

*Political Science*  
*Working Group on Interlocal Services*  
*Cooperation*

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Wayne State University

Year 2006

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City council members and the  
representation function in  
intergovernmental decision making

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## City Council Members and the Representation Function in Intergovernmental Decision-Making

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**Abstract:** Local elected officials provide a representation function for their constituents, expressing citizen preferences for public goods and services and integrating public preferences into government decisions about how to provide and produce public goods and services. In an increasingly networked world, the provision and production of public goods and services frequently occurs through intergovernmental collaboration and inter-local agreements. Public administrators are often viewed as the primary actors in forming intergovernmental agreements, but what role do elected officials play in policy decisions about collaboration? I argue elected officials' representation function in intergovernmental policymaking can be conceptualized through the analysis of three dimensions of a typological theory: stimuli for collaborative action, perceptions of the terms of collaboration, and perceptions of intergovernmental partners. Existing research and interviews with local elected officials are used to explain the dimensions of the intergovernmental collaboration decision typology. This paper offers a preliminary outline of my current research. Analysis of the data is ongoing, and feedback and comments are welcome.

Prepared for presentation at the 77<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Southern Political Science Association, January 5, 2006, Atlanta, GA.

Do elected officials in municipal government play a role in intergovernmental relations with other local governments? Are elected officials active participants in dialogue about inter-local collaboration even in council-manager systems in which the appointed executive is expected to bear responsibility for administration of council policy decisions? Could the analysis of elected officials' representation roles in local government improve our understanding of how local governments come to decisions to provide local public goods and services independently or through a partnership in the form of an informal agreement, a formal inter-local agreement or the establishment of a special district government? I argue new analysis of the role of local elected representatives in intergovernmental relations will provide a more detailed understanding of the engagement of municipalities in intergovernmental collaboration. Based on a three-dimensional typology developed from existing research, I argue elected policy makers exercise their representation roles and offer important support for decisions to work independently or collaboratively with other local governments to address public needs and demands. Elected officials provide a representation link in the democratic system between public demands for local government service and the administrative possibilities of intergovernmental collaboration.

This paper provides an introduction to my typology on intergovernmental collaborative decisions and the role of elected policymakers in this framework. First, I discuss existing research and observations on the role of elected officials in intergovernmental collaboration. Next, I outline my typology of intergovernmental collaboration decisions, focusing on the role of elected policy-makers in intergovernmental decision-making. Preliminary evidence from interviews I have

conducted with elected officials is used to explore and describe the representation role of elected officials as it relates to each dimension of the typology.

Scholars of local government and policymakers have been engaged in an active dialogue about inter-local relations. As the intergovernmental organization of public goods and services receives increased attention, research and dialogue about the role of local elected officials in the intergovernmental process will be an important dimension of this conversation. Existing theories can be used to construct a typology to help us explore and better understand the role of elected policymakers in the decision-making process about inter-local collaboration. By addressing the role of local elected officials in local intergovernmental relations, we can further advance our understanding of local governments' decisions about inter-local collaboration.

### **Elected Officials and Collaborative Local Intergovernmental Relations**

The structure of American federalism allows local governments a variety of options to organize the provision and production of public goods and services. Understanding the constitutional and legal framework in which local governments make decisions is important. The ability of local governments to organize services through diverse public and private arrangements may be constrained by constitutional and statutory restrictions of state governments (Berman 2003; Zimmerman 1995). These constitutional and statutory rules may allow or prohibit local governments to engage in a range of collaborative activity with other local governments. The constitutional-level constraints on local intergovernmental relations are not the focus of this analysis, but they do provide the overarching rules that shape options for collaboration available to local

government officials. Even when permitted to provide a public good or service through collaboration with another government jurisdiction, public officials must exercise a *policy decision* to either engage in collaboration or organize the public good or service within their own jurisdiction without partners. The elected officials in municipal government play an important role in these policy decisions. In this paper, I reference existing research from several theoretical perspectives to construct a typological theory of elected policymakers' decisions to organize public goods and services through collaborative intergovernmental relations or within their own jurisdiction.

