

Why Cooperate?
An evaluation of the formation and persistence of voluntary regional land use cooperative
arrangements in Michigan

by

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**To
My Family**

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ABSTRACT

Why Cooperate?

An evaluation of the formation and persistence of voluntary regional land use cooperative arrangements in Michigan

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Chair: Richard K. Norton

For more than a century, planning scholars have been both frustrated and fascinated with the notion of regional cooperation, which has become one of the most sought after yet elusive ideals of land use planning. While scholars view regional cooperation as the answer to most land use problems, they debate whether regional cooperation can be achieved without substantial mandates, incentives, or both. My dissertation contributes to this planning literature by focusing on the problematic of regional cooperation in Michigan, which is regarded in the planning literature as a state with permissive planning institutions that are unfavorable to cooperation. There are two parts to the puzzle of cooperation in Michigan: first, whether municipalities voluntarily cooperate, and second, whether this ensuing regional cooperation produces desirable planning outcomes. My dissertation focuses on the first part. Using mixed methodology comprised of surveys of local elected officials and case studies of selected municipalities, I focus on whether regional cooperative arrangements can be crafted voluntarily, and assess the factors that affect the formation of such arrangements. Results show that half of the surveyed Michigan municipalities cooperate on land use issues. These municipalities, however, differ considerably in the cooperative arrangements they employ. While some

municipalities cooperate informally by just conversing, others establish formal cooperative mechanisms such as joint master plans and zoning ordinances. Further, the factors that determine whether a municipality makes the initial decision to cooperate are not the same factors that determine whether a cooperative effort is formalized. The perception of future growth pressure and the internal support for cooperation in a municipality are important in explaining a municipality's initial decision to cooperate. The roles of informal institutions and county and regional planning agencies serve as important explanatory factors of the extent to which municipalities formalize their cooperative efforts. Finally, and somewhat surprisingly, a high degree of regional governance culture appears to make it less likely that localities will engage in formal cooperation. Examining cooperation in this light not only allows an in-depth view into decision makers' calculus of cooperation but also offers insight into the underlying causal mechanisms of the key factors predicting cooperation.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Recent emphasis on growth management has resulted in a revival of notions of regionalism, but with one difference: the new regionalism is based on governance and cooperation rather than government and mandates.¹ From a land use perspective, this shift in thinking² has resulted in a flurry of calls for greater intergovernmental cooperation around land use issues (see Healy 1978; Innes 1993). How cooperation evolves, however, is not self-evident. In fact, scholars have been both fascinated and frustrated by trying to understand how cooperation evolves, especially in situations where there is no top-down, central authority to enforce cooperative action. A majority of the literature so far has focused on cooperation around three areas: service delivery, common-pool resources, and economic development. Yet, from the planning perspective, regionalism cannot be attained without some level of cooperation around land use issues,

¹ I use the term new regionalism to distinguish early calls for metropolitan or area-wide government and governmental consolidation from calls for cooperation today that focus on voluntary regionalism. Also, I use the term mandates as growth management scholars use it – to refer to states where state governments mandate local governments to undertake certain planning tasks (see May et al. 1996; Burby and May 1997).

² Again, reflecting a more pragmatic thinking laced with political realism that regional governance through voluntary cooperation would be easier to achieve than regional government through consolidation.

which are arguably different from these three areas. This dissertation examines how and why local decision makers cooperate around land use issues, and develop an understanding of the key impediments to cooperation from a land use perspective. I also offer three different conceptualizations of cooperation. I will examine these questions in Michigan, which as a permissive state is central to debates on whether cooperation is possible voluntarily at the local government level. Data-collection methods include document review, survey, and case-study research.

In the 1980s the Grand Rapids, Michigan metropolitan area faced unprecedented growth and development. This growth was evidenced by the rapid conversion of farmland to strip commercial and low-density residential subdivisions (Fulton et al. 2001). During this time, Kent County, which includes the City of Grand Rapids, saw its urbanized area grow by 80 percent, while its population increased by only 18 percent (Dutzik and Imus 2002). This rapidly sprawling growth soon exposed the problems associated with the lack of comprehensive and coordinated land use planning in the metro area. One of these problems was that the regional infrastructure had not kept pace with the new housing. Officials in Grand Rapids and surrounding localities were soon discussing the prospect of extending a 40-mile-long water line to Lake Michigan. However, what seemed initially to be a straightforward solution ran into roadblocks when the two primary cities in the metro area, Grand Rapids and Wyoming, could not come to an agreement over who would be responsible for constructing and maintaining the new water line.

The dispute over the water line was emblematic of historic relations between the two cities, which can be traced as far back as 1959, when the township of Wyoming incorporated as a municipality to avoid being annexed by Grand Rapids. Finding their differences irreconcilable, the cities of Grand Rapids and Wyoming, located just 5 miles apart, each built separate parallel water lines to Lake Michigan. The two water lines have never since operated at more than half their total capacity each. Grand Rapids and Wyoming also separately operate the two largest wastewater treatment facilities in the area. The lack of cooperation between these two municipalities has tremendous implications for the region. First, these two separate projects cost taxpayers in excess of \$100 million (Elderkin and Riseman 1993). Second, because these two pipes operate at half their total capacity each, the cost of operating and managing them can only be effectively offset by adding customers. More growth means more customers. Both cities now have an incentive to seek growth in their service areas. Third, historically antagonistic relations between the two cities were reinstated with this debacle. Regional planning in the Grand Rapids metro area cannot succeed without the buy-in of either city, yet the two water lines remain a testament to the status quo in the region. One local official in Michigan summarizes this kind of parochialism and lack of cooperation aptly: “Local government officials in Michigan have acted as if the world were flat and as if they’d fall off the end of the earth if they strayed beyond their city or township boundaries” (Jacobs 2004, p. 497).

Many such examples of the absence of regionalism and lack of cooperation among jurisdictions have emerged over the past century, exposing a system of land use planning

in the United States that has been criticized as predominantly characterized by fragmented decision making, pro-growth ideologies, and localism (see Nolon 1996; Scott 1969). This lack of regionalism is evident when one urban municipality extends its infrastructure alongside another rural community, spurring growth in areas with prime farmland; when only one community enforces regulations to protect the water quality of a lake shared among three communities; when one community zones land for industrial use while the contiguous property in the adjacent community is zoned for residential use; and when one community attempts to incentivize compact development and open-space preservation, while the adjacent communities subsidize large-scale subdivisions and strip commercial development. Recent literature has shown that the lack of cooperation and collective action among jurisdictions has fuelled sprawling development patterns; fragmented natural resources; and social, economic, racial, and territorial inequality at the regional scale (Rusk 1993; Porter 1997; Judd and Swanstrom 1998). There are compelling reasons to conclude that these development patterns are not sustainable environmentally, economically, or socially. As a result, scholars, legislators and policy makers have called for greater intergovernmental cooperation to remedy the negative and inequitable consequences of sprawl (Florida Governor's Task Force 1989; Innes 1993; Downs 1994; New Jersey Office of State Planning 1997; Porter 1997; Lowery 2000).

Today, hundreds of communities face situations such as those outlined above, where the lack of regional planning poses severe threats to the communities' economy, environment, and quality of life. On such occasions, communities have choices to make – to act together (cooperate) or to act alone. Scholars have long been fascinated with how

and why some situations allow for greater cooperation among jurisdictions than others (see Stone 1989, Ostrom 1990, Olson 1965, Axelrod 1984). In fact, explanations for the evolution of cooperation have been anything but straightforward and are plagued by many unresolved debates. Therefore, developing an understanding of how decision makers choose to cooperate is of central importance to this dissertation.

In the literature, one can find several debates on how collective action evolves. First, some scholars assert that certain levels of central authority and mandates are required to elicit cooperation from self-interested decision makers, while others suggest that cooperation can voluntarily evolve in decentralized settings even in the absence of mandates. Second, there is tremendous interest in identifying the formal and informal mechanisms that are created to further cooperation, including questions on the relative importance of these various mechanisms. Third, debates also focus on the calculus that decision makers employ while making decisions to cooperate (or not to cooperate), including whether cooperative decisions result from rational efficiency-based calculations or more behaviorally and culturally motivated calculations.

The Grand Rapids example reflects some of these debates. Here, cooperation occurred voluntarily at the local level when the Grand Rapids-Wyoming water-line debacle prompted leaders in the Grand Rapids metro area to lobby the legislature to enable the formation of a formal regional authority (the Grand Valley Metro) to oversee land use issues of regional impact (albeit with limited powers). It is also relatively easy to see in this case that historic relations and politics between the two cities trumped the economic

calculus of efficiency in the decision not to cooperate over the water line. In my dissertation I seek to develop a detailed view of how many of these debates and factors interact in decisions to cooperate regionally. I will use Michigan as the context in which to study local government cooperative efforts to further regional planning.

1.1 The Michigan Context

Michigan consists of four types of general-purpose local governments: villages, cities, counties, and townships. Like the other Great Lakes states, and unlike most of the growth-management states, Michigan is a civil-township state. Representing a hybrid between the New England town and the Southern county (Platt 2004), the township is a layer of local government that exists between the county and the municipality. While conventionally thought of as a “home rule” state, Michigan is in fact quasi-home rule in that its several types of local government enjoy different levels of delegated authority, with townships differing from counties and municipalities primarily in their taxing authorities and the services they provide. Even so, Michigan townships, counties, and municipalities enjoy land use planning and regulatory authorities that are virtually identical. Michigan’s local government structure is thus often described as highly fragmented, with 83 counties, 1,241 townships, 273 cities, and 262 villages (Citizens Research Council of Michigan 1999), each having substantial authority to influence land use and development within their jurisdictions. Because of this authority to independently influence land use patterns, Michigan municipalities have typically been regarded as producing a patchwork quilt of land use policies. Reports studying land use policy have

observed that in Michigan land use-related cooperation is an exception rather than the norm (see Dutzik and Imus 2002).

Regional cooperation is not a new term in the lexicon of land use planning in Michigan. Michigan stood at the forefront of regional planning and served as a model for implementing the idea of regionalism when the metropolitan Detroit local governments created the Supervisors Inter-County Committee. This intercounty group was the first of more than 100 Councils of Governments (COG) now functioning in American metropolitan regions (Scott 1969). While it was quite clear during the creation of this COG that Detroit-area municipalities found the idea of regional government repugnant, the motivation behind the COG was nonetheless to develop an arena for promoting municipal cooperation through area-wide problem solving. Despite early success with the formation of the Detroit area COG, Michigan has also had a long and arduous history of planning reform aimed at cooperation, especially when such reform has been initiated at the state level. More than 70 years ago, in 1934, the State Planning Commission was created to achieve integrated and coordinated land use planning in Michigan. This commission's role was not only to coordinate substantive economic development, natural resource, and land use planning concerns across Michigan, but to also coordinate local, county-level, and regional planning and plan-making processes. Fears of loss of local autonomy and centralization led to the disbandment of this commission in 1947. In 1975, Governor Milliken established a Special Commission on Land Use (SCLU) emphasizing the need for developing coordinated land use planning legislation in Michigan. He warned the legislature, "No area is more critical to improving man's relationship with the

environment than land use. Yet in no area is legislation more fragmented, standards less certain, and decisions more shielded from the people.” During this time a report titled “Michigan’s Future Was Today” set forth an agenda to develop a coordinated state and local land use planning framework to remedy the land use trends of that period. Between 1974 and 1978, several different versions of state land use legislation were considered by the Michigan legislature. Most of the debate focused on local governments’ fear of losing local control should the bills pass, and this fear eventually stymied the passage of these bills (MSPO 1995).

Conversations on state-level planning and regionalism in Michigan would not be revived again until the early 1990s, when the Michigan’s Environment and Relative Risk Report commissioned by Governor Engler listed the “lack of coordinated and integrated planning” as the greatest threat to Michigan’s environment and economy. Several other studies commissioned in the 90s echoed the findings of this report and highlighted the importance of regional planning in Michigan (PSC 1992). More importantly, the activity in this period swung the momentum back in favor of having more discussions on planning in Michigan. The environment was ripe for Governor Granholm to convene the Michigan Land Use Leadership Council, a blue-ribbon commission, to examine concerns about the environmental, social, and fiscal impacts of suburbanization throughout the state. The council prepared a report premised on notions of smart growth and sustainable development. Not surprisingly, the report paid considerable attention to regional cooperation, emphasizing the urgency of the needed comprehensive reforms to make cooperation viable in Michigan.

Altogether, these efforts and reports reached a few key conclusions: First, land use, economic and environmental issues do not follow political boundaries and therefore should be addressed at a larger metropolitan or regional scale. Second, Michigan's fragmented local government structure and its patchwork quilt of land use policies are creating a checkerboard of development patterns with little attention to the long-term sustainability of natural resources and livability of urban spaces. Third, Michigan's home-rule tradition is a tremendous impediment to regional planning and cooperation. Fourth, mandates, incentives and guidelines for regional cooperation are visibly absent in Michigan (MSPO 1995; PSC 1992; TRCPC 2002). Despite these conclusions, drawn over the course of more than 70 years, there has been little state-level institutional activity to mandate, incentivize or institutionalize the idea of cooperation among Michigan municipalities.

Two state-level actions on coordinated land use planning are nevertheless notable.

1. The Coordinated Planning Act of 2001, which requires all municipalities to send drafts and completed master plans to neighboring municipalities, the county or Regional Planning Agency (RPA), among other entities, during plan preparation and updates. My surveys and interviews of elected officials reveal that while county and regional agencies comment on the master plans and plan updates they receive, most neighboring municipalities do not. Local governments, for their part, incorporate most of the county and RPA comments in their plans but typically receive limited feedback from neighboring municipalities. Feedback

from neighboring municipalities is not mandated. This legislation therefore does not provide for systematic interactions among municipalities.

2. The Joint Municipal Planning Act of 2003, which enables local governments to form Joint Planning Commissions. My research reveals that at least seven Joint Planning Commissions (JPC) have been formed under this legislation. This legislation, however, is not comprehensive. It neither establishes incentive packages for municipalities nor provides more substantive tools to aid in the formation of JPCs. An example of such a tool would be permitting municipalities to engage in regional Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) programs.

This minimal legislative activity arguably reflects a sort of political pragmatism or realism on part of the state, only enabling municipalities to cooperate should they desire to do so of their own accord. To place Michigan's land use setting in perspective, one has to discuss this minimalist approach in contrast to the approaches taken by the so called growth-management states.

1.2 Growth-management strategies

State-level land use planning, growth management and intergovernmental cooperation strategies in the United States can be broadly divided into mandate-based strategies, incentive-based strategies, and permissive strategies (Innes 1993). In states with planning mandates, compliance with state mandates is typically achieved through sanctions. State and/or regional agencies have monitoring, cooperation and enforcement roles.

Comprehensive plans are mandated, and in some states even the broad content of plans is specified by the state. In the incentive-based states, local compliance with state directives and goals (presumably encouraging regional cooperative and statewide land use planning) is encouraged through both direct and indirect financial and policy incentives. Comprehensive planning is often not mandated, but if communities choose to plan, a minimum content of plans is specified. Similarly, cooperation is not mandated, but informal communication channels provide opportunities for cooperation. In the states with permissive land use policies, neither comprehensive planning nor the content of plans is mandated (or only minimally so, if localities choose to plan—as is the case in Michigan). Incentives for cooperation and planning are rare.

With regard to cooperation in permissive states, typically, any administrative function that can be undertaken by a single unit of government can be performed jointly by multiple governmental units. In other words, local governments are permitted to engage in a wide variety of cooperative activities should they choose to. Substantive legislation permitting different land use policies such as Purchase of Development Rights (PDR's) and Transfer of Development Rights (TDR's), however, might be lacking. In the planning tradition, states with some level of policy interventions at the state-government level (e.g., mandates and/or incentives) have been typically regarded as the more progressive states with regard to regional planning and cooperation.

Michigan is prototypical of a permissive planning state. In Michigan, local governments do not feel the “push” from the state to plan or cooperate. Further, there are very limited

state-sponsored and institutionalized channels for cooperation; much of the ensuing planning and cooperation should therefore be explained by “other” factors, particularly relating to municipal level decision making. This institutional context places Michigan at the center of debates on whether regional cooperation around land use issues can evolve without state involvement (i.e., without state mandates or extensive state incentives).

1.3 Cooperation or competition?

Some of the most contentious debates in the literature on intergovernmental cooperation surround the need for cooperation as established by the two predominant models of intergovernmental relations: the model of governmental competition and the model of governmental cooperation. On one hand, following Tiebout (1956) and his optimum-city size model, some scholars believe that competition between decentralized and fragmented local governments offers the choice of “exit” to citizens, who can choose to live in jurisdictions offering services that match their preferences. Because municipalities in this model compete for citizens, decision makers are held more accountable, and governmental responsiveness and efficiency are promoted (Tiebout 1956; Lowery, Lyons and DeHoog 1995; Teske et al 1993). Adherents to this public-choice perspective see little need for cooperation, as they see competition between governments as providing greater opportunities for citizens to increase their quality of life.

On the other hand, proponents of models of cooperation suggest limiting the number of local governments by advocating regionalism and consolidated governments. Proponents of regionalism and cooperation assert that optimal outcomes are better identified when

governments can recognize their interdependencies and act together to capitalize on them (Barnes and Ledebur 1991; Peirce 1993; Wallis 1994). This perspective promotes cooperation not just as a way to achieve economies of scale and financial efficiency through pooled resources, but most importantly to address equity and environmental issues that transcend local boundaries (Lyons, Lowery and DeHoog 1992; Rusk 1993; Lowery 2000; Downs 1994).

Therefore, while researchers on both sides of the competition-cooperation debate agree that local government fragmentation increases competition between governments, they disagree about the social, economic and environmental impacts of this competition. In light of this debate, it is important to note that approaching local planning and development management primarily from the public-choice perspective limits discussions of the need for government to just the provision of services. But governments do more than just provide services, and the provision of adequate services is only one component of the array of factors that contribute to a community's quality of life. Government also establishes the regulatory landscape through which decisions that affect the quality of life are made. The question, then, is this: if government does more than provide services (e.g., increase quality of life by enacting regulations that protect natural resources in the area), to what extent does cooperation aid in this process, and to what extent can fragmented jurisdictions engage in cooperation without mandates or state-level incentives to do so?

1.4 Mandates or voluntary cooperation?

While proponents of regionalism can agree that cooperation is important to address problems that cross jurisdictional lines, they differ in their views of how this cooperation ought to be achieved. While some scholars believe in the need for state governments to mandate cooperation, others believe that cooperation can evolve voluntarily. Among those who believe that cooperation can evolve voluntarily, some suggest there is an inherent order in decentralized systems, which allows spontaneous, unconscious, and non-engineered cooperation. This laissez-faire approach to cooperation is often referred to as a spontaneous regime wherein cooperation is achieved without intervention or explicit design (Hayek 1973). In this case, if collective-action problems are defined as the convergence of expectations around certain issues, such a convergence is expected to occur through natural processes without centralized intervention, conscious cooperation, or explicit consent between participants (Young 1989). For example, those who write in the New Institutional Sociology (NIS) literature believe that people live in a socially constructed world that is filled with taken-for-granted meanings and rules. Much of their action is neither intentional nor conscious. Rather, action is undertaken unconsciously and as a matter of routine (see Scott 1991 and 1995). The tacit rules that govern such cooperation are neither written nor spoken. Through what Lindblom (1965) describes as mutual adjustment, participants take unilateral actions, and the cooperation that evolves is a by-product of ordinary decisions without a specific intent to cooperate. There is no common purpose and no explicitly defined relationships. There is therefore no weighing of benefits or costs in this type of spontaneous cooperation.

Another type of cooperation without central authority is a common subject of research for game theorists and those studying complex situations where cooperation has been shown to “evolve” from strategic interactions and adaptations of agents with their surroundings and with each other, without policy interventions (Axelrod 1984; Axelrod, Riolo and Cohen 2001). In this type of cooperation, however, interacting participants make conscious decisions to cooperate. These decisions are voluntary and made using a rational calculus wherein individuals weigh the benefits of cooperating against the cost of non-cooperation. Ostrom (1990) describes this kind of voluntary cooperation in her study of common-pool resources. Here participants voluntarily create rules that govern their behavior. Evaluations of benefits and costs might be “self” motivated or viewed through the lens of shared norms. In common-pool-resource scenarios, Ostrom (1990) explains, the interdependence of participants operating around the common resource is structured in such a way that net benefits to participants are often higher through joint rather than individual action. Not only are the individual benefits clearly calculated, the group that needs to act together for these individual benefits to be realized is also clearly defined. That is, in a common-pool resource setting, the physical interdependence of the participants is well defined– so long as the participants continue to share the common-pool resource in question.

