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The Nature of Metropolitan Governance in Urban America: A Study of Cooperation, Conflict, and Avoidance in the Kansas City Region

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Abstract

In this study I determine the dominant pattern of governance in the 8-county Kansas City metropolitan area based on interviews with 46 city administrative officers in cities over 2,500 in population. Consistent with theories of cooperation, I found that the dominant governance strategy is intergovernmental cooperation in the delivery of public services but that cooperation is punctuated by conflict and avoidance when intergovernmental service delivery arrangements involve infrequent interaction between public entities and when the presence and influence of the regional council of government is limited.

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"If the central city gets cancer, then we're all in trouble."
Fred Siems, former City Administrator of Blue Springs, Missouri

A visitor from another planet approaching the Kansas City metropolitan region, or any region, from above would be able to discern natural barriers and landmarks such as rivers, hills, trees, and lakes as well as human creations such as roads, buildings, and parcels of land. What the visitor from another planet would not be able to see are the political and legal boundaries dividing cities, counties and states superimposed by humankind upon the landscape. Although not visible physically, these political and legal boundaries are no less real and influential. The greater Kansas City metropolitan area, like almost all American metropolitan areas, is characterized by very high governmental fragmentation in that about 1.7 million people reside within 114 cities and 8 counties located in two states and all loosely bound together by a regional council of government without much legal powers.

What is the nature of intergovernmental relations in a highly fragmented metropolis? Using the Savitch and Vogel (1996a) typology of intergovernmental relations, I test theories of cooperation. Consistent with theories of cooperation, I expect to find that the dominant governance strategy will be intergovernmental cooperation punctuated by conflict or avoidance when there is little intergovernmental interaction or expectation of interaction, and when the involvement of the regional council of government is limited. I posit that the delivery of public services through intergovernmental joint initiatives and partnerships with the regional council of government make it possible to minimize conflict and maximize cooperation by building social

capital between political and administrative actors at the local level, reducing agency problems, and facilitating institutional collective action.

H.V. Savitch and Ronald Vogel (1996a) analyzed the patterns of intergovernmental and public-private relations in metropolitan areas and found that the dominant patterns of governance in metropolitan regions could be categorized as mutual adjustment or conflict/avoidance. Mutual adjustment is a concept first articulated by Lindblom (1965) whereby public officials in one jurisdiction take account of another jurisdiction when making decisions that affect their jurisdiction. Lindblom contended that coordination did not have to be direct; it could be indirect. Savitch and Vogel expanded Lindblom's notion of mutual adjustment as indirect coordination to include direct coordination and cooperation between governments or even between governments and the private sector. Patterns of avoidance and conflict are evident when there is little coordination and cooperation between jurisdictions, when there are weak regional institutions, and when there is much competition and/or defection. The metropolitan areas of Washington D.C. (Henig, Brunori, and Ebert, 1996) and Pittsburgh (Jezierski, 1996) were found to practice mutual adjustment while metropolitan Los Angeles (Saltzstein, 1996), New York City (Berg and Kantor, 1996), and St. Louis (Phares and Louishomme, 1996) were classified as exhibiting patterns of avoidance and conflict. Public-private regimes were found to be dominant in the Pittsburgh region.

What Savitch and Vogel (1996b) found was that formal and informal forms of cooperation have taken root even in regions where the dominant governance strategy is conflict or avoidance, and jurisdictions endeavor to deal with problems that increasingly transcend jurisdictional boundaries. For example they found that even the most constrained cases of regional cooperation have fashioned their own institutions like New York's Port Authority, non-

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elected bi-state agencies such as in St. Louis, or by relying on special districts in Los Angeles. According to Savitch and Vogel (1996b), the process of eliciting cooperation creeps along slowly. Regionalism is more analogous to a glacier than a shooting star (Savitch and Vogel, 1996b).

I contend that the nature of horizontal intergovernmental relations in the metropolis can be explained by the frequency of contact between the actors and the presence of a central network broker such as a council of government. Social network theory supports the notion that the long-term nature of intergovernmental relationships leads to "norms of reciprocity" that can be a stronger incentive for intergovernmental contracts or joint service agreements than purely self-interested economizing (Thurmaier and Wood 2002). An important strategy for reducing environmental uncertainty is gathering and sharing information with other organizations (Galaskiewicz 1979, 20-21). Through the sharing of information, jurisdictions can reduce information transaction costs and devote scarce resources to more effective service delivery. Over time, the series of network exchanges can foster a "tradition of cooperation" (Wilkes 1975, 7) that induces further forms of cooperation.