Polycentricity, or the existence of many local government jurisdictions within a larger metropolitan community, is a critical feature of the American local government landscape (Ostrom 1999; Ostrom, Tiebout, and Warren 1961). Local governments develop packages of public goods and services to meet the needs and demands of resident-consumers in their jurisdiction. Empirical research demonstrates local governments have selected many different mechanisms to provide services to their residents, including contracting with the private sector (Stein 1990), the establishment of special-purpose districts or governments (Burns 1994; Foster 1997), consolidation of government units (Carr and Feiock 2004), and contracting for services with other units of local government (Thurmaier and Wood 2002; Thurmaier and Wood 2004). Ostrom, Tiebout and Warren (1961) explain local governments in a polycentric metropolitan community may act as a “system” through cooperative and contractual relationships. The ties between local governments through contracting relationships and through the development of social networks can, as Oakerson (1999) argues, create a “civic metropolis” in which local governments are bound together in interactive discussions

about the needs of the community and the appropriate scale and format of the provision of public goods in the metropolis.

For governments that wish to form cooperative relationships but maintain their distinct jurisdictions, inter-local contracting and the establishment of special districts covering multiple jurisdictions are important cooperative mechanisms. These devices allow for the coordination of a particular public good while allowing individual jurisdictions to organize other goods on different scales, such as within individual jurisdictions. Decisions about the organization of public goods and services are important because they are decisions about how government action will meet demands of local residents, and what institutional structure will be used to provide public goods. Policymakers, for example, make decisions about the level of police patrol service needed in the city as well as whether those patrols will be produced by a police department owned and operated by the jurisdiction or through a contract with another neighboring or overlapping unit of government (on policing arrangements, see Ostrom, Parks, and Whitaker 1978).

How can we understand the decision-making of local government policymakers on intergovernmental collaboration or single-jurisdiction provision of public goods and services? I argue we must closely examine the role of elected policymakers in this decision-making process. Existing research details a critical role for public administrators in intergovernmental collaboration (Frederickson 1999; Thurmaier and Wood 2002) However, elected officials are the representatives of the public and the officers of government with authority to vote on the approval or rejection of many intergovernmental contracts or the public budgets that fund service provision for their

jurisdictions. Further, traditional conceptions of council-manager government have been challenged by research that demonstrates the power distribution between administrative executives and elected officials is variable across cities and may depend on the institutional structure and political dynamics within jurisdictions (cf. Frederickson, Johnson, and Wood 2004; Mouritzen and Svava 2002; Nalbandian 1994; Stillman 1977; Svava 1985; Svava 1990). With this knowledge of institutional change, and with our interest in the problems of metropolitan governance, a systematic inquiry into elected officials' roles in intergovernmental collaboration may lead to an improved understanding of local intergovernmental relations.

### **Elected Officials in the Collaborative Process**

Contemporary public administration, argues Frederickson (1999), has developed largely to address problems associated with the fragmented and disarticulated state—problems that are multijurisdictional in nature require public managers prepared to form conjunctive solutions across the traditional political boundaries of local government jurisdictions. Frederickson (1999, 708) explains administrative conjunction as a process of networking and association by actors involved in administrative activity. Hypotheses laid out to expand this argument suggest elected officials are jurisdictionally focused actors, as compared to administrative counterparts who are the primary network participants and intergovernmental problem-solvers. Administrators are more inclined to be attentive to the mass-public good within a metropolitan community, rather than jurisdiction-specific interests. He explains,

“There are few incentives for elected officials to spend much energy or political capital in the interest of nonconstituents who cannot vote for them. My research suggests that

traditional forms of political representation are rooted in formal jurisdictions, whereas forms of administrative ‘representation’ are evidently associated with professional concepts of the public interest and a sense of representing an inchoate public beyond the boundaries of one jurisdiction. Insofar as there is a regional polity, then, it is an administrative polity” (Frederickson 1999, 710).