Scholars who have explored whether cooperation can evolve consciously and voluntarily have indeed found evidence to support Ostrom’s (1990) thesis. These scholars have found evidence of voluntary cooperation around service-delivery issues, watershed management, and in some cases economic development (Gillette 2000; Summers 2000;

Visser 2004; Lubell 2004). These three types of scenarios, however, contain many of the same situational factors that common-pool resources offer. When participants cooperate around services and economic-development issues, the benefits that cooperating accords to individuals is at least relatively clear. Since these benefits are primarily economic, they can also be calculated easily. Similarly, watersheds are well defined, and cooperation around watershed issues is conceived of in a manner very similar to that of cooperation around common-pool resource. That is, it is easy to see how cooperating will produce greater individual benefits than would independent action.

1.5 Uniqueness of land use settings

1.5.1 Lack of well defined boundaries

Land use issues, however, present a different challenge. Typically, a well-defined common-pool resource such as a forest, bridge, or lake around which cooperation is sought, is absent. Well defined boundaries help assert the physical interdependency of those involved in appropriating a resource. Interdependency is a condition that is a characteristic feature of common pool resources where the appropriators of the resource are jointly affected by almost everything they do. Each individual therefore, must take others' actions into account while making their own choices. In land use settings, asserting interdependence is a much more complicated endeavor. The complication arises from the fact that regional boundaries are not well established. Absent well defined boundaries, the "group" that should cooperate for individuals to reap the benefits of such cooperation is typically not easily identified.

A	B	1	2
C	D	3	4

Figure 1.1 Interdependency among municipalities

Consider eight townships (A,B,C,D,1,2,3,4) located within the same county as depicted in figure 1.1. At the most basic level, these townships are interdependent by virtue of the fact that they share boundaries. That is, townships A,C,D,3 and 1 have at least one thing in common – they all share boundaries with township B. Similarly, townships 1,3, and 4 share boundaries with township 2 and share that as a commonality. When deciding to cooperate meaningfully, by writing a joint master plan for example, who should townships 1, and 3 cooperate with? Should they primarily cooperate with townships B and D or townships 2 and 4, or both sets of townships? Say townships 1 and 3 decide that most of the expected growth pressure to their municipality is from the western part of the county. They decide to primarily join forces with townships B and D. But townships B and D, using a similar logic might find it most appropriate to cooperate to townships A and C rather than townships 1 and 3. How does one resolve this? How do townships 1 and 3, and B and D determine the set of municipalities that they are interdependent with and in doing so define a region? In the example of common pool resources the participants are those who appropriate a resource. In service sharing examples, the participants of a cooperative effort are those who see the need for the efficient provision of a particular service. When municipalities seek to cooperate on land use issues by coordinating their planning activities, interdependency might be defined by a wide

variety of factors such as commuting patterns, school district boundaries, watershed boundaries and so on. On some occasions, evaluating interdependencies using each of these factors might yield the same larger regional boundaries, and on other occasions each of these factors might define a different or even an overlapping conception of the larger region.

The inherent difficulty with land use issues is that agreeing on a common definition of the larger region might be easier said than done (see Kimble 1951). It is the fluidity of the region in a land use setting that makes regional cooperation a problematic working concept (Talen 2005). That said, common pool resource settings require that all actors whose actions affect your own be identified so that most externalities can be internalized. In this way, participants are identified. Further, defining the set of participants would ensure that all interdependencies are managed and accounted for. It is for these reasons that common pool resource scholars have time and again emphasized the need for well defined boundaries as one of the starting points of collective action, and as an element that is most often found in successful, long and enduring common pool resource situations (see Olson 1965; Ostrom 1990).

1.5.2 Lack of discernible individual benefits

The concept of individual benefits from cooperating on land use issues might be moot for two reasons. First, there are few individual benefits (such as individual economic benefits) to be gained from concerted action. Imagine the case of a township that wants to stay rural. This township has complete control over land uses within its boundaries. That

is, it is in charge of its own destiny. This township can stay rural should it want to stay rural. There might be instances where neighboring municipalities push growth outward towards this township. This might complicate local decisions by increasing the pressure for development – particularly when developers request additional permits to build in the areas close to where growth is occurring. The township, however, can deny permits if it can demonstrate through its master plan and zoning ordinance that the intent is to stay rural and that the requested development is not in keeping with the goals of the plan. As surrounding municipalities continue to develop, farming might become less viable in fragmented parcels within the township in the long run, but this is hard to envision in the present. Why should this township cooperate with neighboring municipalities in this case? What individual benefits would accrue to this township in the present that can be easily identified and calculated?

Second, in land use settings, regionally rational outcomes and consequent benefits to be attained through cooperation not only might fail to produce individual benefits, but might also produce net costs to a municipality (that is, sub-optimal outcomes from the local perspective). Consider a simple case where cooperation is optimal from the regional standpoint to ensure the consistency and compatibility of regional policies and land uses. This would involve municipalities cooperating to ensure that land use classifications are consistent across jurisdictional lines and boundary uses are compatible. The transaction costs of ensuring such consistency and compatibility are tremendous. The benefits to individual municipalities, however, might not amount to anything substantial. It might be more profitable to a municipality to deal with inconsistency and incompatibility problems

at their boundaries as they arise. Consider another case of potential regional benefits from concentrating density around a city. This kind of clustering produces efficient land use patterns regionally, but city officials might regard more density at their boundaries as detrimental to their environment – a sub-optimal outcome in which the city might evaluate individual benefits to be extremely low.

In other words, even in a case where a township wants to stay rural and a city wants to stay urban, the township and city might find the benefits of cooperating to be lower than the costs of accomplishing such cooperation. In land use scenarios, therefore, benefits have to be considered from a regional standpoint. That is, individual benefits are primarily derived from group benefits – a municipality is better off because the region is better off.

1.5.3 The nature of cooperative land use policies

In his book *City Limits*, Peterson (1981) describes three types of public policies that governments undertake: developmental policies; allocational policies; and redistributive policies. Developmental policies enhance the economic position of a municipality or group of municipalities who bear the cost of these policies. Developmental policies result in net benefits to municipalities. Commonly cited examples of developmental policies are economic development partnerships among municipalities and joint transportation projects. Allocational policies result in neither benefits nor costs to municipalities. That is, they are relatively neutral in their economic impacts across municipalities. Joint service provision is typically cited as an example of an allocational policy. Finally,

redistributive policies are those sets of policies that typically do not enhance the economic standing of the municipality that bears the costs of such a policy. These policies have the potential to at least in the near term negatively affect the economic standing of a municipality. Cooperative land use policies are typically classified as redistributive. In his discussion, Peterson argues that municipalities are well equipped to deal with and undertake developmental and allocational policies but fall short when it comes to implementing redistributive policies. Any number of reasons, such as not wanting to pay for others' benefits, the fundamentally fragmented and competitive nature of municipalities, lack of political willingness, and the ability of such policies to drain resources and local capacity are cited. For these reasons, Peterson suggests that the federal and state governments are better equipped to implement redistributive policies.³

When viewed in this light, cooperation on land use issues is arguably difficult because such cooperation has the potential to fundamentally alter and threaten the status quo in a municipality (see Stone 1989). For example, imagine a plan that is jointly written by several municipalities. Municipality "A" is part of this joint planning effort. In the plan, these municipalities jointly decide to direct economic development towards the most suitable area for such development (e.g. where infrastructure already exists). This decision could be redistributive in the sense that such a policy directs development away from municipality "A" that left to its own devices might have sought this development within its own boundaries. Apart from moving commercial development away from

³ If meaningful cooperation on land use issues is regarded as fundamentally redistributive, then this lends credibility to critics of voluntary regional cooperation who assert that regional cooperation will not be possible without state level mandates and incentives (e.g. Tax base sharing in Minnesota; Developments of regional impact in Florida). That is, the sense that municipalities will not undertake such policies of their own accord and therefore need mandates or inducements.

municipality “A”, this joint plan also redirects affordable housing, multi-family housing, and mobile home parks, towards municipality “A” on grounds that support structures (e.g. community facilities and transportation) for these housing projects are more readily available in this municipality. It is quite conceivable in this situation that had municipality “A” planned independently, the preferable approach would have been to exclude such development entirely. It is also conceivable that the joint plan in these two examples was crafted with an emphasis on group or regional benefits rather than individual benefits and that the group benefits were indeed expected to translate into greater individual benefits in the long run. Olson (1965) warns that a decision to cooperate based on long term and/or group benefits in a case like the one described above, might be the exception rather than the rule. In this way the redistributive nature of cooperative land use policies complicates land use related cooperation by fundamentally altering the status quo. In examining the redistributive nature of meaningful land use policies and the dilemma of individual and group benefits, Fainstein (2005) argues that there is a need to persuade people to transcend their own narrow self-interest and realize that there are gains to be had from the collective enterprise. Such a mobilization, she asserts, depends on a widely felt sense of justice so that redistribution can be viewed as a rational response. She calls for the infusion of justice and morality in decision making such that municipalities do not resist and will even support, redistributive measures.

In summary, the difficulty of asserting physical interdependence, defining common interests that necessitate joint action, and the redistributive nature of meaningful land use policies contribute to the uniqueness of land use settings. Consequently, these

characteristic features of land use settings contribute to regional cooperation being one of the most sought after, yet elusive ideals of planning.

Because cooperation in land use settings is complicated by the reasons described above, some scholars assert that the action of a higher level of government is needed to compel local cooperation (May et al. 1996). This higher level of government would define the region, establish the common interest, justify this common interest through claims of physical interdependence, and prescribe means for achieving the common interest. That said, most state governments are hesitant to get involved in land use planning issues and have consequently established more permissive institutional environments for land use planning (Altshuler 1996). Although the permissive planning states are more prevalent in the United States, most of the existing planning research on cooperation has focused on selected growth management states, addressing the question of whether state government involvement in these states has produced better planning outcomes. Therefore, very little is known empirically about whether and how land use cooperation evolves in the permissive states like Michigan, where there are neither mandates nor substantial incentives to promote such cooperation. The first question I ask in this dissertation is: Do municipalities voluntarily cooperate on land use issues in these permissive states?

Although several scholars view intervention by a higher-level authority (e.g., the state) as the only way through which to achieve cooperation on land use issues, mandated or incentivized cooperation is not without its problems (Olson 1965, May et al. 1996, Burby and May 1997). These problems seem to arise fundamentally from the fact that mandates

and incentives are structural reforms and that structural reforms do not always lead to behavioral modifications on part of local decision makers. For example, with regard to compliance, Innes (1992) found that even in mandated settings with the looming threat of sanctions against non-compliance, additional negotiations were necessary between the state and local governments to promote local compliance. Similarly, in incentive based environments, May et al. (1996) describe that incentives alone were not enough to explain compliance to state agendas (also see Berke et al. 1999). Compliance was explained as a result of the locally perceived need for regional action, the general commitment or preferences of local decision makers to undertake regional actions, and the extent to which the state and regional entities could provide supportive structures to facilitate regional planning. Further, May et al. (1996) describe the downside of mandates – in that it straightjackets local governments and stifles local innovation. They also found that the promise of local innovation in the incentive-based states was not realized. These findings leave them to ponder about the role of local motivations within the larger context of mandated and incentivized planning settings.

For example, they describe compliance in mandated settings as procedural pro-forma compliance to the mandate itself. In other words, while they were able to discern a calculated commitment among local decision makers to the mandate, a normative commitment to the cause of regional planning was found to be completely lacking. In this regard, they found that municipalities only “step through the motions of the requirements” without effectively implementing mandated activities when they are not fully committed to the purposes underlying those activities (May et al. 1996). These

conclusions are not new. Petak and Atkisson (1982) found that much of regional level planning can be explained by the willingness of local municipalities to undertake such actions. In an effort to understand how local willingness and commitment to regional planning can be increased, May et al. 1996 subsequently crafted an exploratory study which revealed that commitment in both mandated and incentive-based states could be increased through information, education and training. They further found that regional planning agencies could influence local willingness and commitment when they stepped beyond their enforcement roles and engaged in a more facilitative role (also see Berke et al. 1999).

The discussion of mandates and incentives and whether these affect the willingness and commitment of local decision makers to engage in planning is not to suggest that calculated commitment precludes normative local commitment to regional cooperation or to suggest that cooperation, no matter the motivations (normative or calculative), should be inherently good or bad. Rather, I engage in this discussion to argue that even in states with extensive state level institutional arrangements for cooperation, the state level mandates and incentives do not in isolation tell the whole story of regional planning. In fact, the role of local decision makers' preferences, the calculus they employ to evaluate regional cooperation (although they might comply pro-forma) and the expanded and in many ways self motivated roles of regional planning agencies at fostering local commitment to regional planning seem important. I argue that this finding coupled with the discussion about the inherently redistributive nature of land use policies and the cultural motivations for decisions to cooperate (or not) suggest that any evaluation of

how cooperation evolves should consider a more comprehensive range of factors. That is, the preferences of decision makers to engage in voluntary cooperative behavior are induced not just by situational factors and strategic interactions with other decision makers (the calculus approach of weighing benefits and costs), but also by the building blocks of preferences such as beliefs, attitudes, and values (the cultural approach of using moral justifications). In addition to the environmental conditions (such as growth pressure or resource deterioration) and formal institutions (such as the role of regional and county planning agencies at facilitating cooperation, the informal institutions that contribute to the regional governance culture of an area (such as prior cooperation) and the decision maker related factors (such as education and training) would be important explanatory factors of cooperation. These factors would be even more important to consider in permissive states where “motivations of compliance” to mandates or “estimated benefits” from incentives are absent. The second question I ask in this dissertation is: If municipalities indeed cooperate voluntarily on land use issues in permissive states, what factors predict this ensuing cooperation? Conversely, what factors serve as limits or impediments to regional land use cooperation.

1.6 Research questions placed in the context of larger discussions of regional planning

This dissertation does not necessarily take a stance on whether regional cooperation is needed to solve interjurisdictional problems or whether regional cooperation has the potential to produce the normative outcomes that planners seek. Further, the planning

tradition is deeply rooted in historic debates between the regionalists and the metropolitanists about whether regionalism is an end in itself or the means to other ends. On one hand, the regionalist emphasis tends to be less about the specifics of internal urban form, plan making and the ability of both to produce better land use patterns and more about urban positioning within its natural regional context. On the other hand, the metropolitanist version of regional thinking is more grounded on how regional arrangements through discussions of governance can be crafted to produce more sustainable urban forms (see Fishman 2000; Talen 2005). In this regard, this dissertation does not particularly address whether regional cooperation should be conceived of as an end in itself as Mumford, Geddes and other regionalists promoted it or whether regional cooperation should be viewed as the means of producing governance options that result in desirable land use patterns as Adams envisioned. Rather, it takes for granted that both the regionalist and metropolitanist versions of regional planning rely on regional cooperation as central to their understanding of land use planning without contemplating the motivations behind such an assertion. The starting point for this dissertation therefore is a conditional formulation: if we rely on regional cooperation, then what do we know about how this cooperation might be attained?

Also, regional planning can be studied using different units of analyses. The regulatory landscape for planning in the United States is organized in such a way that several state, regional and local entities make decisions that affect the fabric of the land use system. For example, state governments influence regional patterns through the environmental regulations they institute (e.g. coastal development regulations). Federally mandated

Metropolitan Planning Organizations affect regional patterns through the investments they make and the plans they write (e.g. highway development plans). Local governments (municipalities) affect regional development patterns through the master plans and zoning ordinances they implement. No doubt, there are tremendous benefits to understanding regional planning and cooperation through a study of this multi-tiered enterprise comprising of a variety of geographic scales. The scale of such a study is however beyond the scope of this dissertation. Therefore, the focus of this dissertation is on a piece of the larger puzzle of regional planning: the horizontal cooperation among municipalities on land use issues. This study therefore uses the local government as the unit of analysis.

Finally, much of the recent focus in the growth management literature has been on evaluating whether mandates or incentives increase the potential for regional cooperation. In other words, the focus has been on evaluating how statewide institutional arrangements affect cooperation. This flurry of excitement surrounding the growth management states has resulted in a dearth of information and a lot of critical questions about whether cooperation can be achieved in states with neither state level mandates nor incentives to promote regional cooperation. This dissertation does not address whether voluntary or incentive-based or mandate-based arrangements produce more regional cooperation. Rather it takes on the case of a sub-state system (Michigan) with a voluntary cooperative planning framework to understand how and whether regional cooperation evolves within such a setting. Evidence of cooperation will be ascertained by looking for locally crafted regional cooperative mechanisms around land use issues. If such evidence

of regional cooperation exists, then the conditions that promote regional cooperation will be evaluated.

1.7 Results at a glance

A substantial part of this dissertation is dedicated to providing different conceptualizations of cooperation. My literature review revealed that most scholars measuring cooperation do so in a rather simplistic way (e.g. treating cooperation as a binary yes/no variable). This dissertation provides evidence that cooperation is a much more dynamic concept than scholars have viewed it to be. This means that cooperation needs to be measured in a more nuanced manner. I measure cooperation in three different ways, each of which captures a different dimension of regional cooperation. In the first conceptualization, I measure a municipality's initial decision to cooperate. An alternate dimension is the extent to which municipalities formalize their cooperative efforts. Here cooperation is regarded as a continuum of informal to formal. In the third conception of cooperation, I treat informal and formal cooperation as two distinct and equally important categories.

The first question posed in this dissertation evaluates whether municipalities do indeed cooperate voluntarily on land use issues. Results show that about half of Michigan municipalities cooperate on land use issues. These municipalities however, use a wide range of mechanisms or arrangements to engage in cooperation. These cooperative arrangements are as informal as conversations between elected officials and as formal as joint planning commissions and joint master plans and ordinances among municipalities.

With regard to the factors affecting cooperation, my dissertation reveals that the factors that determine whether municipalities make the initial decision to cooperate are not always the same factors that affect whether municipalities formalize their cooperative efforts. Most interestingly, environmental factors and decision maker related factors such as support for cooperation, affect whether municipalities make the decision to engage in cooperation. Neither formal nor informal institutions have significant effects on this initial decision. Similarly, environmental factors do not significantly determine the extent to which a municipality formalizes its cooperative effort. In this regard, informal institutions, formal institutions and decision maker related factors significantly impact the level of formal cooperation. Typically, in voluntary settings, one dismisses the ability of regional and county planning agencies (formal institutions) to influence local action, because of the fact that these agencies for the most part do not have the regulatory authority to implement land use policies.⁴ While my results reveal that these planning agencies do not play a significant role in whether municipalities decide to engage in cooperation, they do play an important role in assisting municipalities with the formalization of their cooperative efforts. This dissertation highlights the facilitative role of planning agencies as important in understanding formal regional land use cooperation.

The most surprising findings are related to the role informal institutions play in determining the extent of formal cooperation. Service related cooperation and the regional governance culture of an area were significantly and negatively related to the formality of cooperative efforts. Although initially puzzling, the results seems justifiable

⁴ Cases where counties plan for townships in rural areas in Michigan are an exception

upon further contemplation. Municipalities in Michigan, in general, find it difficult to take the long term view of planning. This seems especially so when they get accustomed to the path of increasing returns that service related cooperation offers. The negative impact of regional governance culture on formal cooperation suggests at least one or a combination of the following: First, that areas with a governance culture that is favorable to regional planning see little need for formal cooperation. The culture of cooperation decreases the need for the stability of formal cooperation. Second, this regional governance culture provides an illusion or false ceiling of cooperation. Finally, that municipalities substitute the regional governance culture for cooperation in a way that affects their behavior – that is, the governance culture ensures certain types of cooperative behaviors that do not necessitate formal cooperation (related to the first explanation).

In the following chapter, I develop a conceptual framework to evaluate the factors that affect regional cooperation.

Chapter 2

Literature review and conceptual framework

In this dissertation, I am primarily interested in understanding the factors that affect conscious voluntary cooperation among municipalities on land use issues. To develop such an understanding, however, one first has to begin to craft a model of how decision makers' preferences to engage in cooperation are shaped. I derive the factors affecting cooperation from this model. I then follow that with a discussion of each of the factors affecting cooperation and provide hypotheses about the directionality of these factors' effects.