Robert Axelrod (1981) developed a theory of cooperation that can be used to discover what conditions are necessary for cooperation to emerge. By understanding what conditions allow cooperation to emerge, appropriate actions can be taken to sustain cooperation in a specific setting. The results from the Axelrod experiments demonstrate that cooperation can indeed emerge in a world of egoists without central authority when players realize they might interact again. On the other hand, when a player knows they will not meet the other person again, then one will be inclined to defect now because the future does not cast a long shadow.

Ostrom, Gardner, and Walker (1994) also contend that it is possible for participants to solve common pool resource (CPR) dilemmas without necessarily resorting to centralized external authority when opportunities for communication are present. Using the same logic as Axelrod, it may be possible for metropolitan cities facing common social, economic, and technical problems that involve extensive negative externalities, to create their own self-governing institutions such as rules and agreements that optimize collective and regional outcomes. Encouraging interaction between jurisdictions and voluntary participation in a regional council of government that provides frequent opportunities for joint initiatives and coordination may be an efficient and effective way to deliver public services and address political, economic, and social issues that do not respect or recognize political boundaries. As governments collaborate with each other and through regional institutions like a council of government, trust is created that increases the chance of future interactions and collaboration. As governments gain greater trust in the council of government, they will be willing to delegate more authority to this body to act in the regional interest, which leads to more regional integration and a larger sense of regional community.

John Nash (found in Ostrom, Gardner, and Walker 1994) was among the first to distinguish between cooperative and non-cooperative games. In cooperative games, players can communicate with each other freely and make enforceable agreements; in non-cooperative games they can do neither. More recently, Edella Schlager, William Bloomquist, Shui Yan Tang, and Arun Agrawal (found in Ostrom, Gardner, and Walker 1994) found empirical support for the proposition that in common pool resources (CPR) social dilemmas involving fisheries, groundwater systems, irrigation systems, and forestry management, where "individuals do not know one another, cannot communicate effectively, and thus cannot develop agreements, norms,

and sanctions, aggregate predictions derived from models of rational individuals in a non-cooperative game receive substantial support" (page 319). In a non-interactive system, others are likely to over appropriate or under provide the common pool resource, and/or engage in high levels of conflict about assignment or technological externality problems. In other words, non-communication usually leads to collective action problems characterized by defection, shirking, and self-interested behavior. These researchers found that communication improves efficiency and, consistent with the findings of Axelrod, that the inability to communicate on a repeated basis limited the durability of their agreements.

Empirical analysis demonstrates that those who have developed forms of mutual trust and social capital through regular communication have the wherewithal to avert the CPR dilemma or collective action problems and arrive at reasonable outcomes, or even outcomes approaching optimality (Ostrom, Gardner, and Walker, 1994). In other words, "boundedly rational individuals with heuristics that involve cooperation and extending trust are often able to reach and sustain agreements, and that boundedly rational individuals without such heuristics are not" (page 324) and that "individuals who extend reciprocity to others and who learn to craft their own effective rules can accomplish more than individuals who do not, especially when they can identify others following the same heuristics" (327-328).

The institutional collective action (ICA) theory posited by Feiock (2004) provides another framework for understanding a system of cooperative intergovernmental relations in a metropolis. Richard C. Feiock (2002) argues that intergovernmental collective action is "motivated by a desire to achieve a collective benefit that could not be achieved by solitary action" (7). Intergovernmental cooperative actions and institutions also arise because actual or potential benefits are high and transaction costs are low (Hackathorn and Maser, 1987, found in

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Feiock, 2004). The transaction costs of interlocal service delivery arrangements are likely to be low because government officials share the same policy objectives (Post, 2004; Provan and Milward, 2001) and professional and electoral networks (Ostrom, 1998; Frederickson, 1999; Wikstrom, 2002), and because existing institutions or actors such as the state, a council of government, or policy entrepreneurs serve as a broker to facilitate social capital and shoulder a portion of the workload and/or financing (Feiock, 2004). Policy entrepreneurs such as locally elected officials and city managers can also "be instrumental in overcoming opposition to local intergovernmental opposition" (Post, 2004, 79).