The development of the idea of administrative conjunction logically places administrative officials at the center of intergovernmental problem solving. But, do elected officials play a limited role in policy decisions about their jurisdictions’ engagement in intergovernmental relations?

Deil Wright’s (1990) conceptual mapping of federalism terminology may assist in our thinking about the role of elected official in inter-local collaboration. Wright distinguishes *federalism*, *intergovernmental relations*, and *intergovernmental management*. In Wright’s construction, elected officials are the leading actors in federalism, and questions of federalism primarily involve debate about national-state authority. Intergovernmental relations (IGR) and intergovernmental management mainly involve “administrative generalists” and “policy professionals” respectively in Wright’s framework. Elected officials are not the primary IGR actors, but Wright distinguishes IGR as a policy making and coordination activity. In contrast, intergovernmental management involves the implementation of networked programs and the problem-solving associated with intergovernmental programs. Intergovernmental relations are characterized by middle-range involvement of elected politicians in contrast to intergovernmental management’s minimal involvement of elected politicians. With this classification, elected officials might be expected to play a minimal role in managerial networks or implementation of an intergovernmental contract, as described by Wright’s

intergovernmental management or Frederickson's administrative conjunction. However, because intergovernmental relations, and specifically inter-local relations, involve policy-making decisions among government jurisdictions, we might conceptualize a more active decision-making role for elected officials.

A role for elected policymakers in intergovernmental relations can be found in existing research. Describing the relationships between city officials in Oakland, California and federal urban program administrators, Pressman (1975) provides multiple examples of elected officials' involvement in policy discussions related to the administration of federal programs by city departments. Pressman (1975, 32) notes the theoretical politics-administration dichotomy is "strongly affected by the personalities of the people holding city offices and by the wide disparity in the levels of resources available to the politicians on the one hand and the administrators on the other." Individual policy actors within a city can influence intergovernmental politics.

The mayor of a city can shape local-federal relations, as described in Pressman's study, and mayoral leadership can be critical for inter-local collaboration as well. In a volume of case-studies on mayoral leadership in middle-sized cities, LaMore and Supanich-Goldner (2000) discuss Grand Rapids, Michigan Mayor John Logie's role in intergovernmental cooperation. Even in a council-manager city, mayors can use personal persuasion and leadership to identify and advance interjurisdictional problem solutions. LaMore and Supanich-Goldner suggest Logie's efforts to address regional transportation through the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council and his coupling of an Urban Cooperation Agreement with water and sewer agreements for jurisdictions contracting with the City of Grand Rapids exemplify the collaborative leadership that can be

exercised by a central city mayor. Again, this involvement by elected officials may even be evident in cities with administrative personnel who also engage in intergovernmental relations and management.

Elected officials may be focused on jurisdictional interests; but representation of jurisdictional interests does not preclude consideration of metropolitan collaboration. Ostrom, Tiebout and Warren (1961) explain *representation* is one of several criterion used in decision-making about how public goods and services should be packaged. The authors explain the *formal organization* of a public good or service may not directly match the size of the *public* impacted by the distribution of that good, or the *political community* that is considered when making decisions about the provision of a public good. Intergovernmental agreements are one mechanism to help match the formal organization of a public good to the public making demands for that good and the political community policymakers consider when making decisions about the provision of the good. If intergovernmental collaborative agreements help match political communities to the formal organization of public goods and services, the elected representatives of the public may be expected to play an intermediary role in identifying the scope of the public impacted by a problem and crafting an intergovernmental agreement to match the organization of the service to the effected public.

Political leadership and public choice perspectives both outline potential roles for elected officials in the process of intergovernmental collaboration. I will outline three dimensions along which I anticipate elected officials' representation roles in intergovernmental collaboration will be apparent. As these dimensions are outlined, initial evidence from interviews with local elected officials will illustrate how elected

officials perceive intergovernmental collaboration and how they describe their roles in that process. The framework for interviews is shared first to provide methodological background for this evidence.