2.1 Introduction

The traditional interpretation of human agency in both the political science and sociology literatures has been to view it as highly determined by the structures in which actors operate. That is, actors' positions in structures shape their thinking, their interests, and their actions in a given situation. The priority therefore was to conduct a structural analysis of how decision makers, by virtue of the organization they served and the position they occupied, made choices mindful of the constraints imposed by the organizational environment. Economists offered an alternate view of structure and

agency by suggesting that organizational environments (apart from imposing constraints) also provide actors with opportunities – albeit opportunities to maximize their own preferences and produce positive outcomes for themselves. With the emergence of the neo-institutionalist literatures, these divergent views have been expanded to suggest that “structure” no longer just offers opportunities and places constraints on actors, but rather functions as an action arena with rules where actors interact with each other. In this evolving literature, the actors’ beliefs, motivations, social norms, preferences, and interpretations of others’ actions have become important (see Lubell 2003). Further, many scholars of intergovernmental cooperation have become increasingly frustrated that the calls for cooperation in governmental programs are largely answered with structural reforms rather than efforts to change the behavior of those operating within these structures (Peters 1998). Consider the commitment conundrum articulated by May et al. (1996). This commitment conundrum essentially exists because structural changes to a state’s growth-management institutions (e.g., through the introduction of mandates) do not always result in concurrent behavioral modifications by the actors working within the system (e.g., through the development of a commitment to the mandate). In other words, most state- level efforts to promote municipal cooperation have targeted superficial aspects of government (e.g., rules, organization) rather than underlying issues (e.g., beliefs and behaviors of decision makers). Critics of purely structural reforms have therefore suggested that any study of cooperation should entail not just an examination of the structures within which cooperation is sought and the formal institutions of rules, incentives, and sanctions that govern the interactions among decision makers; but also decision makers’ personal motivations, belief systems, preferences and perceptions.

2.2 Analytical approach

I propose the following model to elucidate how decision makers' preferences to cooperate might be shaped. Giddens' theory of structuration is an analytic framework that allows mediation between structure and agency, and a consideration of both these concepts in the context of decision making. Giddens offers the theory of structuration, not only as a way to bridge the duality of structure and agency but also to move away from the traditional deterministic interpretations of these two concepts. According to this view, behavior is a product of both context (rules, environment, norms) and independent decision making. For example, the structuralists would explain planning decisions as the result of the institutional environment (e.g. mandates, incentives, both or neither) and other contextual factors. The action theorists would explain the same planning decisions through individual purposive behavior (e.g. individual self interest). According to Giddens, individuals are neither social "dupes" nor free-floating. Their behavior can deviate from the prevailing institutional rules as well as reflect normative considerations. Further, Giddens employs a recursive notion of actions constrained and enabled by structures which are produced and reproduced by those actions.

Drawing from Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration, I view the institutional context in Michigan as providing the arena within which agents or decision makers operate. Regional and local contexts can be viewed as subsystems of the Michigan's larger institutional framework. The concept of structuration allows for a broad lens through which to view the dynamic interaction between decision makers and the systems

(structural, institutional, and environmental) within which they are situated. Structuring or structuration allows the researcher to accommodate concepts like Argyris and Schon's (1974) double loop learning, allowing for a model where both formal and informal institutions can be restructured as decision makers "learn." That is, structuration allows feedback loops that in turn allow decision makers to modify the very institutions that affect decision making. For example, as decision makers engage in cooperation and experience successes, they change the underlying informal institutions in such a way as to make an area more conducive to cooperation. Conversely, if cooperation is unsuccessful, the informal institutions will most likely be affected negatively, contributing to an overall regional governance culture that is not very conducive to cooperation. With this interpretation, the traditional Marxist understanding of the dominant influence of "structure" on actors is expanded to account for the role of human "agency" in shaping these very structures. This interpretation also allows for mediation between the approaches of rational-choice scholars who impute ex-ante preferences to decision makers in a micro analysis, without paying much attention to broader historical-social influences; and scholars in the historical and sociological institutionalist traditions who treat preferences as primarily derived from macro factors, without paying attention to the strategic interactions between decision makers (Hall and Taylor 1996).

For example, ex-ante imputed preferences based on an economic calculus alone would have predicted cooperation as the rational final outcome in the Grand Rapids scenario. However, this was not the case. In the Grand Rapids case, despite compelling rational reasons to cooperate, decision makers chose not to do so. The sociological institutionalist

perspective allows for the consideration that not all decisions are rational, and that decisions could be informed by historic and cultural factors (e.g., political animosity). In other words, I contend that the preferences of decision makers to engage in voluntary cooperative behavior are induced not just by situational factors and strategic interactions with other decision makers (the calculus approach of weighing benefits and costs), but also by the building blocks of preferences such as beliefs, attitudes, and values (the cultural approach of using moral justifications). This categorization will help explain how and why decision makers behave the way they do, and how institutions affect action.

To further expound on this, I present a diagrammatic representation of the factors affecting cooperative action in figure 2.1.

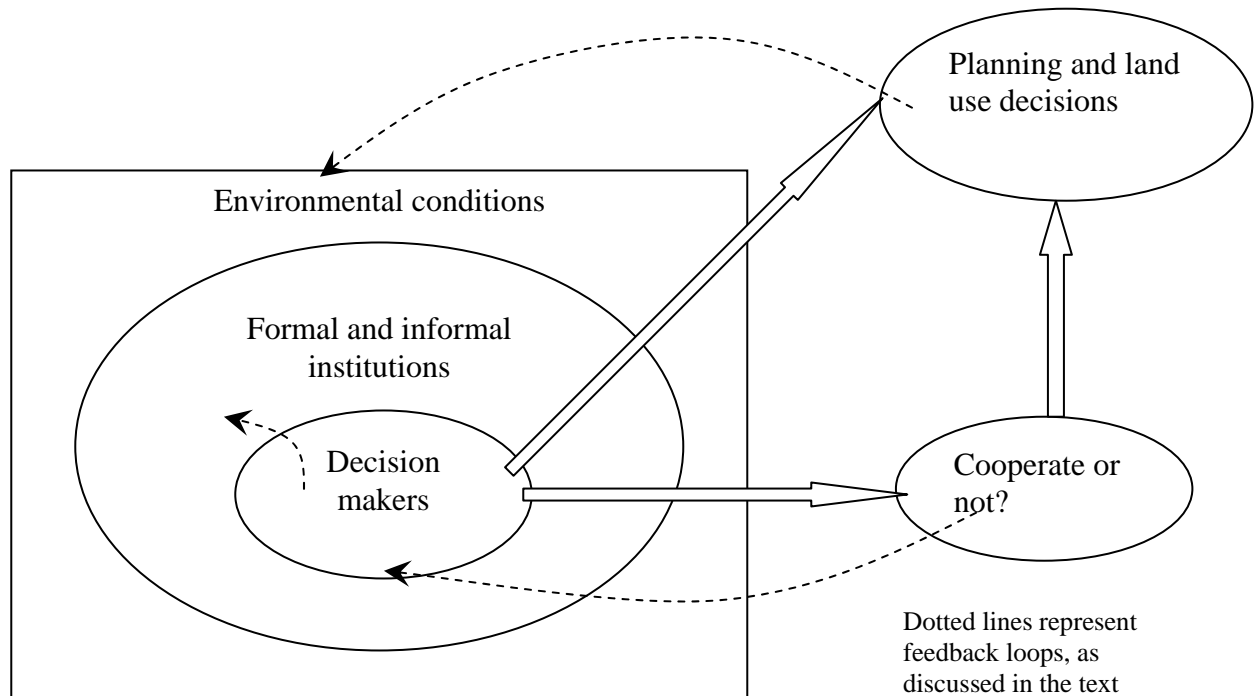


Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework

Environmental conditions are the context within which all action arenas are constructed; i.e., they constitute the external pressures on decision makers. Environmental conditions could refer to a number of variables such as an area's political environment, socio-economic conditions, fiscal conditions, and natural conditions. Formal institutions constitute the organizational structure, rules, operating procedures, and political institutions. Formal institutions are responsive to environmental conditions and could in turn modify environmental conditions if they persist and promote collective action. Informal institutions are the norms, conventions, informal rules, and informal networks within which decision makers operate.

Decision makers make choices to cooperate in an arena defined by environmental conditions as well as formal and informal institutions. Decision makers also have their own agendas, characteristics, and preferences by virtue of their personal experiences and belief systems. These four factors: formal institutions, environmental conditions, the attributes or inner worlds of decision makers, and informal institutions will eventually affect behavior regarding regional cooperation (i.e., whether or not to cooperate). The ensuing cooperation might be expected to affect land use decision making (e.g., whether joint plans are produced, new design guidelines are enacted, or regional strategies are developed). The act of cooperating might result in advantages or disadvantages to decision makers (feedback to decision makers in positive or negative reinforcement). Accordingly, decision makers have the ability to modify the formal and informal institutions governing land use in their jurisdictions (feedback in the form of reform), and the planning outcomes that cooperation produces might or might not impact the

environmental conditions giving rise to cooperation in the first place (feedback remedying environmental conditions). I expand on the four factors below.

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2.2.1 Formal Institutions

Both scholars and practitioners have debated whether *policy intervention from the state*, in the form of creating, maintaining and enforcing institutions, is needed to effect local cooperation -- or whether cooperation can voluntarily evolve among local decision makers (Olson 1971; Hayek 1973; Axelrod 1984; Taylor 1987; Young 1989; Ostrom 1990; Axelrod, Riolo and Cohen 2001). As a result, at least three divergent models of state-level land use legislation have evolved: 1) states mandating cooperation; 2) states offering incentives for cooperation; and 3) states permitting cooperation, but with neither sanctions nor incentives (Innes 1992). These represent three alternative models of governance. Most arguments against centralized control as seen in states instituting cooperation are based on one key issue: the cost of generating compliance. This cost has been interpreted as the commitment conundrum (May et al. 1996), the reliable information problem (Ostrom 1990), the monitoring and enforcement problem (Lustick 1980), the problem of social control (Piven and Cloward 1971), the problem of legitimacy (Laitin 1986; Alt et al. 1998), the ruling class thesis (Elkin 1985), and the cost of maintaining power (Banfield 1961).

Although scholars have questioned whether centralized control (in this case control of formal institutions by the state) is needed to effect local cooperation, formal institutions themselves have not been discredited, especially if they are maintained and supplied at

the local level. In fact, Ostrom's (1990) accounts of successful and enduring common-pool-resource systems suggest that formal institutions such as appropriation rules, enforcement rules, conflict-management mechanisms, and operational rules provide for stable resource management. This is because of the role such institutions play in reducing uncertainty and guaranteeing certain types of behaviors among participants (Hall and Taylor 1996). Because this study focuses on cooperation only in Michigan, there is no variation in formal institutions at the state level. Only regional and local-level variations in formal institutions will be considered.

In the early 1900s, practitioners, policy makers and scholars alike were looking for solutions to the absence of "coordination and control" over area-wide planning, resource, and infrastructure problems (Scott 1969). Because the fragmented structure of municipal government seemed resistant to reform, most suggestions centered on establishing agencies (not just parks and water and sewer authorities at the county and regional level) that would promote cohesion amidst the patchwork quilt of local planning. Created amidst excruciating debates about the weaknesses of American city planning, county and regional agencies were therefore established primarily to coordinate local planning. For example, when current-day SEMCOG was conceived, the idea was to provide a forum or an arena for the free exchange of information so that local officials could use ideas and relationships forged at these forums to solve regional problems "together." The idea of bringing officials together also reinforced the belief, then current, that such interactions would not only make way for innovations in local planning but also inspire regional cooperative efforts (Scott 1969). In the absence of area-wide governments, policy makers

believed, the only solution to area-wide problems was through voluntary cooperation, and the only institutions that could significantly encourage such voluntary cooperation were regional and county planning agencies (which were essentially created for that very purpose).

Regional and county planning agencies therefore, from the time of their conception, have been well suited to provide a variety of services aimed at facilitating local cooperation. These services might be in the form of information, resources, leadership, and mediation. They can also serve as arenas for the convergence of ideas and determine the direction for regional land use policy by setting goals. Through their efforts, such agencies have the potential to define the upper and lower limit of cooperation in a region. Through the services they provide, county and regional agencies also have the potential to reduce uncertainty, provide stability, and mediate the actions or behaviors of cooperating entities.

Hypothesis 1

The effectiveness of county and regional planning agencies at providing support for local cooperation will have a positive impact on municipal cooperation around land use issues.

2.2.2 Environmental conditions

Scholars have emphasized the influence of *environmental factors* such as changing economic and technological conditions (Huggins 1992), shrinking revenues (Ehrenhalt 1995), and deterioration of natural resources (Demsetz 1967; Libecap 1989) on decision making (Goggin et al.1990). In fact, economists have long suggested that the economic

calculus of evaluating benefits and costs is of no value during uncertain times (Lucas 1981), and that cooperation (no matter the benefits or the costs) is a logical and necessary response to turbulent conditions. This is because both perceived and real interdependencies among jurisdictions are likely to increase during problematic conditions. Helling (1998) extends this to suggest that collaborative efforts organized around pressing problems have a greater chance of resulting in action.

Scholars, it seems, have suggested two disparate explanations of how coalitions are formed (also see Stevenson et al. 1985; Logan and Molotch 1987; Lindquist 1992). On one hand, the advocacy-coalition framework advanced by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999) suggests that individuals come together to form coalitions when they share ideological similarities. Coalitions therefore form on the basis of shared beliefs and values, as actors/institutions who share similar perspectives forge relationships with each other. On the other hand, Stone (1989) argues that regimes form not around ideological similarities but rather around the need for immediate action. Pressing problems, he suggests, can bring together disparate individuals with no commonalities and induce them to abandon both the quest for ideological homogeneity and rational reasoning in an attempt to find immediate solutions to the problem at hand.

It is critical to my analysis therefore, to understand how decision makers internalize environmental conditions and perceive them as uncertainties, problems, threats or opportunities, and whether elected officials' perception of environmental conditions results in cooperative action. From a land use perspective, several environmental

pressures might manifest as uncertainties and induce municipalities to cooperate even when the benefits of doing so are not particularly favorable. Among those having the most significant impacts on development patterns are arguably the growth pressures a municipality faces. When a municipality faces tremendous growth pressure, the status quo in the municipality is threatened by the amount of change that comes along with this growth. Elected officials might not always have complete information about or completely comprehend how this change would impact their municipality. This kind of uncertainty might induce local cooperation.

While some environmental conditions manifest primarily as uncertainties, others might reveal themselves as the causes of political instability. For example, land use-related lawsuits and controversial land use decisions represent environmental conditions of enormous pertinence to local planning because they challenge the very institutions that govern everyday planning decisions (such as the master plan or zoning ordinance). Lawsuits and controversies at the local level also have the potential to cause extensive reorganization of the governance structures in a municipality. This is because land use-related lawsuits and controversies typically result in internal conflict in a municipality and eventually in many cases result in political turnovers (see Clingermayer and Feiock 1997). In this way, lawsuits and controversial land use decisions stand in direct conflict with the extent of local stability needed to forge cooperative relationships among decision makers.

Hypothesis 2

Growth pressure will have a positive impact on local cooperation.

Hypothesis 3

Land use-related lawsuits will have a negative impact on cooperation.

Hypothesis 4

Land use-related controversies will have a negative impact on cooperation.

2.2.3 Informal institutions

Although the institutional rational-choice framework has dominated most analyses of cooperation in the past, there is a greater interest today in integrating other frameworks that speak to the effects of “culture” on decision makers’ willingness to cooperate.

Informal institutions such as norms and conventions contribute to the culture of a community or region (North 1990; Putnam, 1993). Informal institutions set the ground rules for interactions between groups of decision makers and could make the difference between cooperative efforts that are palatable and acceptable and those that are utopian and unrealistic in any given locality. Today, informal institutions such as norms, beliefs, and culture are being used to explain outcomes that differ substantially from an expected equilibrium outcome. The cultural explanation of decision makers’ behavior thus stresses that institutions provide not only rules and procedures for operation but also moral and cognitive templates for action. That is, decision makers are not always “strategic” in their interactions but rather are bound by their world views, which act as filters of interpretation. These filters of interpretation offer a new twist on the typical preference ordering of local decision makers. Therefore, within this context, decision makers’ beliefs, expectations, and the political culture to which they contribute become important determinants of cooperation.

Land use planning is an inherently political process. Because of this, understanding the role of local and regional political cultures in shaping cooperative action is extremely important. The political culture of a locality refers to the orientation among decision makers (and the public) about the definition of politics, the role of government, and the shared meanings of what is acceptable political action and what is not (Elazar 1994, Sharkansky 1969, Visser 2002). Political culture might therefore be affected and represented by the locality's political history, its voting history, and the predispositions of its decision makers. While there is tremendous debate about how political culture should be defined and operationalized, for the purposes of this dissertation, I take a narrow view of political culture. Because of this narrow definition of political culture, and in an effort to not conflate it with the broader definitions of political culture or regional culture, I refer to this idea as the regional governance culture of an area. I define regional governance culture as "the set of attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments which give order and meaning to a political process and which provide the underlying rules and assumptions that govern behaviors in the political system" (Pye 1968, p. 218).

Frameworks such as the advocacy coalition framework (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993) and Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior highlight the effects of beliefs on attitudes, intentions, policy choices, and eventually behavior. These theories help isolate the different kinds of beliefs that might matter in creating a culture of cooperation. First are decision makers' beliefs about others (Kelley and Stahelski 1970; Lubell and Scholz 2001). For example, beliefs about others could be about reciprocity concerns (i.e.,

whether or not a person would be likely to reciprocate based on past experiences). Believing that other stakeholders can be held to their promises (trust) has been shown to increase the likelihood of cooperation (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1993). At the same time, Kelley and Stahelski (1970) demonstrate that the perception of competition alone can elicit competitive behavior from the opposing player irrespective of the player's preferences towards cooperation. Because of the importance of "beliefs about others," network and game theorists have paid considerable attention to reciprocity and the potential for future interactions among decision makers as instrumental to furthering cooperative behavior. In this light, the roles played by coalitions, networks and regimes, whether it is fostering informal connections that stabilize over time, norms of reciprocity, and/or positive beliefs of others (e.g., dispelling fears and encouraging trust), become important variables to consider.

Ajzen (1991) provides us with an important link in his explanation of how "beliefs about others" are closely related to the regional governance culture of a region. In his view, subjective norms play a role in exerting social pressure on decision makers to perform or not perform certain behaviors. That is, when more social pressure to perform certain types of behaviors persists, beliefs about how others will react in situations will also stabilize, allowing for greater certainty over whether others will respond in kind. This is how informal institutions, particularly via coalitions and networks, provide stability over the potential behaviors of decision makers, thus creating a particular type of culture more suitable to regional cooperation.

Second, belief of perceived control of the situation (Ajzen 1991) could impact cooperation. This is because actors will be less likely to cooperate if they view a situation as unmanageable and if they perceive themselves as having insufficient control over resources to effect action. Because of the importance of this factor, Stone (1989) frequently emphasizes how important it is for actors to have access to not only financial but also institutional resources. In Stone's account, control over resources explains how regimes can cause purposive action (also see Sabatier 1988). The capacity to act is an important component of how informal institutions facilitate cooperation.

Third, similarity in decision-makers' beliefs and preferences will increase the likelihood of cooperation. Scholars working on collaborative planning models have emphasized the importance of common goals for cooperation (Gray 1985; Innes 1993). The growth-management literature is awash with examples of failed accounts of regional planning when municipalities have not been able to converge on common problems and develop common goals and common solutions to these problems. The extent to which municipalities are able to view similarities across jurisdictional lines and identify points of convergence indicates the strength of an area's informal institutions for cooperation.

Finally, when municipalities have engaged in prior successful cooperation, beliefs about others improve, decision makers may perceive a greater ability to generate action by virtue of the prior networks and relationships they have forged, and their understanding of area-wide issues and others' issues may have improved. In this manner, antecedent

conditions such as prior municipal cooperation around service-related issues might signal informal institutions that are very conducive to cooperation.

Hypothesis 5

The regionalist culture in an area (combination of several of the beliefs listed in the above paragraphs) has a positive impact on cooperation.

Hypothesis 6

Cooperation on services will have a positive impact on land use cooperation.

2.2.4 Decision maker attributes

The kinds of beliefs described above can change depending on the kinds of experiences decision makers have had in the past (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993). These experiences might be interactions with potential collaborators, experiences on the job, or training opportunities where decision makers learned about the benefits of cooperation. The importance of the first kind of experience gained through interactions with others has not gone unnoticed in the cooperation literature (Axelrod 1984; Margerum 2002). Networks, which are created through repeated interactions among individuals, have been researched for their ability to increase the social, intellectual, and political capital of decision makers (Putnam 1993; Gruber 1994). While social and political capital ensure future returns in areas where such returns would initially have been impossible, intellectual capital in networks evolves through social learning processes and tacit understandings. Both individual and shared tacit knowledge attained through interpersonal relations have been shown to improve the quality of decision making significantly (Brockmann and Anthony 2002). Further, the past experiences of decision

makers affect the potential for cooperation by impacting perceptions of others; i.e., the legitimacy, personalities, and credibility of other decision makers.

The other components of experience come from knowledge gained on the job and from the training that elected officials receive. Knowledge and training have also been hypothesized to have positive impacts on decision making in the land use context in general. For example, Feiock and Carr (2001) found that expertise in public administration, politics, finance, and real estate is likely to prove valuable for decision makers advocating local government boundary changes. Similarly, other scholars have argued that training received through professional associations can positively affect the willingness of decision makers to cooperate (Brown and Potoski 2003; Nalbandian 1989). In the land use context, cooperation might be affected by two types of training and educational activities offered to elected officials – training on what cooperation is and its benefits; and training on growth management (see May et al. 1996).