In the summer of 2003, I [1] conducted face-to-face interviews with 46 [2] of the 47 city administrators in the Kansas City region in cities over 2,5000 population to determine the frequency and nature of intergovernmental service delivery arrangements in the 8-county Kansas City region across 28 services. [3] City administrators were asked to identify which sub-regional (intra-county) and regional (across counties) service delivery options best characterized how each of the 28 public services was delivered. [4] Table 1 below shows the frequency and types of service delivery arrangements that were evident across the 46 cities and 28 public services. Based on city administrator responses, I was able to identify 2,576 service delivery arrangements, 1,638 at the sub-regional (intra-county) level and 938 at the regional (inter-county) level. Of the 2,576 service delivery arrangements, 1,848, or about 72 percent, of all service delivery arrangements involved an intergovernmental alliance, 474, or about 18 percent, involved the city independently providing a service in-house, and 254, or about 10 percent, involved the city contracting out a service. Of the 1,848 intergovernmental arrangements, 518, or 28 percent, were joint initiatives with other public agencies; 472, or 25.5 percent, were when another public entity provides the service for the city; 459, or about 25 percent, involved an

alliance with the regional council of government; 175, or 9.5 percent, were intergovernmental contractual arrangements; 122, or 6.6 percent, were joint agreements with the private sector; 68, or 3.7 percent, were when a city specializes in a service that benefits or is used by citizens in other jurisdictions; and 34, or about 2 percent, involved a city-city or city-county consolidation.

Table 1: Types and Frequency of Service Delivery Arrangements

Service Method	Number of Sub-regional Arrangements (%)	Number of Regional Arrangements (%)	Total Number of Service Delivery Arrangements (%)
Contracted Out	254 (15.5%)	-	254 (9.9%)
In-house	474 (28.9%)	-	474 (18.4%)
Joint contract with private sector	37 (2.3%)	85 (9.1%)	122 (4.7%)
Joint Initiative	333 (20.3%)	185 (19.7%)	518 (20.1%)
Contract	105 (6.4%)	70 (7.5%)	175 (6.8%)
Service Transfer	341 (20.8%)	131 (14%)	472 (18.3%)
Specialize in a Service	60 (3.7%)	8 (.85%)	68 (2.6%)
Consolidate	34 (2.1%)	-	34 (1.3%)
Mid-America Regional Council	-	459 (49%)	459 (17.8%)
Totals	1,638 (100%)	938 (100%)	2,576 (100%)

Overall, joint initiatives were the most common form of intergovernmental service delivery arrangement. Joint initiatives were closely followed by the reliance upon other governments or quasi-governments (other cities, the county, special districts, and public authorities), and then partnerships with the regional council of government.

Of the 1,638 sub-regional service delivery arrangements, 910, or about 56 percent, involved intergovernmental arrangements. Of the 910 intergovernmental service delivery arrangements, 341, or about 36 percent involved another jurisdiction (usually the county) providing the service for the city; 333, or 37 percent, involved joint initiatives; 105, or 12 percent, involved contracting the service to another jurisdiction; 60, or 7 percent, involved a city specializing in a service for other cities in the county; 37, or 4 percent, involved the city working

in concert with other cities to contract with the private sector; and 34, or 4 percent, involved the consolidation of services between the City of Kansas City, Missouri and Wyandotte County, Kansas in 1997 and the cities of Mission and Countryside, Kansas in 2002.

At the regional level, there were 938 intergovernmental service delivery arrangements, almost half (49 percent) of which directly or indirectly involve a partnership with the regional council of government, Mid-America Regional Council (MARC). The next most common type of service delivery arrangement was a joint initiative followed by cities relying on another public entity to provide the service.

Interviews with the city administrators revealed that cities partner with MARC, either directly or indirectly, in the delivery of between 5 and 16 different services, or an average of 10 services for each city. It is primarily through MARC that alliances and contacts with public officials, both elected and professional, across county and state lines are developed and sustained. Were it not for MARC, many alliances would occur only at the sub-regional level. MARC is able to serve as the regional broker and coordinator through its decentralized governance process that involves locally elected and professional officials in planning, agenda setting, policymaking and implementation. This finding suggests that MARC is an important vehicle for overcoming barriers to institutional collective action posed by state, county, and municipal boundaries.