### **Hearing Elected Officials' Perspectives**

Preliminary evidence of the representation function in local intergovernmental relations is provided by sharing elected officials' own words about their involvement as policy entrepreneurs, evaluators of the costs of local government, and as representatives in the context of larger political communities. This description of the views of elected officials will be supplemented by future analysis. Data from interviews is currently being coded to refine and to test propositions derived from the collaborative IGR typology. Here, evidence from interviews is used to illustrate that the expectations of theory as organized in the collaborative IGR typology may be reflected in the practice of local government.

Over fifty interviews with a sample of local elected officials in Michigan were conducted from June through December of 2005. Local elected officials were identified using the January 2005 directory of the Michigan Municipal League. Home rule cities, general law villages and home rule villages with populations of 2,500 and over were stratified by population—small (2,500 to 9,999), medium (10,000 to 99,999) and large, (100,000+)—to provide a final sample including officials from the full range of municipal size, from jurisdictions across the entire state.<sup>1</sup> Individual officials were

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<sup>1</sup> Three jurisdictions are excluded from the population before sampling. The City of Rockford is excluded due to the author's prior service as an elected official in that community. The City of Grand Rapids, the central city in the metropolitan area in which Rockford is located, is also excluded. Finally, the City of

randomly selected within each of the three population categories. Subjects were contacted by a letter sent to them at their city hall. Phone calls to schedule interviews were made using the city hall as the contact phone number. Individuals who could not be reached through their city hall were contacted through one follow-up letter. A response rate of about thirty five percent is attributed to the challenge of contacting part-time elected officials through their city offices rather than more directly.

Interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder with the consent of research participants. Interviews lasted an average of forty minutes, but ranged from twenty to eighty minutes. Quotations from interviews will not be attributed to the interview subjects, keeping their identities and the names of their jurisdictions confidential. Interviewees were asked about the organization of various services in their community, about their service as elected officials, and about their perceptions of intergovernmental relations.

### **Typology of Collaborative Local Intergovernmental Relations**

What existing knowledge should be used to understand the decision-making of elected officials? Why is typological theory a beneficial approach?

[INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

My typology of local intergovernmental collaboration decisions has three dimensions reflecting influences on officials' decisions. The theory was derived from existing research on local government and the public policy literature. As displayed in figure one, the typology is based on a) collaborative stimuli, b) perceptions of the terms

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Detroit, Michigan's largest city, is excluded because its population (951,270) is significantly larger than any other jurisdictions in the population of local governments in Michigan.

of collaboration, and c) perceptions of intergovernmental partners. The typology presents each dimension as a dichotomy, in which the condition is present or absent.<sup>2</sup> Each dimension may be measured with one or more variables as empirical indicators of the concept. The typology allows us to visually consider the *conjunction* of causal factors (George and Bennett 2005; Gerring forthcoming; see also Ragin 1987). Different causal factors may interact in different ways, with different causal impact, resulting in different outcomes. Typological theory provides an ideal framework for considering causal complexity. The deductive construction of a typology from existing theory can be tested through a variety of qualitative research strategies and then refined to produce a more complete understanding of causality (Bailey 1994; Elman 2005; George and Bennett 2005).

For local intergovernmental collaboration, typological theory also helps us more thoroughly conceptualize the “negative types” of intergovernmental collaboration. Collaboration may be cast in a normatively positive hue. Policymakers might hope collaboration will provide high quality services economically, reduce duplication and prevent tax increases. If we conceptualize the negative type of collaboration, non-collaboration, we entertain the opposite normative concerns—lower quality services, wasteful spending on a duplication of services, and higher taxes to fund public goods. However, more detailed investigation of the typology might demonstrate the negative cases of collaboration are something quite different. We might find cases in which local governments opt to maintain a service within their community to maintain accountability

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<sup>2</sup> Empirically, variables used as indicators of these dimensions might be measured continuously rather than dichotomously; however, for graphical presentation the use of dichotomous variables more clearly demonstrates projections in the differences between the organization of services within a jurisdiction versus the organization of the services through intergovernmental collaboration.

and oversight over the production of public goods, or to maintain local decision making. Careful analysis of the negative types from the typological theory of local intergovernmental collaboration decisions can better illuminate the causes of non-collaboration.