Hypothesis 7

Growth management related training and training on the benefits of cooperation will have a positive impact on cooperation.

Belief in the potential of cooperation to produce positive outcomes is important in explaining whether decision makers will be committed to cooperation (Gray 1989). There are several examples of failed attempts at annexation and consolidation – all of which are explained by participants' somewhat different perceptions of potential outcomes (Feiock and Carr 2001). That is, not everyone saw the benefits of engaging in annexation or

consolidation, and/or whether these benefits were individual or group benefits. Stone (1989), in his account of regime cooperation in Atlanta, explains the longevity of regimes as resulting from participants' desire to obtain results and tangible outcomes even if it means that participants had to set their own agendas aside. According to Stone, regime members sacrificed individual benefits, at least temporarily, for the sake of group benefits.

Decision makers, it seems, typically use two principle approaches to ascertain whether there are potential benefits from cooperation: the calculus approach and the cultural approach. The calculus approach considers individuals as utility-maximizers, while the cultural approach considers individuals as satisficers. On one hand, decision makers using a calculus approach to gauge cooperation will evaluate the costs and benefits of doing so (see Heckathorn and Maser 1987; Maser 1998). On the other hand, decision makers using the cultural approach will employ a cognitive and moral template to justify cooperation. These two approaches are not mutually exclusive. That is, decision makers could use both templates while weighing the decision to cooperate. There are at least five different ways of thinking about these two approaches and how cooperative decisions are made. First, decision makers using the calculus approach might find that there are truly net benefits to the municipality from cooperation. Second, decision makers might conflate individual benefits with group benefits. That is, they still use the calculus approach to evaluating benefits, but their frame of reference for evaluating these benefits is the region and not the individual municipality. In this case, group benefits suffice. Third, using the calculus approach, municipalities might realize that there are net costs.

However, they might be content to use a moral justification for cooperation (the cultural approach) to compensate for those net costs. Fourth, municipalities might realize that they experience net costs in the near term but that these costs will be compensated in the long run as other participants experience costs themselves. Finally, decision makers might not evaluate cooperation by way of benefits or costs. Instead, they use the cultural approach to justify cooperation as the right thing to do, since school-district boundaries, watersheds, and natural boundaries do not respect individual municipal lines.

Two variables seem pertinent in light of this discussion: the benefits of cooperation and extent of support for cooperation. The five considerations outlined above are extremely important because not everyone who sees the benefit in cooperation will support it. By supporting the idea of cooperation, one increases the feasibility of engaging in cooperative action, but support for cooperation is typically informed by its feasibility. Further, not everyone supporting cooperation might experience the immediate benefits of such support (as in the third and fourth considerations outlined above).

Hypothesis 8

When decision makers can perceive benefits from cooperation, they will engage in cooperation.

Hypothesis 9

Support for cooperation positively impacts cooperation.

In the above sections, I isolated a number of factors as important predictors of cooperation around land use planning issues. Yet perhaps the most difficult task is to find a way to define and measure the ensuing cooperation. In the next chapter, I expand on how cooperation might be conceived in a land use setting.

Chapter 3

Cooperation – an examination

When one encounters the term “cooperation,” several questions follow: Cooperation between whom? What kind of cooperation? Why cooperate? How does one cooperate? These questions are central to my dissertation because they provide the basic template upon which I develop my dependent variable. In this chapter, I provide an in-depth examination of the term “cooperation” and its different conceptions. I begin by classifying the different types of cooperation possible in an intergovernmental setting. I then provide some background on why cooperation is regarded as a silver bullet – a philosopher’s stone – in land use planning (see Pressman and Wildavsky 1984 for discussion of calls for cooperation in governmental agencies). I follow that discussion with a section that provides conceptual clarity on the meaning of cooperation with insights on how cooperation might be measured in land use settings.

3.1 Types of cooperation

The institutional structure within which planners and policymakers operate makes understanding the problematic of cooperation extremely difficult. This institutional structure for land use planning is complicated by the sheer number of entities at the different governmental levels (state, county, local) that are involved in creating,

regulating, monitoring, and implementing land use policies. The term cooperation could therefore be used to describe the relationships between and among several of these entities in the intergovernmental system. Before attempting a more substantive discussion of what it means to cooperate and the different levels or extents of cooperation in a land use setting, it is important to explicate the types of cooperation possible in any given intergovernmental system. I will use the beginning portions of this chapter to develop a nomenclature of cooperation that can be used to classify the types of cooperation occurring among the different players in the intergovernmental system. This nomenclature is described below and also presented in figure 3.1.

3.1.1 Intergovernmental cooperation

This is the cooperation between the different levels of government: federal, state, regional, county, and local. For example, it sometimes includes cooperation between the city council at the local level and agencies at the state level. It is primarily concerned with vertical linkages.

3.1.2 Intragovernmental cooperation

This is the horizontal cooperation between “government” and its agencies. At the city level, it could mean the cooperation between city council and the planning department. At the state level, it could mean the cooperation between the governor’s office and the department of development.

3.1.3 Interorganization or interagency cooperation

This is either the horizontal cooperation between two state agencies that share responsibility for the administration of a program, such as the cooperation between the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Development in the

administration of brownfield programs, or the vertical cooperation among state, regional, and county agencies.

3.1.4 Intraorganizational or intraagency cooperation

This is the horizontal cooperation between the different programs and functions of agencies. It could, for example, entail the cooperation between the land use planning and coastal zone management functions of the responsible state agency (such as the Environmental Protection Agency or the Department of Community Affairs, depending on the state in which the agency is situated).

3.1.5 Interjurisdictional or intermunicipal cooperation

This represents a horizontal linkage between jurisdictions, whether it is between states, between counties, between regions, or between cities, townships, or villages.

Interjurisdictional cooperation often takes the form of informal or formal cooperation agreements pertaining to specific functions, such as police and fire protection at local levels.

3.1.6 Intersectoral cooperation

This represents both horizontal and vertical linkages between governments, agencies, and non-governmental organizations such as citizen action committees, interest groups, and non-profit organizations.

Regimes (such as growth-management regimes) typically vary in the number of the cooperation types they seek. Some regimes exhort interjurisdictional cooperation (as in Michigan), while others mandate all of the above cooperation types (as in Florida and Oregon). Considering the complexity of the framework just outlined, it is only reasonable

to expect complicated and extensive institutional arrangements where all of the above types of cooperation are desired. For the purposes of this dissertation, I am primarily interested in understanding how interjurisdictional or intermunicipal cooperation occurs among local governments (cities, villages and townships). Any forthcoming references to cooperation will therefore focus on the interjurisdictional cooperation among cities, villages, and townships on land use issues.

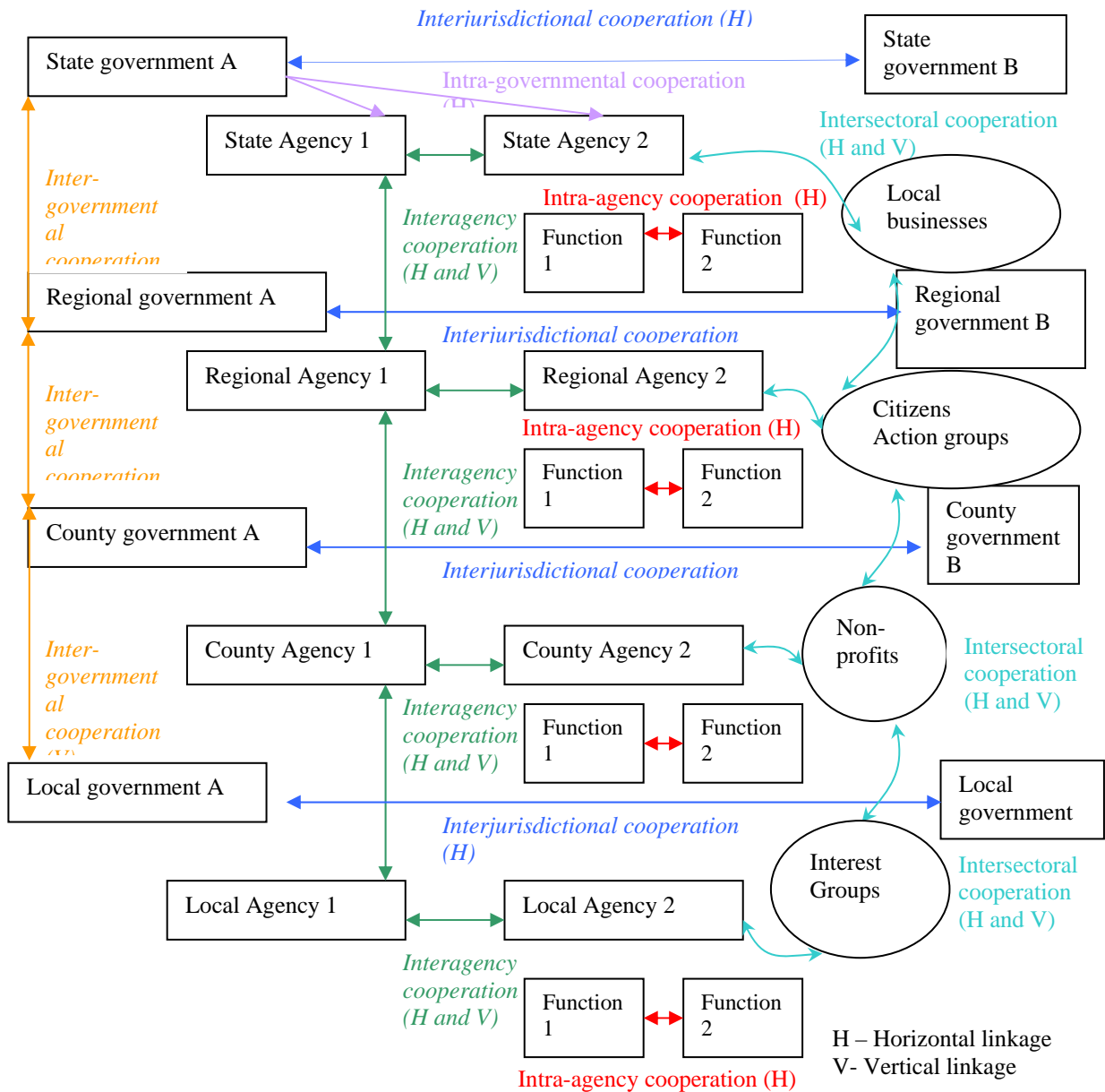


Figure 3.1 Classification of cooperation

3.2 Characterizing cooperation

American city planning has had a long and arduous history with the idea of cooperation.

The elusive quest for cooperation around land use issues has been one of the most debated topics among reformers and philosopher kings alike through much of the 19th and 20th centuries. This quest to engage in cooperation can be understood through three separate but interrelated questions: Why cooperate? What is cooperation? And how to cooperate?

3.2.1 Why cooperate?

Through history, the ideal of cooperation has been advanced for three key reasons: promoting efficiency, investing in good government, and finding lasting solutions to area-wide problems. The importance of cooperation (through metropolitanism) was first recognized as the need for any great city to expand. That is, the reach, expanse and impact of the metropolitan area of the city far overran its political limits, but the city had limited power to control its destiny beyond its political boundaries. As early planning reports for the city of Chicago indicated, this made it difficult to find comprehensive solutions to metropolitan problems and almost impossible to plan “harmonious, connected, and continuous improvements” for the region as a whole.

Early writers who helped to develop the primary motives behind calls for greater cooperation in development-management issues made several observations about the need for cooperation (see Katz 2000; Stephens and Wikstrom 2000). The administration of municipalities needed to be separated from politics so that good government could

prevail over parochialism (the reformist argument). Municipalities were intimately connected by everything concerning the daily life of residents living within their boundaries, but they had no means (barring water supply, sewage, and parks) of controlling or improving the metropolitan area or region as a whole (see Scott 1969). The municipality as a political boundary was not identical with the metropolitan community as a social, economic, and natural fact. And so, like a house divided against itself, the metropolitan region found itself obliged to struggle for quality of life amidst the conflicts, dissensions, and divergences of its several component jurisdictions (Maxey 1922). The social and economic problems of municipalities were for the most part similar in a region, and these problems were often magnified by the fact that they arose from the entire metropolitan area and not only from a particular locality (Studenski 1930). Regional problems like sprawl, pollution, fiscal and social inequity, and resource deterioration needed regional solutions. But the fragmented nature of municipalities created a structural problem that was very difficult to overcome to bring about concerted action and remedy the common problems faced by the metropolitan region (also see Wikstrom 2000; Savitch and Vogel 2000; Lowery 2000; Olberding 2002).

Scholars of intergovernmental relations and metropolitan cooperation have made these observations for more than a century. These observations necessitate separating the question of why the pressing and persistent call for more cooperation exists in the context of local planning and development management into two distinct analytical questions: First, what substantive policy goals are the various local governments failing to advance individually that they would advance (or would be more likely to advance) if they were

cooperating with each other? Second, what is it about our institutional structure of state and local governance that necessitates cooperation to achieve these goals? Or, to put it another way, what makes it difficult for localities to address these goals individually?

First, there are at least three substantive goals to be advanced through increased cooperation. These are increased efficiency in the provision of public services and land uses within a regional context, increased administrative efficiency, and more effective treatment of the collective regional harms engendered by individual jurisdictions pursuing their own locally oriented agendas (for example, by engaging in fiscal zoning). Efficient provision of services is made possible through economies of scale and cost savings to local governments. Efficient land use patterns occur when local governments find the best possible and most suitable uses for land. Further, cooperative infrastructure decisions that limit growth within regionally determined service and growth boundaries and ensure the concurrency of services with growth play a tremendous role in ensuring efficient land use patterns. With regard to administrative efficiency, cooperation is sought to remove duplication of governmental services and to ensure consistency of governmental policies, plans, and regulations across jurisdictional lines. Finally, the two categories of collective harms of most concern in planning and development management include the racial and socio-economic impacts associated with urban decline and the ongoing loss of natural areas and prime farmland to low-density suburban sprawl.

Second, the key institutional attribute that makes it difficult for any given locality to address the substantive policy goals associated with these several problems is that the

scale of these problems themselves, as well as the institutional capacity needed to address them, far exceeds the focus and capacity of a typical local government. That is, the need for cooperation in development management is compounded by the multitude of agencies involved in planning-related functions; the extent to which knowledge is unequally distributed across levels of government, agencies, and officials; the presence of overlapping responsibilities; the generally fragmented nature of local governments; the multiplicity of interdependencies among the actors involved; the need to manage common resources and solve common problems that span many jurisdictions and cross jurisdictions lines; and the nature of planning problems in general (such as wicked and collective action problems), which makes it almost impossible for the numerous and autonomous local jurisdictions to solve problems on their own individual initiative (see Jennings, 1996; Malone, 1990; Gross et al, 1998; Xiang, 1993; Zhang et al, 1992, Scott 1991).

The conditions that necessitate cooperation have been well documented through history and hold true in most planning settings today. What constitutes cooperation, however, has been harder to define. Further, although the need for cooperation exists in most regions around the country, the will to cooperate has been harder to forge. Our understanding of cooperation, therefore, has been shaped by how achievable or feasible cooperation strategies have been throughout history.⁵

⁵ “[A]s a matter of theory, the best results could be achieved through a consolidated . . . metropolitan district . . . under a unified municipal administration endowed with the broad powers of self-government Practically, however . . . it is suggested that a permanent commission be created to coordinate city and county planning” (Scott 1969). Within this statement is the implicit recognition that any sort of regional or metropolitan

3.2.2 What is cooperation? And how does one cooperate?

Cooperation can be very simply defined as the process of “working together.” The artifacts of cooperation (i.e., the procedural evidence of cooperation), which answer the question of how to cooperate, take several forms -- all of which will be outlined in the next paragraphs. Although the need for cooperation was recognized early in the history of American planning, notions of how cooperation might be achieved were transformed continually. Among the first realizations was that common problems needed common comprehensive solutions and therefore a common / regional / metropolitan plan instead of several individual local master plans. In fact, suggestions for regional plans were made in the New York and Chicago areas in the early 1900s by individuals like Norton, Burnham, and Lewis. The question of how such a plan would be implemented was more complicated. Suggestions included establishing regional governments with enforcement capabilities; regional agencies that would conduct only functions that cannot be efficiently carried out at the local level; regional machinery (e.g., voluntary associations like the Councils of Governments) to provide a forum for discussion of regional issues and means for concerted action; regional commissions without enforcement capabilities that would allow local officials to meet and converse with each other about matters of regional significance; and intergovernmental contracts and agreements. The benefits and problems associated with each of these cooperation mechanisms and strategies (the “how to” of cooperation) have been debated from the early part of the 20th century to the

government would be hard to form and that the more feasible solution would be to form a regional commission without enforcement capabilities. Nonetheless, the value of the coordination of metropolitan functions and landscapes is more than subtly implied.

present. Chief among the debates is the concern about whether all of the above-stated cooperation mechanisms are equally capable of producing the substantive benefits that planners seek. In other words, can regional plans be implemented without compromising local autonomy and without forming a regional entity to supervise implementation? Should a regional plan be written in the first place to ensure compatible and comprehensive development patterns across jurisdictions, or will local governments be able to tackle regional issues through conversations with each other and individual local plans? These debates are extremely important in formulating a more complicated and sophisticated definition of cooperation for this dissertation.

3.3 Conceptualizing cooperation

The reason cooperation has been so hard to study is that cooperation is easy to define but hard to measure. Further, to measure cooperation one has to understand how cooperation can occur in land use settings. To date, scholars who have engaged in empirical studies of cooperation have mostly studied economic development partnerships, watershed partnerships, and cooperation around services. They have also for the most part considered cooperation as a one-dimensional concept, measuring the mere presence or absence of cooperation. Others have attempted a different conceptualization by quantifying the cooperative acts that individuals have performed; i.e., counting the number of times individuals conversed with others, shared information with others, etc (see Bardach's 1998 and Lubell 2004). Both of these conceptualizations of cooperation are problematic for several reasons. First, considering cooperation as a one-dimensional concept means that informal conversations among elected officials would not be

distinguished from instances when elected officials from multiple local governments write a regional plan together or when several local governments decide to merge their planning functions into one entity. Second, counting the number of cooperative activities that individuals engage in rewards the quantity rather than the quality of the cooperative effort. In this scenario, instances in which local officials meet informally several times a week and frequently talk on the telephone would be weighed more heavily than a situation in which a local government has one intergovernmental contract in place. The intergovernmental contract in this case is more formal, harder to enact, and a step further into implementation (i.e., action rather than just talk). These popular conceptualizations of cooperation penalize entities that participate in limited but more difficult cooperative mechanisms, thus rewarding different levels of cooperative mechanisms equally.

In light of this discussion, I suggest that cooperation might be conceptualized in at least three ways. Each of these conceptualizations provides insight into a different dimension of cooperation. First, cooperation could be simply classified as a binomial variable. When defined this way, a “yes” on the binomial variable might be treated as the initial decision to engage in cooperation. Second, cooperation could be treated as a continuum, ranging from informal to formal cooperative activities. In this way, more formal and more difficult-to-implement cooperative mechanisms would be placed higher on the scale. Third, cooperation could be defined as a multi-nominal category wherein informal and formal cooperation are treated as equally important categories. This definition suggests that informal and formal cooperation are categories that cannot be ordered in any meaningful way. Since cooperation as a binomial variable is the easiest to conceptualize,

in the following sections I will describe in greater detail how cooperation as a continuum and cooperation as a multinomial variable might be conceived.

3.4 Cooperation as a continuum

The fundamental question, then, is whether different cooperative mechanisms such as informal conversations, regional plans, and joint planning commissions should be considered equal, when arguably these cooperative mechanisms require different levels of commitment of resources and time, different levels of loss of autonomy, and different levels of formality. An investigation into literature that anticipates some of these nuances reveals alternate ways of conceptualizing cooperation. Scholars writing in the policy and management sciences have theorized that the term cooperation could be split into three component parts: cooperation, coordination and collaboration (Cigler 1992). This literature also suggests that the terms cooperation, coordination and collaboration (often used interchangeably) could be placed on a continuum based on the extent to which their characteristic features are present or absent, with cooperation at the lowest end, and collaboration at the highest end. Setting up these three types of cooperation as a continuum would imply that the ideal and best possible cooperative outcome is collaboration. I provide an interpretation of these three terms using the policy sciences literature in the following paragraphs,

Cooperation is the first step in the development of intergovernmental relations. It is the least formalized component of managed coordination or negotiated regimes and is defined as the deliberate but temporary relations between organizations that are relatively

autonomous for the accomplishment of individual organizational goals (Schermerhorn 1975). It is characterized by informal agreements without clearly delineated goals and tasks, with a notable absence of any formal division of labor (Morris 1963; Davidson 1976). While cooperation represents a deliberate and voluntary decision on the part of organizations involved, it is only a step above the unmanaged and unconscious coordination attributed to self-governing regimes.