However, this research also found that MARC is more involved in some services than in other services. Cities are most likely involved with MARC in the following areas: 9-1-1 services, public transit, aging services, public health, child care, parks/trails, purchasing, emergency medical services, emergency preparedness, stormwater, solid waste disposal, and solid waste collection. MARC plays a lesser role across the region in airports, economic development,

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sewage collection and treatment, contractor licensing, fire, tourism, and land use planning, and is not involved with police, jails, recreation programs, or zoos.

During the interviews with the 46 city administrators, I also asked city administrators whether 1) intergovernmental service delivery arrangements in 28 public services result in cooperation, conflict, or avoidance, 2) to what extent they are satisfied with intergovernmental service delivery arrangements, and 3) if they personally believe that intergovernmental service delivery arrangements impose too many limits on the city's independence of action. Below I summarize and analyze the interview results for each question.

1) Intergovernmental cooperation, conflict, and avoidance

The city administrators' responses demonstrate that intergovernmental relations in the delivery of the 28 services are generally cooperative; however, cooperation is punctuated by conflict in certain cities and services. City administrators in 19 of the 46 cities reported that intergovernmental service delivery arrangements were cooperative across all 28 services. However, 27 city administrators, or 59 percent, reported that moderate conflict is present in 11 services, or 39 percent of all services. Twelve of these city administrators, or 44 percent, reported that conflict is serious enough in six of the services (water, annexation/zoning, wastewater, economic development, fire mutual aid, and border streets) to jeopardize future partnerships. Intergovernmental cooperation is punctuated by serious conflict in about one-quarter of the cities and services included in this study.

Of the 27 city administrators that reported some conflict with other jurisdictions in the delivery of services, five reported conflict with the county or another city over zoning, growth, and annexation issues, five reported disputes with a water district or the county over the extension of water service, and four reported competition with other jurisdictions in economic

development initiatives. Four administrators reported difficulty with their respective county government in the provision of wastewater services and three cities reported difficulty in dealing with the county emergency management director. Three administrators reported conflict with another city in implementing police and fire mutual aid agreements. Two administrators reported problems with another city in sharing the maintenance and responsibility for border streets. One city administrator mentioned conflict with the county regarding the delivery of ambulance service and services to the elderly. One city administrator reported a disagreement with another city as to the price charged for treating wastewater. Finally, one city administrator reported that personalities, not issues resulting from service delivery, interfered with partnerships.

Interviews with the 46 city administrators reveal that a majority of the conflict between a city and another public entity occurs when a city contracts with another public entity for services, when another public entity such as the county or special district is responsible for providing the service to city residents, and when the regional council of government is not actively engaged. When a city enters into an intergovernmental contract or another public entity provides the service for city residents, the city gives up a measure of authority and influence over service delivery and unless there is a problem interaction between the public entities is infrequent. In most situations involving conflict, avoidance, and competition such as economic development, tourism, and growth related issues it is interesting to note that the regional council is not actively engaged.

Conversely, city administrators mention few instances of conflict or avoidance when a city interacts regularly with another public agency in the joint delivery of public services or when the regional council is actively involved. This finding supports theories of cooperation that frequent interaction and the involvement of a common network broker builds social capital, trust,

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and cooperation between parties and that non-interactive arrangements tend to evolve into non-cooperative behavior.

2) Satisfaction with intergovernmental service delivery arrangements

City administrators were asked whether their overall level of satisfaction with intergovernmental service delivery arrangements could be described as always satisfied, usually satisfied, usually unsatisfied, or always unsatisfied. All but three of the city administrators indicated they were "usually satisfied" with the outcomes of intergovernmental service delivery arrangements. The other three administrators stated they were "always satisfied." This finding may explain why intergovernmental service delivery arrangements are more common than independently providing a service in-house or contracting out and suggests that intergovernmental social service delivery arrangements are likely to become durable.

3) Perceived Autonomy within intergovernmental service delivery arrangements

City administrators were asked whether they personally believe that intergovernmental service delivery arrangements impose too many limits on the city's independence of action. Only three city administrators indicated that intergovernmental arrangements excessively infringed upon their jurisdiction's autonomy and sovereignty. In one of these cities, the city administrator reported that the city simply defected by terminating the relationship with another government when there were problems or conflict.