One recent study demonstrates careful attention to non-collaboration cases. Agranoff and McGuire (2003) find communities may differ in the nature of their collaborative strategies, being either passive or opportunistic, and in the level of their collaborative activity. Six models of collaborative management are analyzed through case studies. The two-dimensions outlined by Agranoff and McGuire point to the existence of communities that are not likely to be engaged in intergovernmental collaboration. This may occur because a community is “contented,” has independent financial security and perceives limited opportunities for the formation of collaborative partnerships. Alternately, a city may simply abstain from collaborative activity. Agranoff and McGurie (2003: 55) explain some jurisdictions object to the involvement of other governments in their “political and governmental space.” Additionally, a lack of resources may prevent collaboration, collaboration may not be perceived as necessary, elected or administrative officials may prefer to avoid arrangements that may entangle city services. The typological theory used in the current paper provides further opportunity for conceptualizing cases of non-collaboration.

Typological theories are useful for analyzing phenomena with multiple, conjunctive causes. Dimensions of the typology can be specified in greater detail and refined to better understand the decision-making structure. The typology of local intergovernmental decisions will be evaluated and refined in a future paper. In this paper,

a look at the dimensions of the typology serves as a starting point for describing the representation function of elected officials in intergovernmental relations. Here, I outline the theoretical underpinnings of the three dimensions of the typology. After the description of each dimension, I share preliminary descriptive evidence from interviews with local elected officials to further illustrate how elected officials perceive intergovernmental collaboration.

### *Collaborative Stimuli*

Stimuli bring the possibility of collaboration onto the public agenda. Establishing the content of the public agenda, or the menu of possible choice, is an important prior step to choosing among policy alternatives (Bachrach and Baratz 1962; Cobb and Elder 1972). For a local government service to be organized through a collaborative arrangement, some type of a stimulus must bring the possibility of a collaborative solution to the attention of policymakers. Stimuli for collaboration might be conceptualized in several ways. Cigler (2001) explains the presence of a policy entrepreneur is important for the emergence of collaborative ventures. Additionally, the network management literature suggests entrepreneurial actors or network managers are needed to establish and maintain network connections (Agranoff and McGuire 2003; Kickert, Klijn, and Koppenjan 1997). Schneider and Teske (1992) find entrepreneurs are likely to emerge in local government when slack budgetary resources are available and when collective action dilemmas are available to be solved. Schneider and Teske define the potential pool of entrepreneurs broadly, including managers, bureaucrats, elected

officials, public actors and special interest groups. Public entrepreneurs are one likely source of stimulus for intergovernmental collaboration.

Entrepreneurship among elected policymakers was evident in some communities. While serving as the mayor of a small municipality, one official explained his role in drafting an inter-local agreement for the municipality to provide fire service to a few neighboring townships, after one township withdrew from a previous agreement due to questions about the distribution of costs associated with the agreement. The former mayor explained: “And that’s when I said, you know there ought to be a way to establish these rates that’s based on some sort of a foundation that’s really not questionable. That nobody can say we’re just trying to stick the townships. So we came up with a formula that takes our budget and all line items in our budget and takes certain line items and says okay, the cost of this item is shared with the township.” This official reports drafting an agreement that is now satisfactory to the municipality and the remaining townships involved in the agreement, preserving collective action in fire service delivery.