Coordination, on the other hand, is defined as the process by which two or more organizations develop shared goals through formalized processes and decision rules (Mulford & Rogers 1982). By coordinating, organizations find a way to manage their interdependencies (Lindholm 1965; Malone and Crowston 1994). As one might imagine, coordination then involves a substantial loss of organizational autonomy and therefore the sacrifice of individual goals for collective ones. Some scholars stop with cooperation and coordination and extend the scope of coordination to include joint decision making processes and common routes to common outcomes. Others add another layer to this continuum and consider collaboration as an extension of both coordination and cooperation.

Collaboration is defined as the process by which organizations seek common goals through joint processes beyond their own limited means (Gray 1985). Collaboration involves considerable dedication of resources and decision rules. The process is extremely formalized, and division of labor exists. Collaboration also indicates a prolonged timeframe of involvement and a certain degree of permanence in agreements.

Collaboration requires joint decision making and often the creation of new forms / entities for governance, or the merging of old entities. As one moves from cooperation to collaboration, the costs to participants increase, as does the degree of formalization, centralization, and levels of interdependence. Consequently, when interdependencies increase and one encounters more central control, it might be more plausible to expect mechanisms of coordination and collaboration rather than cooperation. (For example, the growth-management regimes in Florida and Oregon mandate more formal cooperation; i.e., coordination and collaboration.)

The transition from cooperation to coordination and then to collaboration can therefore be characterized along three dimensions: structure, formality, and commitment. Structure relates to aspects of power and control. The arrangement of organizations and governments in hierarchies, networks, or coalitions concentrates, displaces or disperses power accordingly. The locus of concentration of power influences the decision rules of cooperation and the levels of influence organizations have on each other. This concentration of power in turn influences conditions of enforcement, monitoring, compliance, and sanctions. At the lower end of the cooperation continuum, power is dispersed among cooperating entities as they retain their powers of self government. At the higher end of the continuum (which indicates what scholars refer to as collaboration), power is often reinterpreted and concentrated in the hands of the newly organized or reorganized entities (e.g., a joint planning commission for three local governments replacing three separate and individual planning commissions). When decision makers move from making decisions autonomously to making decisions jointly (e.g., appointing

members to a joint planning commission rather than individual planning commissions), they sacrifice an enormous amount of control over decision making and a certain amount of control over the outcomes of the decision making process. They have to forge new relationships (ties), develop new scales of reciprocity, and realize that trusting others with their own affairs does not always mean compromising on the interests of their jurisdiction. All of this means that moving up the cooperation continuum results in a loss of several elements that contribute to the structure of intergovernmental relationships: power, autonomy, and control.

The second dimension, formality, refers to the extent to which rules of conduct, operating procedures, norms, and the process itself are codified in terms of defining the relationships between the cooperating entities. Formality offers stability and legitimacy to a cooperative effort. Formalizing cooperation helps increase trust among participants by helping bind promises made during the act of political contracting. It helps preserve institutional memory, especially when the local political landscape is characterized by turnovers of elected officials and general political instability. Formalizing relationships through intergovernmental agreements, for example, ensures that all participants are active participants in a process. Formality also infuses a certain level of predictability and accountability into the process, its outcomes, and the anticipated behavior of other participants. While formality offers benefits to a cooperative process, it also extends some disadvantages to participants who are merely contemplating taking the first steps towards cooperation. This is because formalizing a cooperative effort demands that

participants be very certain about and committed to their involvement in a cooperative effort (i.e., they must be past the “testing the waters” stage).

The third dimension of commitment refers to the extent to which participants are invested in a process and in the outcomes of the process. Moving up the cooperation scale exacts not only a greater commitment of time and resources (endurance over a longer period of time), but also a greater need for both calculated and normative commitment from participants. In harnessing this level of commitment, participants will be asked to overcome tremendous political, practical, and psychological barriers that in most development-management scenarios preclude even the most basic commitment to solving regional problems (see May et al. 1996). Therefore giving up and/or sharing power, losing control and autonomy, formalizing the idea of cooperation, pledging long-term commitment to the cooperative process, and committing resources and time to the cooperative effort all make moving up the cooperation continuum difficult.

3.5 Substantive benefits of moving up the cooperation continuum

The difficulty of moving up the continuum, however, is compensated by the substantive benefits gained from formal cooperation. Consider this situation: the county has just organized a regional collaborative project aimed at a specific area-wide problem (e.g., developing sustainable tourism alternatives). During the course of several meetings organized for this project, local elected officials from neighboring jurisdictions find themselves contemplating development patterns in their region. During the course of these conversations, they discover that they are all dealing with very similar problems

and that they could benefit from talking with each other on a more regular basis. These elected officials now meet every month, and by doing so they have taken a deliberate step towards informal cooperation. At the meetings they start talking about how limited current efforts and plans to manage growth have been, and they vow to keep communication lines open on this issue. They continue talking for several years, and these conversations no doubt produce the outcomes that Healey and Innes have discovered to be the end product of collaborative processes. These conversations help build trust and produce better knowledge of regional issues. The elected officials gain a better understanding of each other's value systems, beliefs, and concerns. Their attitudes towards each other change. This increase in comfort level surely sets up a situation wherein future cooperation would be easier to forge. At this point, the extent of cooperation is still mostly "talk" and no action. Other steps could be taken to direct these conversations towards action. Joint agreements could be crafted, and joint plans could be written. A further step towards both formalization and action would be setting up a joint planning commission. At this point, the member jurisdictions might take additional steps to ensure that the joint plan is more than the sum of its parts. They might decide to include regional policies (an urban growth boundary) in the joint plan instead of having it be just an amalgamation of the individual master plans – a much harder task, albeit much truer to regional principles. The best plan, of course, is the plan that comes off the shelf and is implemented. To implement the joint master plan, a joint zoning ordinance and eventually a joint zoning board might be created. At this point, the elected officials who initially met at the county-organized collaborative project have formalized their temporary linkages to create permanent institutions to govern regional land use on the

ground. They have demonstrated their attitudinal adjustments through behavioral changes.

For the purposes of this dissertation, instead of referring to sections of the cooperation continuum as cooperation, coordination and collaboration, I will simply call it the cooperation continuum, with the understanding that moving up the continuum compels changes to the structure of relationships, formality of arrangements, and commitment levels of participants. In this redefined continuum, I equate the term “cooperation” with informal cooperation and the term “collaboration” with formal cooperation.

“Coordination” forms the middle portion of the continuum. By considering cooperation as a continuum from informal to formal, I am assuming that both informal and formal cooperation are dimensions of the same underlying concept. In the following section, I discuss how the different mechanisms that local governments employ to cooperate around land use issues might be placed on this cooperation continuum.

3.6 Defining the cooperation continuum in land use settings

The land use scenario provided above offers an example of what moving up the continuum of cooperation on land use issues would look like. It also lends some credibility to the argument that cooperation is a multidimensional concept, with each level of cooperation (from initial talking to establishing the final joint zoning board) symbolizing a greater amount of cooperation. As the scenario indicates, cooperation on land use issues could occur in a variety of ways, through a range of cooperation mechanisms. Local governments could share information and data, organize joint

stakeholder-based processes, share planning staff, engage in collaborative projects, form joint committees, and converse with planning commissioners and elected officials from neighboring jurisdictions. Further, local governments could also cooperate by establishing joint programs, writing joint ancillary plans (e.g., resource-management plans), crafting joint agreements, writing joint master plans, writing zoning ordinances, developing regional land use policies, establishing joint planning commissions, and establishing joint zoning boards. The need for cooperation in the realm of land use planning is created by the fragmented nature of local governments, the extent to which information is dispersed across a patchwork of politically defined local boundaries, administrative inefficiencies created by overlapping responsibilities, inconsistent policies across jurisdictional lines, inefficient land use and service-delivery patterns, the nature and scale of planning problems (which are not confined to political boundaries), and the need for collective action to solve them. Therefore, efforts at cooperation and the mechanisms used to cooperate must address the problems that give rise to the need for cooperation in the first place. Where and how the cooperative mechanisms are placed on the cooperation continuum will not only depend on the extent to which employing them changes underlying structures, increases formality, increases difficulty, and increases commitment, but will also depend on the efficacy of these mechanisms at addressing planning problems. I provide an evaluation of the various cooperative mechanisms in table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1 Explanation for the cooperation continuum

Cooperative mechanism	Examples	Ease of implementation – based on extent of needed changes to underlying structures, formality and commitment	Substantive benefits
Joint data collection and data sharing	Model ordinance language, tax data, maps, plans, community-wide surveys	Easy: Does not result in loss of autonomy; no changes to existing governance structures; informal – no legal or binding obligations; does not need much commitment	Cost effective; limits duplication; helps overcome governmental fragmentation
Shared stakeholder - based processes	Joint stakeholder groups for comprehensive planning processes	Easy: Do not result in loss of autonomy; informal – no legal or binding obligations; no changes to existing governance structures; do not need much commitment	Cost effective; procedural efficiency; more potential for substantive interactions
Planning staff	Sharing planning staff (e.g., building inspector, zoning administrator)	Easy: No loss of control (fear of it) and autonomy; no changes to existing governance structures does not need much commitment	Cost effective; some substantive payoffs (e.g. consistency of policies); information sharing;
Collaborative projects	Joint planning projects as needed (e.g., transportation projects)	Moderately Easy: Do not result in loss of autonomy; no changes to existing governance structures; need certain level of commitment; temporary shared goals	Administrative efficiency; produce collective action on selected and pre-defined projects
Joint committees and study groups	Establishing joint committees to study and propose recommendations on issues of greater than jurisdictional impact or common problems	Moderately Easy: Interactions occur over longer time period than collaborative projects and are motivated by broader substantive planning concerns; need substantial commitment of time and resources; limited fear of loss of control and autonomy	Information sharing; produce collective action on predefined regional issues; substantive but issue-specific interactions that produce only temporary linkages
Informal meetings – elected	Elected officials meet regularly (albeit informally)	Difficult: Commitment needs to be high, especially to sustain meeting over	Shared knowledge; collective action

officials	to exchange information and discuss regional issues (e.g., breakfast meetings, regional and sub-regional alliances)	prolonged periods of time. Difficult because the meetings are not about project or problem-specific needs, and rewards are not immediately apparent. This means there are more interpersonal/trust /political issues to overcome.	on area-wide problems; substantive interactions focused on more general planning issues over longer periods
Informal meetings – Planning commissioners (PC)	Planning commissioners from neighboring jurisdictions meet regularly	Difficult: Require high commitment levels to meet over prolonged periods of time – especially because most PC’s are not compensated for their time.	Shared knowledge – important because PC’s are typically more familiar with day-to-day planning concerns – also important because PC’s implement the master plan; collective action on area-wide problems
Joint programs	Joint commercial districts, open space preservation programs	Difficult: Increasing level of formality; joint goals and joint decision-making processes – but scope of common decisions is limited to programmatic areas; require a certain level of commitment; fear of loss of control and autonomy; changes to decision- making structure	Collective action on regional issues; consistency; cost effective; administrative effectiveness/ streamlining; remove duplication
Joint resource-management plans	Joint parks and recreation plans, lake-wide management plans	Difficult: Larger in scope; formality increases; joint goals; require high level of commitment; long range; substantial fear of loss of autonomy and control	Consistency, collective action on regional issues, shared knowledge; ancillary impact on land use patterns
Joint design guidelines	Smart growth guidelines; active living by design guidelines	Difficult: Require moderate level of commitment; informal – but more directly connected to land use planning than resource-management plans	Consistency; collective action; greater than jurisdictional impact; provide prolonged substantive interactions

Joint agreements	Agreements addressing annexation issues (e.g., PA 425 agreement in Michigan)	Very difficult: Extensive changes to decision-making structures and power relationships; joint goals; very formal; require extensive political will and commitment	Have tremendous implications for land use patterns and the potential to engage in collective action
Planning agreements	Agreements establishing planning alliances and regional groups	Very Difficult: Provide formal stable membership; therefore required commitment level is high; substantial fear of loss of autonomy and control.	Shared knowledge; collective action on regional issues
Joint master plan	Several jurisdictions replacing their individual master plans with a joint master plan	Extremely difficult: Tremendous fear of loss of autonomy and control; commitment level is extremely high; joint goals; redefines relationships; long-term interactions	Consistent policies and regulations; collective action on regional issues; regional plan and therefore tremendous substantive regional land use impacts
Joint planning commission	Several jurisdictions replacing their individual planning commissions with a joint planning commission	Extremely difficult: Tremendous loss of autonomy and control; extremely high commitment required; joint decision making; restructuring of governance process; formal; long term	Implements the joint master plan; streamlined administration; consistency of land use policies
Joint regional policies	Urban service boundaries, urban growth boundaries; regional tax base sharing; regional TDRs	Extremely difficult: Require tremendous commitment; redefine political boundaries; extremely difficult because of shared control/loss of individual control	Regional level policies that redirect land use at a larger scale than that of an individual political boundary – potential to truly address regional issues rather than produce a joint plan that is only a compilation of individual master plans
Joint zoning ordinance	Several jurisdictions replacing their	Extremely difficult: Could still be implemented by the individual zoning boards –	Implements the joint master plan; a joint plan needs

	individual zoning ordinances with a joint zoning ordinance	therefore moderate loss of autonomy and control when compared to joint zoning boards; more difficult than joint plans and joint PC's because zoning ordinances are used to implement plans – i.e., collective action and implementation	to be implemented through a joint zoning ordinance so that the regional goals are not compromised through the use of independent zoning ordinances – same benefits from above three categories apply
Joint zoning board	Several jurisdictions replacing their individual zoning boards with a joint zoning board	Most difficult: Hardest because it shares the characteristics of the above four categories and includes the broadest aspects of implementation. Complete loss of autonomy and control; requires tremendous commitment; formal; joint decision making	Implements the joint zoning ordinance; important to ensure joint zoning ordinance is implemented as intended; same benefits as categories above

The above evaluation shows how each of the listed cooperative mechanisms changes organizational structures, differs in terms of formality, and requires different levels of commitment for implementation. The table also offers some insight into the substantive impacts of each of the listed cooperative mechanisms. Using this evaluation, I place the listed cooperative mechanisms on the cooperation continuum in Figure 3.2 below.

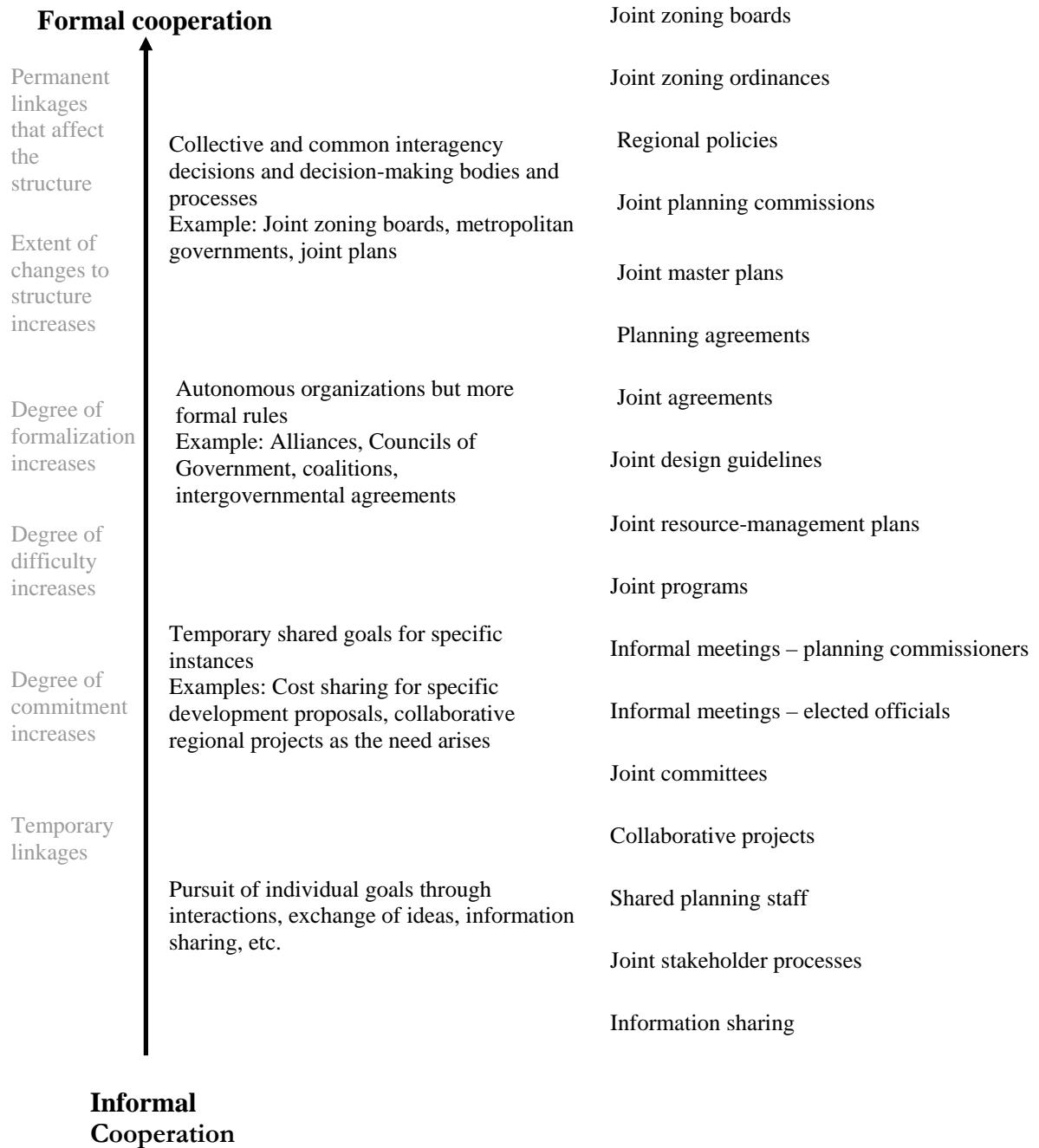


Figure 3.2. Explication of cooperation as a continuum
(Adapted from Oran Young 1989, Nice and Fredericksen 1995 and Rogers and Whettan 1982)

3.7 An Alternative interpretation of cooperation: Cooperation as a multinomial categorical variable

Looking at cooperation through a new lens allows us to question whether formal cooperation constitutes “more cooperation” as the continuum above indicates. An alternative interpretation of the cooperation continuum would take into account the arguments put forth by the communicative and collaborative planning scholars in considering informal cooperation just as important as formal cooperation (i.e., informal and formal cooperation as nominal rather than ordinal categories). If understood this way, informal and formal cooperation would be considered completely different concepts, similar to how unilateral action and cooperation (even in its most informal sense) might be considered completely different actions. This conceptualization would allow us to distinguish between informal and formal cooperation without succumbing to rating one as more important than the other (as a ranked scale implies), and/or treating them as the same (as a dummy cooperation variable implies). These differences between informal and formal cooperation are easy to highlight. While informal cooperation is characterized by temporary linkages among participants, formal cooperation is achieved by legally binding permanent linkages. While informal cooperation helps achieve individual goals or situational shared goals at best, formal cooperation aims at fulfilling common goals through collective decisions and shared decision-making processes. This means that formal cooperation requires an entirely different level of commitment from participants than informal cooperation. Similarly, formal cooperation requires thinking about changes

to the decision-making structure, power relations, and organizational autonomy in a completely different way than one thinks about informal cooperation.

Considering informal and formal cooperation as distinct nominal categories would also imply that both informal and formal cooperation could be considered ends in and of themselves. Further, the choice of informal or formal cooperation is motivated by different concerns, and made possible by different mindsets and mentalities. Informal cooperation might occur when participants seek social learning, which is a form of tacit, informal learning that occurs through mutual adjustment and mutual learning. Social learning changes the participants' problem-solving strategies, norms, theories of reality, values, and beliefs. Therefore, participants seek informal cooperation to improve their social, political, and intellectual capital; to build trust; explore the idea of cooperation; to educate others and be educated about unfamiliar issues; and to build relationships with others (see Friedmann 1987; Gray 1985). While there are limited pre-conditions to exploring informal cooperation, participants seek formal cooperation only when there is some certainty that such cooperation will be feasible in the first place (e.g., when the participants at least have working relationships, or when benefits significantly outweigh costs). Although formal cooperation produces many of the benefits that informal cooperation provides (e.g., building trust through continued interactions), it is not sought for that purpose. In other words, when the objective is to build trust and promote learning, one looks to informal and not formal processes. Formal cooperation is sought for a different set of benefits: legitimacy, credibility, legality, institutional memory, accountability, and predictability of future behavior.