This finding may also explain why intergovernmental service delivery arrangements are the preferred service delivery method in the Kansas City region.

Examples of Mutual Adjustment, Conflict, and Avoidance

In the final section of this paper, I illustrate stories of regional cooperation, conflict and avoidance, created from the interviews with city administrators, The Kansas City Star editorials and articles, and interviews with some of the actors in these cases.

Regional Intergovernmental Cooperation: The Pursuit of Regional Public Safety

One would suppose that law enforcement in two states, 8 counties, and 141 cities in the Kansas City metro area would be disjointed, complicated, and chaotic. To be sure, coordinated law enforcement can be a challenge, especially across state lines. However, the two cases below illustrate that considerable coordination and cooperation does exist between police departments in different jurisdictions across the region that make it possible to effectively enforce the myriad laws found throughout the region.

1) The Regional Prostitution Sting Operation. During the weekend of June 14th, 2003, detectives and police officers from 13 cities located in seven counties, including cities in both Kansas and Missouri, successfully conducted the first metro-wide prostitution sting that resulted in the arrest of 100 persons. According to Sargeant Brad Dumit of the Kansas City, Missouri police department, "It was the largest local sting of its kind. Everyone worked well together and we were very successful" (Vendel and Rice 2003, B2). "Nobody can recall doing anything with this many agencies for this purpose" (Vendel 2003, B1). "Dumit hopes the effort will be the beginning of a long-term, collaborative fight against prostitution across the area and across state lines" (B1). "A lot of smaller cities don't have vice units", he said. "We can accomplish more if we combine our manpower and resources" (B1).

Sargeant Dumit informed me that the sting effort involved the coordination and participation of seven cities in Missouri and six cities in Kansas. [5]

2) The Regional Metro Squad. In the summer of 2002 an 18-year-old lifeguard at an Overland Park, swimming pool, was brutally murdered in the pump house. In the months that followed, a team of detectives from various jurisdictions throughout the metro, known as the metro squad, pursued her murderer. Just recently, law enforcement officials notified the public they had apprehended a suspect.

Almost every city administrator indicated the city had participated in the metro squad by contributing available detectives to help solve a heinous crime somewhere in the region, or they had received assistance from the metro squad to solve a serious crime that had been committed in their community. The metro squad provides the necessary human resources and expertise that is not available to a single jurisdiction and makes it possible to enhance the quality of law enforcement for all citizens in the region no matter where they live.

Regional Intergovernmental Conflict

1) The Chamber of Commerce Border Raid. On August 21, 1863, at the height of the Civil War, James Quantrill, a pro-slavery Missourian, and his band of men crossed the state line and under the cover of darkness and burned much of downtown Lawrence, Kansas, a haven for abolitionist Jayhawkers. One hundred and forty two years later, when the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce announced that they were going to open a satellite office with two employees in Johnson County, Kansas for the purpose of providing space for meetings and to lobby on behalf of its Johnson County members[6], one would have thought that the Civil War had begun anew.

An outraged mayor from Overland Park, Kansas, claimed that the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce was a Missouri organization and their move was an attempt to solicit members from Johnson County and entice Kansas companies to come to Missouri (Alm 2003b). "This raises the bar on aggressive competition, and that is the viewpoint of many people", said

the mayor (Alm 2003b, C1), who acknowledged a bit of wounded pride over the planned move of nearly 2,000 Internal Revenue Service employees from Overland Park and Lenexa to Kansas City, Missouri (Alm 2003b, C1). Other local chamber officials complained that the Greater Kansas City Chamber had rarely fought for Kansas's business interests in Topeka the way it did for Missouri firms in Jefferson City (Alm 2003a). Blake Schreck, president of the Lenexa, Kansas Chamber said, "this has gone beyond strong concern to opposition…. It [the opening of the office] seems aggressive and provocative" (Alm 2003b, C5). The public announcement that the Greater Kansas City Chamber was going to open an office caught some Johnson County chamber and governmental officials off guard (Babson 2003). Not discussing this move with Johnson County officials before it was publicly announced reinforced the feeling by some Johnson County officials that they are being taken for granted (Babson 2003).

The Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce President Pete Levi responded to the Johnson County outrage and criticism by saying that the Greater Kansas City Chamber was not trying to drive wedges and that the organization was doing its best to promote and represent the entire metropolitan region as a single regional community (Alm 2003b, C5). Others, like Fred Logan, a member of the Kansas City chamber board who voted to open an office in Johnson County and who is also a member of the Overland Park Chamber of Commerce, said that "the simple fact of the matter is there's a role for all these chambers to play" (Alm 2003b, C5). Jerry Heaster (2003), columnist for The Kansas City Star, stated, "in my experience, nobody has ever indicated any concern that belonging to both their local and metro-wide chambers compromises the mission of either organization. Most see their roles as complementary" (page C2). The Kansas City Star (2003a) came to the defense of the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce by noting that in May 2003, 1,500 members of the Greater Kansas City Chamber, many who live

in Missouri, crossed the state line to attend a technology conference at the Overland Park, Kansas Convention Center and in the process contribute to the Johnson County economy. The Star also noted that the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce was in the process of coordinating a visit of congressional staffers who are examining federal funding needs in the entire metropolitan area, not just on the Missouri side.

As a result of the brouhaha between the Greater Kansas City Chamber and local Johnson County chamber and government officials, the Greater Kansas City Chamber announced it would postpone the creation of the satellite office in Johnson County for at least 6 months while both sides do more networking and try to come to some sort of mutual agreement (Babson 2003). The Kansas City chamber and Johnson County officials released a joint statement in which they pledged to "establish ways to work cooperatively on issues of mutual concern" (Babson 2003, C3). A taskforce has been formed to identify issues that they can agree on and mutually support.

This story illustrates the deep division, distrust, and competition that still exist between business and political officials in Missouri and Kansas, especially in the area of economic development and tourism. This case clearly illustrates the barriers created by historical divisions, political boundaries, and the tension between regional and local interests. This story also illustrates how non-communication and avoidance can result in conflict and mistrust. On a more positive note, this case illustrates how a strategy of mutual restraint can have positive results. A perceived provocation by the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce was immediately followed by a forceful response by Johnson County chambers and public officials. However, rather than retaliate with equal force and intensity or defect, the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce used a measured response by delaying the decision until both sides could resolve the

issue through dialogue and negotiation. Now the opportunity exists to achieve mutual understanding and an accommodation.

Regional Intergovernmental Avoidance

 1) An Arena: Let the Race Begin and to the Victors Belong the Spoils. The former city administrator of Lenexa who served 19 years as city administrator and who was one of the most connected and respected managers in the region told me that economic development issues are the most competitive and divisive. This case will corroborate the Lenexa city administrator's claim.

The talk of building an arena has been heating up in the Kansas City region, with officials in Kansas City, Missouri; Olathe, Kansas; Kansas City, Kansas; Edwardsville, Kansas, and Overland Park, Kansas competing to build the region's first sports arena in nearly three decades.

A study released by the Greater Kansas City Sports Commission recommended Kansas City, Missouri spend as much as $200 million to build a 20,000 seat arena in downtown Kansas City and renovate Kemper arena (Spivak 2003). According to the study, an arena is needed to stop sports events from leaving town, lure new minor-league sports teams, pump new life into the downtown, and keep Kansas City competitive with similar sized cities (Spivak 2003). According to the study, the current arena, Kemper Arena, lacks many of the features and amenities that patrons have come to expect in a facility (Spivak 2003). The new facility is expected to draw as many as 850,000 spectators a year (Spivak 2003).

In nearby Olathe, Kansas, developers have proposed and the city council has approved a $140 million project to build a shopping center, a 280-300 room hotel, and an 8,000-seat arena near 119th Street and 35 highway, just about 30 minutes drive away from the proposed downtown Kansas City arena project (Cooper 2003b).

In nearby Wyandotte County, Kansas, there are two potential arena projects in the making. The owner of the new minor-league baseball team wants to develop a 7,500 to 9,500-seat arena next to the new minor league ballpark in Village West where the new NASCAR racetrack is located (The Kansas City Star 2003b). In Edwardsville, Kansas, just a few miles from Village West, the city council has approved a $491 million project to build an 8,500-seat arena, 800,000 square feet of retail, an indoor multi-sport facility, four hotels, and a golf course surrounded by 385 homes (Wiebe 2003). The project would be partially funded by special tax incentives from the state of Kansas.