Cigler (1999; 2001) points to other preconditions for collaborative organizations relevant to the idea of a collaborative stimulus, including natural disaster and real or perceived fiscal stress. One elected official explains his city has become increasingly involved in a regional watershed due to increased flooding. “It’s become very active with the amount of flooding, say probably the last five to six years. It’s become quite an active group...We do have one area that is built where, basically, the homes are in the floodplain, so...they were built in what they called the hundred-year floodplain. Unfortunately, the hundred years comes about every two to three years now, so we literally have houses that their whole basements, up to the first floor and their first floors

are under water. So yes, we have a lot of contact...” The official confirms council members have been involved in policy discussions related to the watershed. “Again, we’re literally involved in all steps of it; the meetings, the discussions, that sort of thing.”

Perceptions of fiscal stress may be a particularly relevant collaborative stimulus for local intergovernmental collaboration. Research interviews for this project were carried out in the state of Michigan. State revenue sharing for local governments has declined from \$1.5 billion in fiscal year 2000-01 to an estimated \$1.1 billion in the 2004-05 fiscal year (Michigan 2004). As Michigan works to transform its economy (Duderstadt 2005), we might expect perceptions of fiscal stress to be a prevalent stimulus for collaborative activity in Michigan. Some communities might look to inter-local contracts for cost sharing. One official indicated even consolidating the municipality with the adjoining township should be considered. The council member states, “I just wish there were tangible reasons why consolidation would be attractive to the township. Frankly, eventually the city is going to run out of money.” The institutional structure of local government and the different taxing and service provision prerogatives of township and municipal government present barriers to the idea of consolidation. The official notes, “...the method and the incentives for doing that are not there on the township’s part. Why would they want to take us on? There’s no reason.” Officials’ explorations of ideas like government consolidation suggests local governments are charting out many options, including intergovernmental options, to address fiscal stress.

*Terms of Collaboration*

Second, officials' perceptions of the terms of collaboration shape their willingness to engage in collaborative relationships. Perceptions of the costs and benefits of a particular project will weigh on the minds of decision makers. Cigler (1999) notes visible advantage is an important pre-condition of collaborative activity. When evaluating the collaborative project, do officials view the benefits of working collaboratively to be higher than organizing the service alone? Does collaboration result in shared cost or improved levels of service? One council member serves on the police authority established by two neighboring jurisdictions. Costs associated with the existing police contract were one concern the council member was monitoring. The council member explained, "Monday night at our council meeting I did discuss with the city manager like you know all the problems that we've had relative with our employees and their contract." Elected officials are attentive to the costs associated with collaboration.

Intergovernmental agreements may also result in informal reciprocity benefits. Another small community with an inter-local agreement for night-time police dispatch explained the benefits of the contract relationship: "...it's been the case it's been easier for them to give us a stipend to take care of dispatching after a certain time. And at the same time if there is any problems especially at night time maybe one of our cars is predisposed, [the other municipality] hears it, comes in, backs us up. Or vice versa. If we hear [the other municipality] stopped a car and there's only one car on the road [our police] will back them, that kind of thing. So you know it's a real give and take which is good."

Perceptions of the transfer of power or decision-making authority may also shape officials' views of a collaborative arrangement. One challenge associated with *governance*, the decoupling of the steering and direction of public policy from the formal government institutions, is the reduction of authority and control by officials who are formally responsible for meeting public demands (Hirst 2000). As government provision decisions about local public goods and services are separated from the entity responsible for producing those goods, monitoring mechanisms may become necessary to evaluate the quality of service provided. Services can be provided efficiently through contract relationships, though intergovernmental contracts may provide greater opportunity for monitoring and incorporating public demands than private sector contracts (Oakerson and Parks 1988; Stein 1990; Warner and Hefetz 2002). Still, officials' perceptions of their ability to monitor service efficiency and alter service arrangements if necessary may enter their decisions about engaging in or continuing a collaborative project.

One jurisdiction's consideration of consolidating their fire department with neighboring departments illustrates that decision-making authority becomes a relevant consideration, particularly if a collaborative partnership is not perceived to result in cost savings. The council member explains: "I mean we've looked at, over the years we've looked at things like shared fire service but the problem is, and this is probably oversimplifying it. But essentially you've got the proper number of stations and personnel to cover the entire area so the fact is even if you had a combined district, the only savings really would be in probably a couple of administrative positions like chief, maybe assistant chief and probably some dispatching savings but overall the savings would not be great enough for each municipality to give up the autonomy that they have."