In this conceptualization of cooperation, the various mechanisms used for cooperation are classified as formal or informal based on their characteristic features (similar to how the mechanisms were ranked). In a land use setting, informal cooperation occurs when local governments share data and information, organize joint stakeholder-based processes, share planning staff, engage in collaborate projects, form joint committees, and converse with planning commissioners and elected officials from neighboring jurisdictions. These activities are considered informal partly because they do not symbolize relationships that are “written in stone,” and partly because they involve a limited loss of autonomy, limited long-term commitment from participants, a lack of stable and long-term interactions, and mostly tacit, intangible and narrower (often project- or problem-specific) substantive benefits. The cooperative activities or mechanisms that are considered more formal include establishing joint programs, writing joint ancillary plans, crafting joint agreements, writing joint master plans and zoning ordinances, developing regional land use policies, and establishing joint planning commissions and joint zoning boards. These mechanisms are considered formal because they provide tangible outcomes that are more generally applicable to the larger scope of master planning.

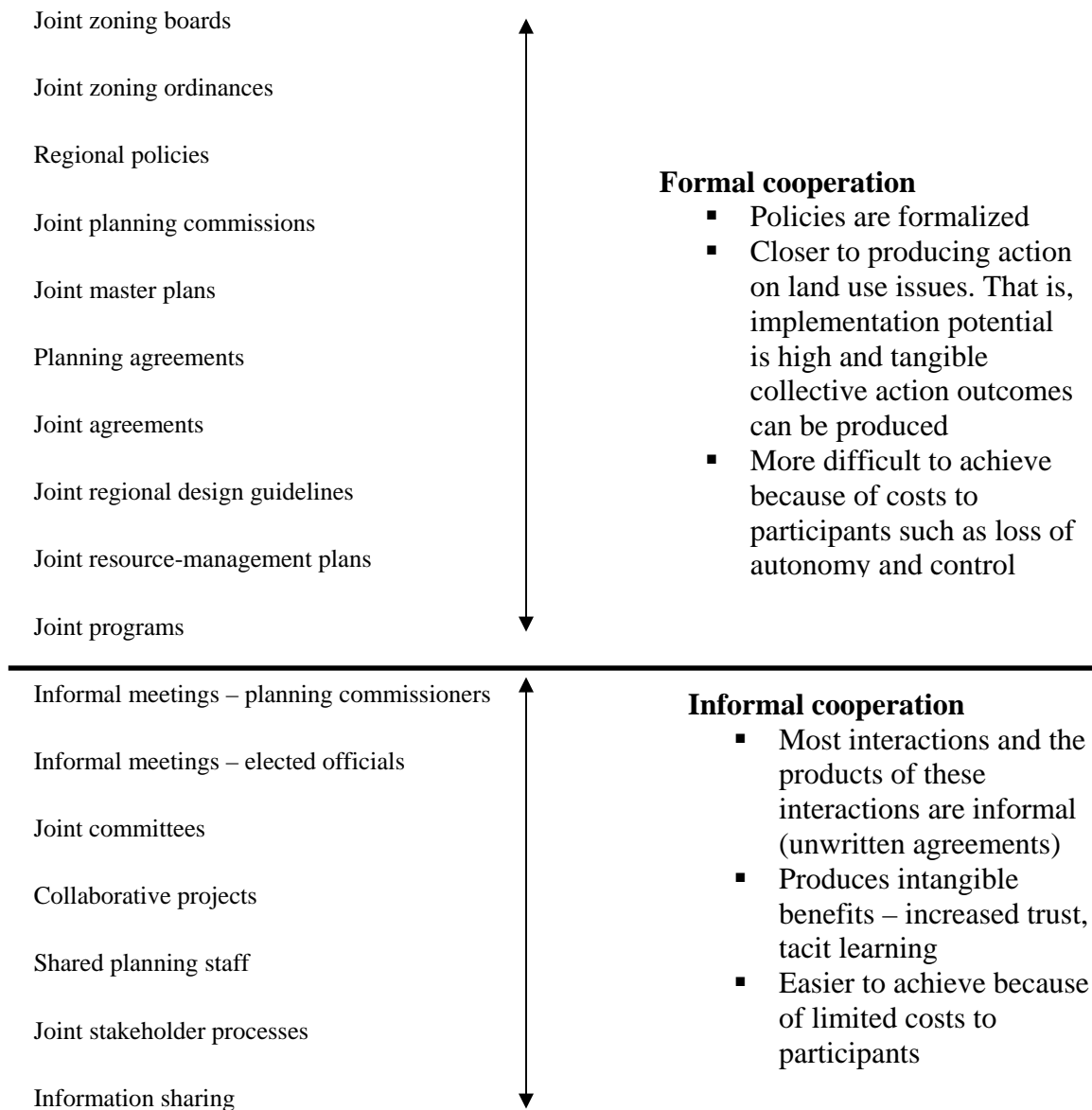


Figure 3.3 Explication of cooperation as a multinomial variable

On the whole, this discussion suggests that there may be several ways of conceptualizing what constitutes cooperation. First, cooperation could be simply defined as “working together” but this definition overlooks the nuances of the different levels of “working together.” This means that the various types of cooperation (e.g., informal and formal)

would not be differentiated from each other. Second, cooperation could be treated as a more dynamic concept by dividing it into two separate categories: informal and formal cooperation. By doing so, we would assume that informal and formal cooperation are dissimilar but equally important concepts. Finally, cooperation could be considered as a continuum ranging from informal to formal cooperation. Here formal cooperation is ranked more highly than informal cooperation because it produces more substantive collective action and joint decision making, is more difficult to achieve, and requires greater commitment from participants.

Chapter 4

Research design and methodology

In this chapter, I provide an account of the methodology used for this dissertation.

The research design for this study was structured to allow multiple stages of data collection. The data were collected in three different stages. The first stage was an exploratory effort and involved multiple open-ended telephone conversations with elected officials, policy makers, and planners in Michigan. The purpose of these initial phone conversations was to both refine the conceptual models by grounding them in the institutional realities of Michigan, and hone the survey instruments to make them both user-friendly and substantively relevant. Based on this effort, the second stage of data collection was conducted. This stage involved administering the surveys employed for this study. This stage provided the quantitative data for this study and also provided preliminary information that aided in the selection of the case study sites. Finally, the third stage consisted of actually conducting the case study. The material from the case study is primarily used as supportive material to the overall quantitative results throughout this dissertation.

4.1 Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis for this study is the “municipality”. That said, for survey purposes neither the municipality as an entity nor the entire elected board could be surveyed for practical reasons. My survey therefore, was primarily directed to the chief elected official of a municipality. In responding to questions that made references to a municipality’s decision to cooperate for example, these chief elected officials were asked to characterize the local elected board’s collective decision. This seemed to be a reasonable option given that local elected boards act collectively, the chief elected official has the closest working relationship with each of the board members individually, and the chief elected official also sits on the planning commission and has a more intimate knowledge of the municipality’s planning activities.

4.2 Data collection

Data were collected from several sources for this study, including interviews, mail and web surveys, and a variety of miscellaneous data sources.

4.2.1 Mail and Web Surveys

The principal data source for determining the extent of municipal cooperation on land use issues, as well as the variety of anticipated explanatory variables, was a 45 item long survey instrument. This survey instrument is appended to the end of this dissertation. Michigan has a total of 1776 municipalities. Out of these, 69% are townships (1241), 14% are villages (262), and 15% are cities (273). Because cooperation typically involves a cluster of communities, I employed a cluster sampling technique to draw my sample. Substantively, much of the justification for regional cooperation comes from the need to

maintain the urban cores and protect the rural peripheries. Therefore cities and villages, in their capacity as urban cores, were used as the center of the clusters. This cluster sampling was done in two stages. To draw my sample, I first chose a random sample of 136 cities (50% of total Michigan cities) and 131 villages (50% of total Michigan villages). I then selected all the townships bordering or containing these chosen cities and villages. This yielded a total of 333 townships providing a total sample frame of 600 municipalities. Of these 600 municipalities, 192 responded to the survey. This constitutes a response rate of 32%. Of the 192 municipalities that responded, 69% were townships, 9% were villages and 21% were cities. This indicates that there is a slight over-representation of cities and under-representation of villages in my sample when compared with the actual proportions of cities and villages in Michigan. To ensure that the resulting sample of municipalities was geographically representative, I compiled several maps using Geographic Information Systems. A visible inspection of the maps showed that the constructed sample was representative in terms of the geographic distribution of municipalities. This ensures that the findings and conclusions reached through this study can be reasonably extrapolated to the entire state of Michigan

Because of the centrality of formal institutions to my study, I also surveyed county and regional planning agencies to ascertain their perspective on land use cooperation and more importantly to understand these agencies' role in facilitating local cooperation. The principal data source for determining county and regional agency perspectives on local cooperation was a 26 item survey. This survey is appended to the end of this dissertation as well. I sent mail and web versions of this survey to a census of county (83) and

regional planning agencies (14) in Michigan. Of the counties and regional planning agencies receiving the survey, 25% of counties and 50% of regional planning agencies responded. All surveys were pre-tested using both planners and elected officials before they were sent out.

4.2.2 Case studies

I also conducted two case studies for this dissertation. I selected the case study sites after receiving the completed mail and web surveys back from the municipalities. Using these completed surveys I conducted some preliminary data analysis to identify the case study sites that varied on the key independent variables that were theoretically determined and confirmed through analysis. Preliminary results revealed that the level of internal support for cooperation in a municipality, whether municipalities perceived benefits from cooperation, and the extent of perceived growth pressure in a municipality were important variables in terms of contributing to an understanding of the evolution of municipal cooperation. I then looked through the survey results to find clusters of municipalities for comparison that varied on these key independent variables. My survey results yielded several candidate municipalities that could have been compared for case study purposes. I conducted an initial round of telephone interviews with both policy makers, and planners in these municipalities, and researched archival material such as newspaper editorials to narrow the results. Finally, two municipality clusters were chosen for further analysis.

Both of these clusters of municipalities are located in Washtenaw County. The first cluster is the Chelsea area municipalities and the second, the Manchester area municipalities. Using these two case study sites offers several benefits. They are located within 10 miles of each other. This geographic proximity provides these two clusters with several commonalities. Both Chelsea area and Manchester area municipalities face several similar problems, they have similar amounts of farmland and natural resources, they are both located in the western part of Washtenaw county, their developmental histories are similar, they share the same general political persuasion, and have racial, social, and other demographic similarities in the make up of their general population. By being located in Washtenaw county, and consequently SEMCOG, these two sets of municipalities are also governed by the same formal institutions. Further, both clusters were pre-defined by the municipalities themselves and endorsed by the county as “Chelsea area” and “Manchester area” communities. The pre-defined Chelsea and Manchester areas also consist of the same number of municipalities and similar jurisdiction types – with one difference – Chelsea used to be a village and only recently became a city. They however differ in the three independent variables chosen for further examination in the following ways.

Table 4.1 Case study comparison

Chelsea area municipalities (consisting of Sylvan township, City of Chelsea, Lyndon township and Dexter township)	Manchester are municipalities (consisting of the Village of Manchester, Manchester township, Freedom township and Bridgewater township)
Low perceived growth pressure	High perceived growth pressure
Low perceived benefit from cooperation	High perceived benefit from cooperation

Low internal support for cooperation

High internal support for cooperation

Once these two areas in Washtenaw County were chosen, several steps were taken to gather the data needed for further analysis. I conducted several interviews of the chief elected officials in all of the municipalities in the Chelsea and Manchester areas. In total, I interviewed thirteen elected officials multiple times for a total of about 52 hrs. These were structured interviews guided by an interview protocol. I also interviewed several Washtenaw county planners, read internal meeting minutes from each municipality's planning commission and elected board meetings, and researched newspaper editorials. Finally, I attended public meetings in these two areas including planning commission meetings and area officials' meetings for almost a year from August of 2007 to June of 2008.

Apart from these structured in-person interviews aimed at gathering information on the case study sites, I also conducted telephone interviews of several Michigan policymakers. The purpose of these telephone interviews was to gather background information, clarify regression and other results from the analysis, formulate survey questions, and interpret results.

4.3 Variable constructs

Dependent variable: cooperation

In chapter 3, I outlined three different ways of conceptualizing cooperation. The variable constructs for each of these three conceptions of cooperation are discussed in this section and provided in table 4.2.

Cooperation: The measurement of the initial act of cooperation is based on a single question asked in the mail and web based surveys of municipalities. This is treated as a dummy variable.

Extent of formal cooperation: This variable was calculated out of a series of questions that were posed in the mail and web based surveys of municipalities. This is treated as a continuous variable.

Informal cooperation and formal cooperation: This separation of informal cooperation and formal cooperation was offered to suggest that informal cooperation need not always be regarded as leading up to formal cooperation but rather that informal cooperation could serve as an end in itself. Whether a municipality engages in informal or formal cooperation was also calculated out of a series of questions that were posed to municipalities in the mail and web based surveys. This is treated as a nominal variable.

Table 4.2 Dependent variable measurements

Outcome variables

Cooperation

Dummy variable: coded 0 or 1

Frequency of 0 = 95

Frequency of 1 = 92

Measurement: Chief elected official was posed the following question

Does your jurisdiction currently cooperate on land use planning and zoning issues with neighboring jurisdictions?

Extent of formality

Range: 0-13

Measurement: Chief elected officials were asked to indicate whether they used several of the listed cooperation mechanisms. These cooperation mechanisms were listed in chapter 3 along with the conceptualization of cooperation. The listed cooperation mechanisms were not mutually exclusive – i.e. elected officials could select multiple listed cooperative mechanisms. Based on the theoretical explanations provided in chapter 3 and after asking a group of elected officials and planners to rank the listed mechanisms in the order of formality, these cooperation mechanisms were ranked from 0-13. There were more than 13 listed mechanisms but some of these mechanisms were not being used in Michigan. The mechanisms that were not being used were removed from the ranking. The municipality’s most formal cooperative effort was then selected and this was given the pre-determined rank.

1. Collaborative projects
2. Joint committees
3. Elected officials informal but organized meetings
4. PCs meeting
5. Joint programs
6. Joint resource management plans
7. Joint design guidelines
8. Joint agreements
9. Planning agreements
10. Joint master plans
11. JPC
12. Regional level policies
13. JZO

Informal cooperation; Formal cooperation

Frequency of no cooperation: 92

Frequency of informal cooperation: 25

Frequency of formal cooperation: 70

Measurement 1: If the most formal effort of a municipality was still informal, a code of “1” was assigned

If the most formal cooperation effort of a municipality was formal, a code of “2” was assigned.

Municipalities that did not cooperate were assigned a score of “0”

Measurement 2: No cooperation was coded as “0”; Informal cooperation based on figure 3.3 was coded as “1”; Formal cooperation based on the classification in figure 3.3 was coded as “2”.

Municipalities with both informal and formal cooperative efforts in place were classified based on whether a “majority” of their cooperative efforts were informal or formal. Municipalities with an equal number of informal and formal cooperative efforts in place were coded as “3”.

4.4 Independent variables

Table 4.3 provides all the independent variables used in the regression models. All the independent variables used are drawn from the web and mail surveys of municipalities and were operationalized based on the conceptual framework provided in chapter 2.

Environmental Factors

These factors provide the background conditions for planning in a municipality.

Cooperative efforts are often forged as a direct reaction to changes in these environmental conditions. The environmental conditions that are particularly important in a land use setting are those that induce tremendous uncertainty into the planning process. In most municipalities, growth pressures, and other threats to local institutions such as lawsuits and controversial land use decisions, constitute the most concerning environmental conditions with direct impacts on planning decision making. The capacity of a municipality – particularly the amount of full time staff dedicated to executing a municipality’s planning function is also considered an environmental factor with the potential to impact local cooperation. These four variables are measured using four straightforward questions in the survey.

Formal institutions

The only formal institutions included in this study, are those provided at the county and regional level. This is measured by asking municipalities to gauge the effectiveness of county and regional agencies at performing a variety of supporting functions aiding local cooperation. These supporting functions are listed in the table. The variable itself is created as a composite (a sum) of the listed functions that the county and regional agencies perform.

Informal institutions

Informal institutions help determine the ideas that a palatable in region. Two variables measuring informal institutions are included in this study. This first is a measure of the extent of a “regional governance culture” in an area. This variable measures whether a cooperation-conducive regionalist environment exists in an area. This variable is constructed out of several questions in the survey. Conversely, the inverse of this variable would measure the extent of needed cooperation in an area. The second informal institutional variable measures antecedent conditions for cooperation. This variable measures the extent of cooperation on a variety of listed services.

Decision maker related characteristics

Four different variables help measure decision maker related factors that make the decision makers of a jurisdiction more receptive to the idea of cooperation. Two of these variables are related to education. The first education related variable measures whether elected officials and planning commissioners in a municipality have undergone training on the benefits of cooperation on land use issues. The second variable measures whether elected officials and planning commissioners have undergone training on growth management principles and concepts in general. The third variable in this category measures the extent of internal support in a municipality for the idea of cooperation. Data for this variable were compiled from the survey as a composite of the extent to which planning staff, elected officials and planning commissioners in a municipality support cooperation. The fourth and final variable measures whether elected officials in a municipality anticipate benefits from cooperation on land use issues. This was a straightforward question on the survey.

Table 4.3 Independent variable measurements

Independent variables	Measurement explanation	Scale	Concept measured
Regional governance culture (sum) Range: 10- 50	Political culture conducive to cooperation	Scale 1-5	Informal institutions - regionalism
	Strong leadership from public officials	Scale 1-5	
	Competition among local governments for growth and development	Reversed Scale 1-5	
	History of political conflict among jurisdictions	Reversed Scale 1-5	
	Strong regional institutions	Scale 1-5	
	Agreement on regional land use problems	Scale 1-5	
	Access to the financial, technical, institutional networks and resources needed to forge cooperative alliances	Scale 1-5	
	History of good working relationships with our neighboring jurisdictions	Scale 1-5	
	Similarity of land use problems in the region	Scale 1-5	
	Realization of interjurisdictional impacts of land use policies	Scale 1-5	
Growth management training of LEB and PC	Growth Management training for LEB and PC	Yes/No	Decision maker characteristics -education
PC, staff, LEB support (average) Range 1-5	Extent to which PCs, staff and LEB support cooperation with neighbors	Scale 1-5	Decision maker characteristics
Regional and County Planning Agency Effectiveness (sum) Range 18-90	Providing technical assistance and staff support for cooperative land use efforts	Scale 1-5	Formal institutions
	Providing technical assistance and staff support generally for planning and zoning purposes	Scale 1-5	
	Providing opportunities for interactions among decision makers	Scale 1-5	
	Playing a mediation role among local decision makers	Scale 1-5	

	Providing financial incentives for encouraging cooperation	Scale 1-5	
	Providing a forum for regional /countywide problem solving		
	Providing leadership for cooperative planning efforts	Scale 1-5	
	Providing “fair” representation of the range of regional /countywide interests	Scale 1-5	
	Setting regional /countywide land use priorities and goals	Scale 1-5	
Full time staff Cooperation on services (average)	Full time staff dedicated to planning and zoning	Number	Capacity
	Fiscal services (e.g. property assessing)	Yes/No	Informal institutions - antecedent conditions
	Information services (e.g. GIS)	Yes/No	
	Building regulation (e.g. enforcement)	Yes/No	
	Police (e.g. patrol, crime lab)	Yes/No	
	Fire (e.g. inspection, ambulance)	Yes/No	
	Refuse collection (e.g. solid waste, recycling)	Yes/No	
	Water and sewer (e.g. collection, treatment)	Yes/No	
	Transit (e.g. public bus)	Yes/No	
	Parks and recreation (e.g. senior centers, trails)	Yes/No	
	Cultural services (e.g. museums, zoos)	Yes/No	
	Environmental services (e.g. water quality, erosion)	Yes/No	
	Roads and bridges (e.g. construction)	Yes/No	
	Cooperation training Benefits from cooperation	Training particularly on cooperation LEB and/or PC members	Yes/No
Perceived benefit from cooperation?		Yes/No	Decision maker characteristics

Unsuccessful cooperation	Prior unsuccessful cooperative efforts	Yes/No	Informal institutions - antecedent conditions
Future Growth Pressure	Anticipated future growth pressure	Scale 1-3	Environmental factor - concerns
	Controversial land use decisions		Environmental factor - land use /political climate
Controversy	Lawsuits related to planning and zoning	Yes/No	Environmental factor - concerns
Lawsuits		Yes/No	

4.5 Regression Models

The regression models were primarily constructed to understand the factors that predict cooperation on land use issues. All three regression models used for this dissertation use “cooperation” as the dependent variable.