Most recently, developers have stepped forward to build an arena in Overland Park, Kansas. A development team plans to build a 7,500-seat arena along with a retail complex, worth about $140 million near the Sprint World Headquarters. The arena would be the home to the minor league Central Hockey League team. The project has been promoted as a tool to lure conventions to Overland Park to ensure the financial success of the new Overland Park convention center and hotel that are currently experiencing severe deficits. The project will need an infusion of $62 million in tax incentives from the state of Kansas similar to the incentives used to finance the Kansas Speedway and Village West in Kansas City, Kansas.

Bill Hall, chairman of the Greater Kansas City Sports Commission, has described the race by these communities to build a new arena in the Kansas City area as "an attempt to cannibalize each other" (The Kansas City Star 2003b, B3). City officials and most developers in the competing communities generally believe that the first community to build an arena will attract the necessary teams and events and that only one arena can be profitable in the Kansas City area. "Our impression is whoever is first in the ground will build the arena. They're very similar uses and venues", said John Bayless, the Edwardsville city engineer (Knight-Ridder

Newspapers 2003, B8). "I think clearly, first in wins", said Mike Thiessen (The Kansas City

Star 2003b, B8), who represents Wyandotte County's ballpark and arena developers. "I am

convinced that there will be one arena in the metro area and that will be the first one," said

Kansas City businessman Don Thomason, who submitted a bid to build an arena in Olathe

(Cooper, 2003a, B2). However, Tim McKee, vice president of economic development for the

Olathe Chamber of Commerce, said he didn't think that two arenas would undercut each other,

even if they were only 20 miles apart (Wiebe 2003) because their uses would be complementary

and not duplicative. The mayor of Kansas City, Missouri said she also did not think the Overland

Park arena plans would interfere with Kansas City's plans for a new downtown arena (Cooper

2003c). Likewise, Kevin Gray, the president of the Greater Kansas City Sports Commission,

said the Overland Park initiative would not hinder efforts to build a new arena in downtown

Kansas City (Cooper 2003c). Gray, however, did admit that the possibility of two arenas and

two minor league hockey teams in the Kansas City region would undercut each other vying for

fans and business (Cooper 2003c).

The uncoordinated race to build an arena in five locations leaves open the possibility that

the region could end up with two or more arenas. Competition to build the first arena is not

harmful to the region, provided that those who do not come in first place practice mutual

adjustment and do not then continue to compete to build a second, third, fourth, or a fifth arena.

If each community single-mindedly, independently, and relentlessly maximizes their self-interest

through avoidance and duplication, then a Pareto inferior outcome is likely to result as the

existing arenas will perform sub-optimally and the jurisdictions and the region will suffer as a

result. However, through communication, coordination, and mutual adjustment, a

complementary rather than a fragmented and duplicative strategy can be developed that achieves

Pareto optimality.

Conclusion: The Nature of Metropolitan Governance

As hypothesized, the dominant pattern of metropolitan governance in the Kansas City

metro area is one of intergovernmental cooperation and coordination, punctuated by conflict or

avoidance when there is infrequent interaction and the involvement and influence of the regional

council of government is limited. Like Washington D.C. and Pittsburgh, the Kansas City region

exhibits mutual adjustment between most cities and public entities and for most of the public

services included in this study. Unlike the Pittsburgh region, however, where public-private

regimes are the rule, most service delivery arrangements in the Kansas City region are

intergovernmental.   Like Los Angeles, New York City, and St. Louis, the Kansas City region

exhibits regional intergovernmental conflict and avoidance among some cities and in a few

public services such as utilities, land use, economic development, and tourism.

Consistent with theories of cooperation, this research finds that cooperation is more

evident when there is regular and expected interaction such as in joint agreements and when

cities partner with the regional council of government. It is not surprising or coincidental that

intergovernmental cooperation is more common than conflict or avoidance given that a majority

(53%) of all intergovernmental service delivery arrangements involve a joint initiative and a

partnership with MARC.