*Perceptions of Intergovernmental Partners*

Third, perceptions of potential intergovernmental partners shape the willingness of officials' to engage in intergovernmental collaboration. In his early review of research on inter-local agreements, Anderson explains tensions among local government units may prevent collaborative activity:

“Old, traditional mistrust between units; the fears of the officials of small units about getting tied up with larger ones beyond their control; the fear of becoming committed to future expenditures and tax burdens beyond local needs or capacities; the desire to protect their local powers and independence—in short, a number of ‘expediency values’ may well come to the fore and result in a refusal to enter upon a joint or cooperative project. These must be taken into account in almost every proposal to bring about interlocal cooperation, and to these must be added such factors as parochialism, clashes of personalities between leaders of the several units, and other highly subjective variables” (Anderson 1960, 121).

Anderson's description of what I call “perceptions of intergovernmental partners” may seem closely related to the terms of collaboration discussed above. What distinguishes these two categories? The terms of a collaborative arrangement involve the agreed upon decision-making structure, the intergovernmental contract or the special-district charter, and the organization of the public good or service. Anderson's description of traditional levels of trust among units and clashes of personality fall into the category of perceptions of intergovernmental partners.

Explaining the failure of an inter-local contact for fire service, a council member suggested pride and personality of the officials in a neighboring jurisdiction might have played a role in the end of collaboration. The reason for the end of the agreement:

“Pride. That’s all a pride thing. Somebody got mad at somebody and by god I’ll be damned if I’m ever going to go back there and let them... It’s really that irrational. The whole thing to start with was irrational and it’s just continued to be irrational and the other thing is, is in the townships around here, the rural townships, people don’t get too involved in the township politics and unless they were to come up, you know some citizens out there were to start stirring up things and start demanding you know why are you spending this much here when the city would charge you this? It’s not going to change any time soon...because you’ve got board members out there that have been on the board for ten, twelve years and they’re not going to change their minds overnight.”

Just as negative perceptions may inhibit collaboration, positive perceptions may bolster collaboration. Trust and reciprocity are powerful factors in representation and cooperative relationships (cf. Bianco 1994; Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Ostrom, Gardner, and Walker 1994; Ostrom and Walker 2003). Just as mistrust may prevent collaboration, norms of reciprocity and repeated contracting relationships with regular partners may lead to Oakerson’s (1999) conception of a networked civic metropolis. Thurmaier and Wood (2002) find the social networks established by government administrators in the Kansas City Metropolitan area facilitate the formation of interlocal agreements. Positive perceptions of intergovernmental partners, then, may contribute to increased or stable intergovernmental collaboration while negative perceptions prevent collaborative options from being discussed.

Some officials refer to ideals of *regionalism* to explain why they attempt to work with other governments. A mayor working with the county government and neighboring jurisdictions on a road project exemplifies how positive perceptions and relationships with neighboring jurisdictions can facilitate cooperation:

“So township government is a little bit different than city government. But I do know personally and cordially the township supervisors around me. I made it a point when I got elected previously...there hadn't been a lot of personal contact with them. We do interact on certain things and it's made a great help to the city on some projects with the...county road commission which represents all of us and so now we have a communication channel that benefits all the residents. Regionalism has got to come. We've got to start leading the way.”

These three dimensions form a typology of local intergovernmental collaboration decisions. The dimensions of the typology were used to structure questions in in-depth interviews with elected officials. The typology helps us conceptualize not only positive cases of collaboration, but also negative cases in which collaboration is not expected to occur. From the typology we see that “non-collaboration” does not necessarily mean disagreement. Non-collaboration may simply indicate a jurisdiction may not perceive any benefit from a collaborative relationship with another government and no stimulus has prompted officials to consider intergovernmental service organization. Using these three dimensions, we can better analyze elected officials perspectives on inter-local collaboration and assess how their views of representation and the interests of their constituents help structure their decisions about intergovernmental collaboration.

