto, James Lewis and Samuel.
- Mann, M. (1997). "The Autonomous Power of the State", in j. Agnew (eds), *Political Geography: A Reader*, London, Arnold, p. 58-81.
- Marden, P. (1997). "Geographies of dissent: globalization, identity and the nation", *Political Geography*, vol. 16, no 1, p. 37-64.
- Marks, G. (1996). "An Actor-Centred Approach to Multi-Level Governance", *Regional and Federal Studies*, vol. 6, no 2, p. 20-38.
- Miller, B. (1994). "Political empowerment, local-central state relations, and geographically shifting political opportunity structures", *Political Geography*, vol. 13, no 5, p. 393-406.
- Miller, B. (1997). "Political action and the geography of defense investment: geographical scale and the representation of the Massachusetts Miracle", *Political Geography*, vol. 16, no 2, p. 171-185.
- Miller, B. A. (2000). *Geography and Social Movements: Comparing Antinuclear Activism in the Boston Area*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
- Routledge, P. (1996). "Critical geopolitics and terrains of resistance", *Political Geography*, vol. 15, no 6/7, p. 509-531.
- Rowe, M. W. (eds) (2000). *Toronto considering self-government*, Owen Sound, Ontario, the Ginger Press, Inc.
- Sack, R. D. (1986). *Human Territoriality: Its theory and history*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Scowen, R. (1991). *A different vision: The English in Quebec in the 1990s*, Don Mills, Ontario, Maxwell Macmillan Canada.
- Sewell, J. (1972). *Up Against City Hall*, Toronto, James Lewis and Samuel.
- Sewell, J. (1993). *The Shape of the City: Toronto Struggles with Modern Planning*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press.
- Sewell, J. (1999). *Welcome to the Year of the Slingshot*, Eye, Toronto.
- Sewell, J. (2000a). *LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT - BULLETIN No.3 - January 2000*, downloaded from the internet on August 29,
- Sewell, J. (2000b). *No whipping boy: Toronto searches for the power to govern itself*, Eye, Toronto: 13.
- Soja, E. W. (1996). *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-And-Imagined Places*, Oxford, Blackwell.
- Soja, E. W. (2000). *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions*, Oxford, Blackwell.
- Steinberg, P. E. (1994). "Territorial formation on the margin: urban anti-planning in Brooklyn", *Political Geography*, vol. 13, no 5, p. 461-476.
- Stephens, G. R. and N. Wikstrom (2000). *Metropolitan Government and Governance: Theoretical Perspectives, Empirical Analysis, and the Future*, New York, Oxford University Press.
- Tarrow, S. (1998). *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- The Toronto Star (2000). *Toronto needs its own charter*, The Toronto Star, Toronto.
- Vallance, D. (2000). *Toronto, the province, is a marvelous idea*, The Annex Gleaner, Toronto: page number unavailable.

Walker, M. (1999). *Secession of the City of Toronto from the Province of Ontario, Notice of Motion, Toronto City Council, December 15-16, 1999*, Toronto, Councillor Walker: 2.

Welsh, M. (2000). *Toronto charter plan boosts independence, The Toronto Star*, Toronto: B3.

Welsh, M. and P. Moloney (2000). *Committee passes Toronto Charter, The Toronto Star*, Toronto: B1, B3.