4.5.1 Model One

Dependent variable: Cooperation (dummy variable)

In this model, I develop an understanding of the factors that predict the initial cooperation among municipalities. Although a municipality’s capacity, measured through the full time staff dedicated to planning and zoning activities is included as a variable in the models predicting the formality of cooperative efforts, and both informal and formal cooperation, it is omitted from this model. Preliminary interviews with both elected officials and planners revealed that capacity related concerns do not play a role in determining whether a municipality decides to engage in cooperation. Interviewees explained that capacity related concerns are brought to the table mostly while contemplating questions of how much cooperation rather than questions about whether a

municipality should cooperate. Further, elected officials also indicated that general training on growth management principles do not play a role in the decision to cooperate. Rather such training plays a larger role in determining the kinds of cooperative mechanisms that elected officials chose to employ to address different land use problems. In keeping with this initial finding, the variable measuring training on growth management issues was also removed from this model. Finally, several respondents to the survey had indicated that their municipality had been involved in unsuccessful cooperative attempts. Such prior attempts at cooperation, several elected officials explained affect their perception of whether it is “worth it” to a municipality to engage in another cooperative effort. Prior unsuccessful cooperation is an antecedent condition that contributes to the informal institutions in an area. It was therefore included in this model. The predictors used in this model are outlined in table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Regression Model 1

Environmental factors	Formal institutions	Informal institutions	Decision maker related factors
Future growth pressure (positive effect)	Effectiveness of county and regional planning agencies at supporting local cooperation (positive effect)	Extent of regional governance culture in an area (positive effect)	Cooperation related training (positive effect)
Controversial land use decisions (positive effect)		Cooperation around services (positive effect)	Internal support for cooperation (positive effect)
Lawsuits (negative effect)		Prior unsuccessful cooperation (negative effect)	Perceived benefits from cooperation (positive effect)

4.5.2 Model two

Dependent variable: Extent of formality

I construct this model to develop an understanding of the factors that affect the extent to which elected officials formalize their cooperative efforts. Table 4.5 provides a synthesis of the anticipated effects of the explanatory variables on the extent of formality.

Table 4.5 Regression models 2 and 3

Environmental factors	Formal institutions	Informal institutions	Decision maker related factors
Future growth pressure (positive effect)	Effectiveness of county and regional planning agencies at supporting local cooperation (positive effect)	Extent of regional governance culture in an area (positive effect)	Cooperation related training (positive effect)
Controversial land use decisions (positive effect)		Cooperation around services (positive effect)	Growth management related training (positive effect)
Lawsuits (negative effect)		Prior unsuccessful cooperation (negative effect)	Internal support for cooperation (positive effect)
Capacity (two tail – no predetermined effect direction)			Perceived benefits from cooperation (positive effect)

4.5.3 Model three

Dependent variable: Informal cooperation; Formal cooperation

This model is a multinomial regression model and therefore is divided into two components: one predicting informal cooperation and the other predicting formal cooperation. Although two separate binomial logistic regressions could have been conducted separately for informal and formal cooperation, they have been combined here in one multinomial regression model to increase the efficiency of the model and reduce the amount of error. All predictors from model two and their hypothesized effects are retained for this model and provided in table 4.5. Another variation of this multinomial

regression model is also used. The predictors remain the same in this second model. The dependent variable however is operationalized in a different manner as described in Table 4.4. This second version of the multinomial model has three components: these three parts of the model predict informal cooperation, formal cooperation, and both informal and formal cooperation.

In addition to satisfying regression assumptions in general, several other checks were made to ensure that the regression models met all the commonly accepted standards. Rules of thumb for regression analysis state that at least 30 observations need to be included for central limit theorem to operate. Further, there need to be at least five observations for each parameter specified in the model (Allison 1999). For logistic regression models, there need to be at least ten observations for each parameter included in the model. This rule of thumb helps ensure the power of the regression model and helps avoid what Goggin (1986) refers to as the problem of too many variables and too few cases or overdetermination. All three regression models specified in this study contain 192 observations, with about ten or eleven independent variables. The specified models therefore have sufficient explanatory power. Also, all the general diagnostic tests such as plotting the studentized residuals against the predicted values to check for heteroskedasticity, checking component plus plots of variables for linearity, and determining variable inflation factor scores for multicollinearity and leverage values for outliers and influential cases were conducted.

Other issues of concern

One potential problematic issue with this research is that there might be endogeneity problems in terms of how the variables informal institutions and informal cooperation were constructed. This problem of endogeneity might manifest itself in two ways: first, there is the issue of temporal priority or causal order and second the question of measurement validity. The temporal priority of the causal variables (factors) is at issue when the factors that are supposed to affect a particular outcome, themselves depend on that outcome. For example, the regional governance culture, which is hypothesized as an informal institution affecting the extent of land use cooperation, might itself depend on the land use cooperation in an area. Testing for such chicken and egg kinds of problems while dealing with cross-sectional data is extremely difficult. However, a remedy might be for future research on land use cooperation to use structural equation modeling, and variants such as path analysis as data analysis techniques. Such an extended analysis of cooperation using path analysis is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Using path analysis and other modeling techniques would allow the researcher to determine exogenous and endogenous variables by reversing the specified causal order. This problem of temporal priority is of lesser concern to this research than the problem of measurement validity.

Measurement validity raises questions about the degree to which a measurement actually measures what it purports to. Framed another way, in the context of this research, the problem of measurement validity relates to whether the variables regional governance culture and informal cooperation have been defined, operationalized and measured in conceptually and analytically distinct ways.

The variable regional governance culture captures the general attitudes, beliefs and culture underlying political behavior in an area. The variable informal cooperation measures the particular cooperative behaviors that elected officials engage in. Regional governance culture was measured as a rather “diffuse” concept by examining whether elected officials acknowledged that municipalities in their region faced similar land use problems, whether they agreed on common regional problems; whether the political environment was characterized by conflict and competition; whether municipalities had good working relationships with each other; and whether the municipalities recognized the extra-jurisdictional impacts of their land use policies. Cooperation (the dependent variable) in general and informal cooperation (a component of cooperation) in particular were measured by asking elected officials to indicate whether they were engaged in very specific land use related cooperative activities such as informal conversations among elected officials, joint committees to explore land use related issues, and collaborative land use projects among municipalities. Elected officials were also asked to name the municipalities they cooperated with. These two variables are conceptually distinct in the same manner that attitudes are generally regarded as distinct from behavior. That said, there is always the possibility that elected officials used their cooperative behavior to inform their assessment of regional governance culture. To avoid this problem, the set of questions evaluating the governance culture of an area were placed early in the survey and questions about cooperative activities were asked later in the survey. It is also conceivable that the assessment of regional governance culture could be based on factors other than whether a municipality is engaged in a cooperative effort. Finally, if elected officials had used their cooperative activities to assess the governance culture, one would

expect these two variables to be highly correlated. The pairwise correlation between elected officials' assessment of regional governance culture and informal cooperation was .043 with a significance level of .616 indicating no significant relationship between the two variables and highlighting the lack of strong evidence to suggest that elected officials confounded the region's governance culture with their cooperative activities.

4.6 Qualitative information

The first aim of this dissertation was to develop an empirical understanding of the factors predicting cooperation on land use issues. This was primarily accomplished using the quantitative data in the regression models and substantiating the quantitative data with excerpts from the case studies. The second aim was to understand the limits to cooperation. The data presented to address this second aim are primarily qualitative data. These qualitative data were obtained from both the surveys of elected officials and the case studies. There were two questions on the mail survey that addressed the limits to cooperation. The first question asked non-cooperating elected officials for a written account of why they chose not to cooperate on land use issues. The second question asked for an account of whether the municipality in question had been a part of an unsuccessful cooperation attempt and if so, an explanation of why the effort was unsuccessful. Elected officials also had the opportunity to record other thoughts on cooperation in general in the final "comments" part of the survey. In the following chapter, I present my analysis of the limits to cooperation. This chapter is followed by two other chapters that provide the results pertaining to the factors predicting cooperation.

Chapter 5

Impediments to cooperation

5.1 Introduction

In chapter 3, I outlined a long list of reasons why local governments should cooperate with each other on land use planning issues. However, given that the norm in permissive states is to make independent rather than joint cooperative decisions, the next question to ask is: What factors stand in the way of municipalities voluntarily cooperating in their planning and development management efforts in order to yield multi-jurisdictional solutions to those multi-jurisdictional problems? The difficulties of achieving such voluntary cooperation have been studied extensively and are often explained as resulting from many combined factors. These include basic ideological differences, the authority of one or more stakeholders to take unilateral action, constitutional issues and precedents, a history of unsuccessful decision-making efforts and conflict, and the uneven distribution of power among stakeholders (Gray 1989, Selin and Chavez 1995). Further, formal and informal institutional constraints such as the home rule tradition, lack of trust, fear of loss of autonomy, lack of information, historic conflicts, and rivalries have also proved to be impediments to local land use cooperation (Rogers and Whetten 1982; Nice and Fredericksen 1995; CLOSUP 2005).

On the whole, this body of work suggests that localities fail to cooperate for any one (or more) of several fundamental reasons. Specifically, they do not cooperate because they never have in the past (i.e., simple inertia); they see no pressing reason to do so now (e.g., the problem is a state or regional problem, not a local problem); they fear cooperating (e.g., because it might threaten their autonomy or alter power relationships); they see cooperation as detrimental to their own interests (e.g., they perceive themselves as competing with neighboring jurisdictions for residents or desirable development); they simply do not get along with neighboring officials or trust their sincerity for some reason; or, while they see some benefits to cooperation, they place higher priority on other concerns (e.g., maintaining autonomy), they are stymied by institutional hurdles (e.g., lack of clear legal authority to do so), or they lack the administrative capacity, knowledge, or skills needed to do so.

This literature has no doubt made tremendous progress in helping scholars of intergovernmental relations understand why cooperation is both the most sought-after and the most elusive aspect of intergovernmental decision making. But how do the reasons for non-cooperation outlined above translate to planning and development management settings? In other words, what does it mean in a planning setting to say that local governments do not want to give up control and hence do not cooperate? Do the reasons for non-cooperation differ depending on whether local officials are trying to get to the table (initiating cooperation) or stay at the table (sustaining participation after having made the initial decision to cooperate)? Also, are there certain obstacles to cooperation that quite simply cannot be overcome? In this chapter, I will elaborate on the answers to

several of these questions and present results from both the mail surveys and in-person interviews of local elected officials in Michigan.

Local elected officials encounter obstacles to cooperation in a variety of situations. These obstacles might prevent elected officials from generating the initial interest needed to engage in cooperation, stall efforts to sustain interactions and conversations among elected officials during the course of a cooperative effort, hinder both informal and formal cooperative efforts, and prevent informal conversations from materializing into formal agreements with a substantive impact on local land use policy. My research reveals that the obstacles to land use related cooperation fall into two categories: obstacles that prevent local elected officials from initiating cooperation, and obstacles that hinder cooperation during the negotiating process. I elaborate on these two sets of obstacles in the following sections.

5.2 Obstacles to initial cooperation

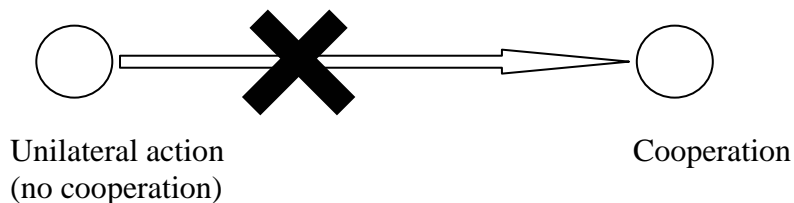


Figure 5.1 Obstacles to initial cooperation

5.2.1 Status quo

“It has always been this way, why change?”

"That's the way we have always done it."⁶

The “protecting the status quo” argument plays out in two separate but interconnected ways at the municipality level. The first relates to the destiny of local governments (i.e., autonomy and independence of government at the local level), and the second relates to policy outcomes and governmental operations at the local level. The principles of sovereign government and municipal independence have always provided meaning to and the foundation on which municipalities were first created in the United States. And it is this independence and authority, as Tocqueville rightly observed, that provide meaning to municipal governance even today. To most local officials, this independence defines municipal government and sets it apart from the centralization and bureaucracy of the rest of the political system. In fact, independence alone gives municipalities their importance. In Michigan, local elected officials truly believe and are invested in this system of municipal independence. Any change, in their eyes, would drastically alter something that isn't really broken. As they see it, mandated or exhorted cooperation would threaten the very essence of this system of municipal independence. This status quo is important to elected officials, because reproducing it confers upon them certain benefits (e.g., autonomy) that unfortunately stand in direct contrast to a more social purposive model of governance.

Independence, elected officials explain, is manifested first and foremost in the ability of elected officials to make independent decisions for their jurisdiction. Local officials reinforce their independence when they reproduce the existing governance structures. Further, local independence helps elected officials maintain two kinds of power that seem

⁶ Both quotes are survey responses

central to our understanding of autonomy, control, and turf in municipal government (see Stone 1989). Systemic power is derived from the social structure that accords power in certain ways (e.g., the tradition of home rule, and the presence of township governments in Michigan). Pre-emptive power is the capacity to use the strategic position that systematic power provides (e.g., independent decision making). The realization of systemic power occurs through pre-emptive power. Within these two conceptions of power are multiple dimensions of power: “power to” and “power over.” An elected official explains how “power to” and “power over” are realized in a land use setting:

Let’s say I ran the township so when I say jump everybody jumps. When I say sign this agreement, people don’t read it, they just raise their hands. And there are many townships like that. So suddenly you have taken a very comfortable arrangement where someone can go to your planning commission and if you don’t like him you can tell your members of the PC, “That ain’t going nowhere - screw him.” Or conversely overlook things to help him out. This land division comes in and the developer needs a few extra land divisions and you just give it to him. You can do that when you have things under your control. Suddenly you go into a Joint Planning Commission situation in which – wait a minute, those people are elected from another city or township and I can’t control them and they can’t control me. What happens to my power now when someone comes and says they want to put a gas station in? I didn’t like them and in the previous arrangement I can say “Screw you.” Unfortunately that is what much of politics at the local level comes down to – do I like you enough? Am I going to screw you or not? It boggles my mind. At least that’s the way it has been practiced in my township. So a traditionalist is giving up a lot of his or her power once we expand the boundaries, once they expand the governmental units to people they no longer directly control. Because as supervisor you appoint the members of the planning commission with the board’s consent – that is your one appointment solely that you have. Suddenly you are not appointing all the members of the joint planning commission anymore, are you? So I would think that you would find quite a few traditionalists who would not want to give up what has been, you know, little fiefdoms – this is his kingdom here . . . mine here . . . hers there . . .⁷

⁷ Local elected official, personal communication, October 22, 2007

In this situation, elected officials use their power over planning commissioners to achieve the planning outputs they desire. Possessing these two aspects of power helps elected officials assert their independence. Cooperation on regional issues would require elected officials to share this decision-making power with neighboring entities or to completely cede it to the state as in the growth-management states.

Discussions during a Joint Planning Commission meeting in the Manchester area in Washtenaw County confirm the elected official's concern about losing control over Joint Planning Commission members from other jurisdictions. A joint planning commissioner warns the group during its preliminary discussions:

We should make decisions not because Uncle Charlie who we have coffee with is a good guy and we like him enough, but because we want the future of our community to be a certain way. We should use this regional planning process to figure out what this future should be for us. So then we can justify our plans based on the vision we have for this region as a whole.⁸

This single remark confirms elected officials' worst fears of losing control. It is this inability to control other decision makers, the decision-making process, and the outcomes of the planning process that elected officials anticipate losing through cooperation.

Further, officials seek cooperation in land use settings to manage the interdependencies among local governments. But the locally crafted argument for independence runs completely counter to the notion of regionally interdependent communities that do not follow political boundaries. Ironically, at the local level the most visible boundary is the political one.

⁸ Joint Planning Commission meeting, December 12, 2007

This understanding of local boundaries and local independence has several implications that concern planners and policy makers: First, it creates an “us versus them” mentality of divisiveness rather than commonality. Second, it completely alters the perception of whether regional problems have impacts at the local scale. This in turn affects the perceived need for cooperation negatively; i.e., some elected officials say, “Regional issues are not our problem, we do not have any problems in our jurisdiction, and therefore we do not see a need for cooperation.”⁹ Those who defend this perspective indicate that well-defined boundaries allow local governments to be responsible for their own issues. That is, transparent boundaries reduce accountability. One official remarks, “Our problems are of our own making and we will fix them.” He continues, “More fluid regional boundaries remove accountability from elected officials – they can quickly blame everybody else for their problems and not act on them because nobody else is cooperating with them to solve their issues.”¹⁰ When confronted with this statement, however, elected officials who are currently engaged in cooperative efforts respond:

Right – but the point is that within your local political boundary the problems that you create are more apparent – But outside your boundaries, because you think you are independent politically and otherwise from neighboring jurisdictions, you assume that your policies and decisions have no impacts – but the truth is that they do have impacts on the regional community. These impacts might be secondary impacts that are much more implied. For example, suburban municipalities developing rapidly helped cause the demise of the center city – a secondary impact – but it takes a non-parochial individual to realize this, and much more important, acknowledge it and do something about it.¹¹

Local officials who indicate that they would prefer not to deviate from existing land use policies and regulations explain further that their tried and tested policies work well

⁹ Survey response

¹⁰ Local elected official, personal communication, October 24, 2007

¹¹ Local elected official, personal communication, November 11, 2007

within local boundaries. Further, if a problem were isolated, they would know best how to modify their internal regulations to fix the problem. This argument is related to another key reason that local elected officials resist cooperating with their neighbors: They feel that their primary responsibility is to their constituents, who after all are the people they know best.

That said, the social forces that created the 6x6 township government as we know it have shifted, and the fundamental nature of independent governmental units has changed. Today most jurisdictions are not as self sufficient as they used to be (and as Tocqueville observed them to be). Jobs in a municipality typically do not pay for its housing stock. Bed-and-a-job communities have been transformed to more elastic bed-for-me, job-for-you communities. This alone affirms the extent to which jurisdictions are interdependent. Some elected officials recognize this and understand that the term ‘quality of life,’ which is so often used locally to justify planning activities, includes the entire live-work experience even if residents are not both living and working within the same political boundary. Others would rather parse these roles and be responsible only for the role they play in creating and sustaining this experience.

5.2.2 Local knows local best

“Smaller township governments know what is best for their community.”

“We believe that our local interests are best served by maintaining local control.”¹²

The existence of municipalities in Michigan has long been justified by Jeffersonian notions of direct democracy and the desirability of situating government as close as possible to its people. Although municipalities today do not function the way their creators envisioned – direct citizen involvement has been over time replaced by representative government through elected boards - this ideal of the municipality persists even now. With this ideal comes the understanding that local officials not only understand their citizens’ preferences better, but also understand the key issues of the municipality much better than anybody else can. The only way to preserve their individuality and the local character, several officials say, is to maintain local control of land use policies. As one official remarks, “To make all decisions the same [regional] would result in a "faceless" citizenry.”¹³ Another official adds, “Each jurisdiction has its own character, which supports the local feelings of community.”¹⁴ Implicit in these comments are two assumptions: First, that regional policies would sacrifice individualism for uniformity; and second, that the absence of a regional constituency will result in a black box in place of the citizens for whom government exists in the first place.

At its most basic level, this argument is tied to the question of both constituencies and interests. Local officials pragmatically explain that there is no regional constituency, since local officials are accountable to their own residents and not to residents from other

¹² Both quotes are survey responses

¹³ Survey response

¹⁴ Survey response

jurisdictions. Therefore, they feel that their interests (and those of their jurisdiction and citizens) would be compromised if they engaged in cooperation. They complain that any semblance of personal contact would be lost to bureaucracy. This was apparent as I interviewed a village president in the coffee store that she owns, which is located in a renovated historic building in the heart of her village's downtown. The Village President is interrupted three times in five minutes. Residents casually converse with her about topics ranging from invitations to barn dances to water and sewer issues, and even the village's latest joint planning efforts. She says, "Small government is good government. I am very accessible – if there is a water or sewer problem, I am the first to hear about it right here in my coffee store. I understand the local economy very well. I understand the struggles that our main street faces and I am there struggling with them."¹⁵

The idea of a regional entity that is removed from the day-to-day functioning of the local government troubles local officials for several reasons. First, regional decision making would take away from the benefits of small government and its constituency; second, local officials are unsure whether their interests would be served; and third, they do not want to compromise the quality of their local decision making by cooperating with their neighbors. The final assessment is explicated in the following section.

5.2.3 I don't like what my neighbor is doing

“[The] township next door is trying to keep growth to only agricultural and sprawled homes.”

“Both townships are very lax in zoning and enforcement.”