Also consistent with theories of cooperation, conflict and avoidance are more evident

when intergovernmental service delivery arrangements involve a service contract, the transfer of

authority and responsibility to another public entity, or when the influence and presence of the

council of government is limited. In the first two instances, there is infrequent interaction and/or

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little expectation of future communication unless there is a problem. In the third instance, there is the absence of a network broker that can build social capital and facilitate collective action.

These findings call for structuring intergovernmental service delivery arrangements to include more opportunities for shared governance between public officials and with the regional council of government, particularly when there is a principal-agent relationship such as in an intergovernmental contract, or when the responsibility and authority for delivering a service is centralized either at the county level, a special district, public authority, or the regional council of government. For example, local governing body members and city administrators can build into their schedules informal and formal meetings with their counterparts at the agent agency or the central authority to discuss and solve issues of common interest and concern and share future plans rather than waiting until there is a problem. Policy makers at the central authority or agent agency should solicit input from local officials before important decisions are made, and local officials should not be shy about proactively offering their advice about important issues that are under consideration. Establishing a more integrated regional community will take more time and effort and will not always work smoothly, but doing so will make it more possible to address and solve important metropolitan issues involving public health, the environment, land use, utilities, public safety, public works, homeland security and disaster preparedness, urban sprawl, traffic congestion, crime, affordable housing, economic development, and public education— issues that affect and are important to all Americans regardless of where they live.

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Notes

[1] I want to extend a special thanks to LeAnne Ochs who assisted in interviewing city administrators in the Kansas City region.

[2] Of the 46 cities in the data set, 27 cities were located on the Missouri side of the metro and 19 cities were located on the Kansas side of the metro. The Mid-America Regional Council planning area includes eight counties, five counties on the Missouri side of the metro (Jackson, Platte, Cass, Clay, and Ray) and three counties on the Kansas side of the metro (Wyandotte, Johnson, and Leavenworth).

[3] The 28 public services included in the study are as follows: solid waste collection, solid waste disposal, airport, public transit, traffic control, streets (border), stormwater, water, sanitary sewer, contractor licensing, police, fire, ambulance, police academy, emergency preparedness, 9-1-1, jails, elderly programs, childcare, public health, recreation, parks/trails, zoo, economic development, tourism, land use, affordable housing, and purchasing.

[4] The interview instrument asked city administrators to indicate which service delivery method or methods were used for each of the 28 public services at the sub-regional and regional levels so responses could be standardized. City administrators were provided a listing of the service delivery options at the sub-regional and regional levels and asked to indicate which option (s) best characterized the way a service was delivered. City administrators were asked to describe the way each service was delivered and the partners involved. Based on the city administrators' explanation, the interviewer recorded the most appropriate service delivery method (s) used at the sub-regional and regional levels. In a few instances, when city administrators were not familiar enough with how a service was delivered, they called the appropriate department head for clarification.

At the sub-regional, city administrators could choose one or more of the following service delivery methods for each public service:
1. A service is performed entirely by the private sector,
2. The city contracts independently with the private sector to deliver a service only for city residents,
3. The city provides a service in-house independently to its citizens,
4. The city partners with other public entities to contract with the private sector,
5. The city enters into a joint initiative with another public entity (entities),
6. The city contracts with another public entity (entities),
7. The city has transferred a service to another public entity (entities) or another public entity has full responsibility to provide the service to the city's residents,
8. The city specializes in a service available to citizens in another jurisdiction, and/or
9. The city has consolidated with another city or the county.

At the regional level, city administrators could choose one or more of the following service delivery methods for each public service:
1. The city partners with another public entity (entities) to contract with the private sector,
2. The city enters into a joint initiative with another entity (entities),
3. The city contracts with another public entity (entities) to perform a service,

4. The city has transferred the responsibility of a service entirely to another public entity (entities),
5. The city specializes in a regional service that is used by citizens in the region, and/or
6. The city partners with the regional council of government, MARC, to provide technical training, planning, funding, coordination, and/or the management of a particular service.

[5] The seven cities in Missouri were: Liberty, Kansas City, North Kansas City, Riverside, Sugar Creek, Raymore, and Harrisonville. The six cities in Kansas were: Kansas City, Merriam, Gardner, Overland Park, Leawood, and Lenexa.

[6] About 700 (30%) of the 2,500 members of the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce live and work in Johnson County (Babson 2003a; J. Heaster 2003; Alm 2003a)