## **Future Considerations**

A theory that views local intergovernmental relations as part of the representation function of local elected officials helps us explore the role of elected policymakers in inter-local collaboration. This paper introduces a typological theory to better understand the collaboration decisions of elected policymakers and utilizes descriptive evidence from a series of interviews to provide an initial exploration of representation in local intergovernmental relations. Elected officials' involvement in policy decisions on collaborative intergovernmental ventures can be understood using a three-dimensional typological theory. Collaborative stimuli, perceptions of the terms of collaboration, and perceptions of intergovernmental partners impact elected officials' decision-making about inter-local collaboration.

As noted earlier, the policymaking role of professional administrators vis-à-vis their city council is variable (Nalbandian 1991; Nalbandian 1994). For council-manager cities, the policy relationship between elected council members and mayors and professional city managers may impact the level of involvement elected officials play in the process of intergovernmental policymaking. The descriptive examples in this paper include scenarios in which elected officials have heavily participated in IGR and scenarios in which the council member primarily interacts with the manager about intergovernmental policy. Further exploration of this relationship will be the topic of a future paper. For now, two different jurisdictions illustrate that the level of involvement elected representatives take in intergovernmental policymaking is variable. In one medium city with council-manager government, the mayor indicates elected officials have been highly involved in intergovernmental relations: "Oh, yes, everybody, I mean

all the politicians. Again I'm very fortunate in this city and I don't know, I can't speak for other cities but politics has never been a strong suit by anybody. We look out for the public good, how best do we serve the public good and let's do it. Let's not get involved. But, yes, the city council sets an agenda, if you want to call it that and the administration follows the agenda." In another medium city, a council member explains the elected officials' and manager's role in intergovernmental relations differently: "Yes, manager does the negotiations and we don't get involved in this. Occasionally on an issue he may have a city council person sit with he and maybe the city attorney just to have council representative in the negotiations." These statements are shared to emphasize that while I argue a "representation function" does exist in intergovernmental collaboration, I argue the role of elected officials in intergovernmental relations is variable across communities. Further analysis of this variation deserves greater descriptive and empirical attention.

With this theory and initial descriptive evidence, we can see a representation function for local elected officials in the process of intergovernmental policymaking. Council members and mayors enter the intergovernmental policymaking process attentive to the interests of the constituents within their jurisdiction. Elected officials also act as representatives for their full jurisdiction, evaluating the potential need to collaborate or their interests in maintaining independent service provision, evaluating the terms of collaboration of their municipality's finances and future decision-making authority, and evaluating potential partners, at times proactively advancing their own understandings of regionalism.

Interviews with local elected officials provide descriptive evidence to elaborate the dimensions of the intergovernmental collaboration decision typology for this paper.

This project is in the early phases of analysis. In the coming months, data from research interviews will be coded and further analysis of elected officials' perceptions of collaboration decisions will be conducted. Reactions to the typological theory or the role of elected officials in intergovernmental collaboration are welcome. Understanding the causal complexity of officials' decisions to collaborate and the key differences between decisions to collaborate or organize services independently are the principle goals of the project. By explicitly analyzing the role of elected policymakers in the intergovernmental process, I believe our understanding of intergovernmental relations as a representative policymaking process will expand, with potential benefit for citizens, administrators, and representatives alike.

**Figure 1: Typology of Local Intergovernmental Collaboration Decisions**

		Weak Stimulus		Strong Stimulus	
		Negative Terms	Positive Terms	Negative Terms	Positive Terms
Perceptions of Partners	Positive	Collaboration Unlikely	Collaboration Possible	Collaboration Possible	Collaboration Very Likely
	Negative	Collaboration Very Unlikely	Collaboration Unlikely	Collaboration Unlikely	Collaboration Possible

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