¹⁵ Local elected official, personal communication, October 26, 2007

“They are developing rapidly without public utilities.”¹⁶

These statements are often followed by stories of the substandard quality of planning decisions, zoning enforcement, and land use patterns in surrounding municipalities. Respondents then look incredulous as they contemplate cooperating with a neighbor whose quality of work they do not quite approve of. These elected officials explain the fear of having part of their decision making relinquished to individuals who cannot make good decisions for their own jurisdictions. Most growth management regimes appease this fear by instituting a neutral organization (i.e., neutral with regard to local politics and concerns) to monitor and ensure the quality of local plans, or by establishing minimum standards and content of master plans at the state level. In the absence of such institutions, to ensure at least a basic quality of land use decisions local officials have to factor the fear of compromising the quality of decision making into their calculus when confronted with an opportunity to cooperate with their neighbors. The underlying theme here is “mistrust,” which manifests itself in three ways. Local officials cannot trust their neighbors to look out for their interests, represent them well, and produce quality work. This lack of trust presents a tremendous impediment to initiating cooperation.

5.2.4 Why cooperate in the absence of a need for cooperation?

“[There are] no compelling local issues to force cooperation.”

“A need has not been present.”

¹⁶ All three quotes are survey responses. Echoed by J. Local elected official, personal communication, October 24, 2007

“We will cooperate when needed and stay out of each other’s way when NOT.”¹⁷

The question of “need” seems central to any discussion of cooperation. This assessment of need has two dimensions: objective need and perceived need. The objective need for cooperation exists at all times because of the fundamental nature of land use planning. The perceived need for cooperation is affected by several considerations: whether elected officials consider themselves interdependent with their neighboring jurisdictions and therefore feel connected to regional issues as a whole, even in the absence of pressing concerns in their own jurisdiction; whether elected officials anticipate benefits accruing to their own jurisdiction from cooperation; and whether local governments as a general philosophy believe in a more reactionary or proactive approach to both local and regional problems. This last consideration seems especially important. Some officials attribute their lack of cooperation to the lack of a pressing need for it: “Things are slow now. More developmental pressure would promote more regional planning.”¹⁸ This statement implies that they are simply waiting until the time is right. Others candidly observe, “Looking at the surrounding areas and how they have grown over the past years, there is a real fear that we will lose our identity like them when growth comes our way. The economy is slow now and it gives us time to consider our options and plan, so that we will be prepared when growth comes our way in the future.”¹⁹ In other words, some officials take a reactionary approach, waiting until a tangible problem presents a clear need for cooperation. Others, however, link problems like sprawling development

¹⁷ All three quotes are survey responses

¹⁸ Survey response

¹⁹ Local elected official, personal communication, October 26, 2007

patterns to independent decision making and view proactive cooperation as the first line of defense against them. To the extent that local officials take a response-oriented approach to assessing the need for cooperation, they actually create obstacles to cooperation.

This discussion exemplifies how important it is for scholars to understand the calculus decision makers use in assessing the need for cooperation. The following set of statements made by several elected officials during the course of interviews and/or through survey responses sheds some light on this issue.

“We are an inner city that doesn't have a lot of demand for a varied number of land uses that have not already been used – so we do not need to cooperate.”

“We are a built-up suburb with very little undeveloped land. It is more likely that your question will apply more to the outer limits of urban sprawl.”

“We have 100% rural ag land – why cooperate?”²⁰

From the inner city and the suburb's perspective, cooperation is not needed because they do not encounter many planning and zoning changes and decisions on a daily basis. From the rural township's perspective cooperation is not needed because they do not anticipate developing in the future. This is indicative of both the myopic lens through which local

²⁰ All three quotes are survey responses

officials view their problems and their narrow-minded approach to thinking about the need for cooperation.

A broader perspective might suggest something quite different. For the city and the suburb, cooperation with the neighboring townships might provide the motivation for surrounding rural areas to want to maintain the city as their vital urban core rather than compete for commercial development with the city. Further, for landlocked and built-out cities seeking elastic boundaries, cooperation might help open up dialogue with neighboring townships around annexation issues. For a completely rural jurisdiction, the development threat to agricultural land could be averted by cooperation with their more developed counterparts. Cooperation with surrounding rural townships could produce contiguously and consistently protected agricultural land. This entire discussion suggests that local officials might not recognize the need for cooperation because they lack a complete understanding of the issues and how cooperation might help solve these issues, or that they understand the issues but are not willing to act on them unless and until their hand is forced. This lack of perceived need for cooperation serves as a severe impediment to cooperation.

5.2.5 We have irreconcilable differences – we want different things

“Rural townships don't have the same problems that we do.”

“We have very dissimilar problems.”

“[The] neighboring city has different zoning issues and neighboring townships have expressed different zoning priorities.”²¹

Scholars contributing to the literature on intergovernmental cooperation have suggested that homogenous communities are better able to cooperate than heterogeneous communities. This is because homogeneous communities can more easily identify commonalities on which to base their cooperative efforts. With heterogeneity come differences that are hard for most jurisdictions to overcome. My research indicates that the differences that make it difficult for elected officials to cooperate with each other fall into three categories: the personalities, priorities, and preferences of elected officials; the structural and policy differences (i.e., cities, villages and townships) among municipalities; and the problems that these municipalities face.

Personality differences hinder local officials from working together effectively. One local official explains:

We are all friends and neighbors but there are obviously differences in personalities. It amazes me – there are some really strong personalities. Ultimately you agree basically on everything, but then if there is a personality conflict you have a real challenge to come forward with your agreement and get it moving, because you have different styles of working together.²²

While several other aspects of the cooperative process are typically open to compromise, the personalities that participants bring to the table are not. These personalities are also reflected in the roles that participants play in cooperative processes (whether they are the aggressive leaders, the pacifiers, the logical thinkers, mediators and so on), thus

²¹ All three quotes are survey responses

²² Local elected official, personal communication, October 26, 2007

contributing to the intra-group dynamics of an effort. In the absence of formal conflict management and negotiation processes, strong leaders seem to be able to push group processes along and use these intra-group dynamics for the benefit of the process (see Hershberg et al. 1992; Grell and Gappert 1993; Schneider et al. 1995; Mintrom 2000). In the absence of leaders who can effectively tap into these dynamics to conjure momentum for cooperative effort, personality differences seem hard to overcome.

The differences in elected officials' preferences, types of local government, and municipal problems seem to be inter-related. One elected official explains:

We are different, yes – we are a village and we are cooperating with townships. The village does have different needs from the township, and so I think it is important that we do acknowledge and work within those guidelines. So I am not sure those political boundaries should ever be erased completely. BUT among those differences we also have commonalities – that we together encompass a community. Obviously your unit of government is your first priority – its problems shape your preferences. We [the village] want a vital downtown and they [the township] want to stay rural. But we also want to preserve their rural space and they want to preserve our downtown. It is in all our best interests to do that.²³

This local elected official suggests two things: First, joint goals will suffice where common goals do not exist. The difference is that joint goals can be cultivated from two complementary and even disparate needs, while common goals are best arrived at by identifying commonalities. For example, when cities and townships cooperate, there are usually more differences than commonalities. As per this elected official's insight, it might be foolhardy to base cooperation across jurisdiction types on commonalities. Local officials might be better served by looking for complementary land use problems (such as protecting farmland and investing in downtowns) as the foundation for their efforts.

²³ Local elected official, personal communication, October 26, 2007

Second, the problem of differences exists only when locally drawn political boundaries define jurisdictional problems. If the city and the township redefined their individual boundaries so that they saw themselves as part of a common region, then the goals of revitalizing urban cores and protecting farmland would be common to both the township and city residents. In other words, instead of differences between the two jurisdictions, there would be common problems of the region as a whole. To the extent that local officials take issue with the personalities of their counterparts and see more differences than commonalities, they create tremendous obstacles to cooperation.

5.2.6 False ceiling

“We make sure our zoning districts are compatible at our boundaries.”

“We comment on each other’s plans.”²⁴

Local officials have different ideas of what constitutes cooperation. These preconceived notions, which provide the standards against which they gauge their own efforts at cooperation, develop in a variety of ways. Local officials are typically members of their local government’s lobbying and representative organizations. In Michigan most township officials are members of the Michigan Township Association, and most city officials are members of the Michigan Municipal League. In this capacity, some elected officials regularly attend land use conferences and workshops where they are exposed to new academic material and practical examples of land use planning innovations in Michigan and other parts of the country. Further, professional planning organizations,

²⁴ Both quotes are survey responses

county planning agencies and regional organizations also convene such forums where local officials interact with each other, planning practitioners, policymakers, and academics. These interactions facilitate learning, and learning has the potential to alter preconceived notions. Not all elected officials attend such events, however. Local officials might also develop notions of what constitutes cooperation by weighing the information they have about cooperation against what is feasible or achievable in their own jurisdictions. The extent of the knowledge that elected officials accumulate thus defines the range of cooperative arrangements that exist and are possible in their universe. Furthermore, officials often conflate the cooperative arrangements that are possible with those that are probable. When they do so, their universe of cooperation shrinks and becomes limited to only those cooperative strategies that are probable in their jurisdiction. In this way local officials define the upper limit of cooperation, and in many cases this upper limit is lower than what cooperation by definition demands at its most basic level. In other words, local officials seem to create and be satisfied with a false ceiling (a false upper limit) of cooperation.

The idea of what constitutes cooperation is also defined by the minimum standards set by the state. In Michigan, the Coordinated Planning legislation of 2001 mandates that local governments comment on their neighboring jurisdiction's master plans during plan making and plan update processes. For some localities, this constitutes their entire realm of cooperation around land use issues. Also, although Michigan law does not mandate it, ensuring the compatibility of boundary land uses is one of the most basic actions that local governments can undertake to ensure minimal land use conflicts in their

jurisdiction. Several jurisdictions fail to do even this, so jurisdictions that undertake this activity voluntarily deserve credit for it. But neither commenting on the neighbor's master plan nor ensuring land use compatibility requires any level of substantial interaction among elected officials. Yet several elected officials were quick to point out that they cooperate with their neighbors by engaging in the above two tasks. The question is not whether these two tasks constitute cooperation. Rather the problem is that several elected officials are complacent about how much they have accomplished and not really aware of how more could be done. This false ceiling serves as a tremendous impediment to cooperation.

5.2.7 History of political conflict – your past will always catch up with you

“We do not cooperate because we have a history of conflict between jurisdictions.”

“50 years of non-cooperation will do it to you.”²⁵

The memory of intergovernmental politics and conflict at the local level seems to be a lasting one. This memory of past conflicts is a tremendous impediment to cooperation because it informs what will be feasible in a particular locality. This rationality in thinking stands in direct contrast to the larger purposive vision needed to engage in cooperation. Hence the circular relationship between the vision of cooperation and its feasibility – the more people invest in a vision, the more feasible it will be — but people invest only in visions that seem feasible. In this way the history of political conflict among jurisdictions injects doubt into the initiation of any cooperative process.

²⁵ Both quotes are survey responses

During an evening's conversation, elected officials in Washtenaw County likened this problem to a situation in Saul Bellow's novel *Henderson the Rain King*. Eugene Henderson, a troubled middle-aged man, goes to Africa. While living with some of the local tribes he finds himself taking part in a sort of rain festival. For the ceremony to go on as planned, a big statue must be moved to a different location. The local "big man" of the village tries to move it, but he can't. Henderson then tries to move the statue and accomplishes what everyone deemed impossible. The native (who was no doubt big enough to move the statue) could not move it because the memory of past defeat precluded his success. The elected officials explain why they relate to the story: "You have to get by the memory of past defeat, and that is what I think we are doing and that is what cooperation helps you do. It helps you begin to build trust and will help you overcome the memory of past defeat, because every time you tried to work with the village in the past it has ended up rancorous. Why will it be any different now?"²⁶ This memory of past defeat seems to define the realm of possibilities and impede cooperation in the universe of local planning and development management. Overcoming this barrier requires strong leadership and officials who are willing to roll the dice and take a chance.

One of the largest contributors to this history of past conflict is annexation. The issue of annexation has defined the relationships between cities and townships for more than a century. In Michigan this relationship is characterized by antagonism, with townships fearing that they would be reduced to mere appendages due to the city's desire to engulf its neighbors, and cities dreading that their future growth lies in the hands of their rural counterparts. Both cities and townships in Michigan express dissent over Michigan's

²⁶ Local elected official, personal communication, October 22, 2007

annexation laws. Each side accuses the other of having a more advantageous position. In fact, Michigan's laws today allow for a push-pull relationship among cities and townships, with cities pushing for annexation and townships resisting losing their land.

“Townships limit our growth and this hurts our local economies.”

“Lack of cooperation from [the township] - refusing annexation - attempting to develop without public utilities”

“The city is run, in my opinion, by greedy individuals, who would like to take away what we have.”²⁷

These statements express the sentiments of most city and township officials. Cities find that they are land locked. Their economies depend on the renewal and expansion of their tax base. City officials read academic research making claims such as the following:

“When a city stops growing, it starts shrinking.” “Economically robust cities are elastic cities.” “Elastic cities have lower racial segregation and social inequalities.”

City officials then conclude that the economic and social future of their city is in jeopardy.

The most rational option is to expand city borders, and city officials and residents in Michigan feel that they have the inherent right to do so.

Townships, on the other hand, are in a bind. They can direct development towards the city to establish a population of at least 100 in areas contiguous to the city, which would ensure that the city cannot unilaterally annex their land. In doing so, however, they are setting themselves up to lose development and revenue at their outer limits should a city's annexation attempt succeed – that is, if they are unable to force a referendum or unable to

²⁷ All three quotes are from surveys

get the votes necessary to turn down the annexation attempt. They also have an incentive to make sure that such development is of higher density so they can reach the 100-person mark more easily. However, the higher the density of development becomes, the greater is the chance that they would require the city to extend water and sewer to this development. Most Michigan cities are wary of expanding utilities to the surrounding townships without annexing the land served by utility expansion. Added to this, township officials are extremely suspicious of the role developers play in annexation attempts and report that they have to monitor [them?] constantly to ensure that developers do not petition the city to have the property annexed.

Annexation woes make for good storytelling, and this research unearthed several narratives of annexation battles gone wrong. In the late 1990s Sylvan Township, in a proactive attempt to guard against annexation by the Village of Chelsea, commissioned its own water and sewer plant without paying any attention to the extent of the growth needed to sustain such a plant. This move not only reinforced the historically negative relationships between the two jurisdictions but also created uncertainty regarding the future of the relationship. The Sylvan township supervisor explains:

We are looking at cooperation now as the first step towards repairing what were some very very rocky relations between the township and the then village and now the city of Chelsea [the village of Chelsea just recently became a city]. Ten years ago we had a township supervisor and a village president who could not get along. The upshot of that was just awful land use planning. The upshot of that was that our supervisor at that time consulted a law firm up in Lansing to ask, “What can we do to prevent annexation?” etc., etc. The lawyer said, “Why don’t you have your own sewer and water system?” So the supervisor went out and created a sewer and water district. He went out and floated bonds. Now we have a water plant and a sewer district. Those bonds are in desperate shape. We did not get the anticipated growth. They said, “Well how are we going to prevent annexation from the city of Chelsea?” Real land use issue right? “We are going to

set our own sewer and water district.” Because that is a real defense against it. You [the city] can provide municipal water and sewer service. Now *we* [the township] can provide municipal water and sewer service. They didn’t take a look at the land to see how many homes it would have and everything. They simply said, “What do we need? Oh, we need a thousand REU’s [residential equivalent units] to make it work. So we are going to say there is a thousand REU’s out there.” Well, there is not. It turns out there is room for 600 homes. Oops.²⁸

After erecting the water and sewer plant to avoid annexation, experiencing less than the desired amount of growth, running the plant at a loss for 10 years, and facing the possibility of having to raise a general tax in a rural township to pay off the plant, Sylvan Township is now trying to sell the plant to the City of Chelsea. They hope a franchise agreement would provide a win-win situation for both the city and the township and reflect a renewed and invigorated relationship for the next decade – a relationship based on joint and not unilateral action. Incidents such as the one described above create additional pressure on newly elected officials, who have the onerous task of not only repairing old relationships but also forging new ones.

This is because when cities use their power *over* townships *to* unilaterally annex township land, they reinforce both their systemic and pre-emptive powers, which are safeguarded by the local government structure and institutions in Michigan. Any agreements reached over annexation would challenge the systemic forces that have created the current structure of local government in Michigan. Therefore such agreements are hard to reach. Today, however, several local jurisdictions realize that annexation serves as the first and foremost impediment to cooperation and view annexation agreements as the first step towards future cooperation. When cities make unilateral

²⁸ Local elected official, personal communication, October 22, 2007

moves to expand their boundaries, the townships typically respond with equal hostility by undertaking actions that would help protect them against annexation – even though such responses might be irrational and might end up costing rather than benefiting the townships. The issue of annexation plays the largest role in determining whether political relationships among municipalities are tumultuous or tempered.

5.2.8 Internal conflict: United we stand; divided we...

“When cooperation between townships was suggested by the supervisor, [the] board voted no.”

“Our neighboring boards have too much turmoil.”

“Cooperation will be a new endeavor for our township. The new elected board is receptive to the idea; they encouraged it. This was not true in the past.”

“My council is not strongly supportive. The change of one council seat could end [the] attempt [to cooperate].”

“How in God's name can we become adept at cooperation externally when we cannot accomplish it internally?”²⁹

Internal conflicts in local governments stifle governmental innovations. Such conflicts are of several varieties. Sometimes conflicts arise between the chief elected official and his or her board. At times the conflict is within the board itself, among several of its elected members. The relationship between the planning commission and the elected

²⁹ All five quotes are from survey responses

board, planning staff and the elected board could also be characterized by conflict. These conflicts might emerge from a variety of factors such as personality clashes, local politics, and disagreement on key issues. As Leo Tolstoy writes in *Anna Karenina*, “Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.” Similarly, every dysfunctional local government has its own particular tale of woe.

In Dexter Township in Washtenaw County, the internal conflict is between the Chief Elected Official (CEO) and the township board. An elected official from a neighboring jurisdiction observes, “The CEO in this township cannot even get her board to do their homework and read their materials before attending board meetings.” Further, the one board member who does his homework is an 84-year-old farmer who does not care too much for planning and zoning. This CEO describes the conflict within her board as follows:

Carl [the farmer] is vocal about his opinions, and it is hard to compromise with him. He is just a grumpy old stubborn jerk. He is a character. I love him for his work ethic. But he would be happy if there [were] no such thing as a zoned community, or a planning commission. Then again, I have trustees that open their work packet on the way to the board meeting. That drives me mad. I never agree with Carl but at least he is there ready to present his case.³⁰

For this supervisor, the juggling act of balancing conflicting personalities in her board seems to detract from all of the things the board could accomplish together for the township as a whole.

In Sylvan Township, there is tremendous conflict between the elected board and the CEO. Before becoming CEO, he served as the editor of a newsletter that critically

³⁰ Local elected official, personal communication, November 28, 2007

evaluated the township board's activities. When election time came, the editor, along with several other township residents, decided to run against all of the township board's incumbents on a reform platform. Only two of the reform-minded challengers were elected – the editor to the position of CEO, and one of his fellow challengers to the board.

The CEO explains:

I was elected on a platform really of “the good old boys have not done really well.” Now unfortunately I took to the board in a minority position, which has made my life grievously hell for the last 2 years. They [the board] have tried to marginalize me over the last 2 years. They have kept me off from all the things they consider important committees. All of the other township supervisors around me sit on the Chelsea Area Fire Authority – I don't. All of the other supervisors sit on the water and sewer authority – I don't. They don't let me. The township clerk shows up at all the other committee meetings where I am a representative member to show where the power really is. She is bad at her job because she is too busy doing mine.³¹

Internal harmony within the governing ranks of local governments is important for a variety of reasons. CEOs cannot make unilateral decisions; rather, they need the majority support of their elected board. Further, CEOs typically interact much more with other local elected officials than do other board members. In so doing, CEOs have many more opportunities to learn. The logic of action in local government, however, suggests that no matter how much CEOs learn, they still need the support of their elected boards to act on what they have learned. Similarly, although planning commissions are appointed by CEOs and confirmed by the board, they are considered the gatekeepers of the comprehensive plan. Changes to the plan, zoning ordinance, or the function of either document require the planning commission's buy in, so that they are not enforcing a plan pro forma but because they are committed to its cause. The relationships among the

³¹ Local elected official, personal communication, October 22, 2007

planning staff, planning commissioners, and the elected board therefore need to be non-adversarial to open channels for the discussion of new ideas and to promote learning.

As discussed above, conflicts manifest in a variety of ways, and dysfunctional government is created by a variety of factors. When conflicts emerge from personality clashes and local politics, they are hard to remedy. Conflicts arising from disagreement on issues, however, can be compromised on and remedied. Elected officials insist that the only way to remedy disagreements on issues is to ensure communication. In the following excerpts, CEOs talk about how important it is to communicate with their elected boards, planning commissions, and planning staff to minimize conflicts and generate support when it comes time to vote on an idea or implement it. When asked if it took a lot of convincing to get her board to support the idea of a joint planning commission, one elected official explains:

I do give the board monthly updates [and] keep the board updated at all times so they feel invested in my thought process and I in theirs. I also attend the PC meetings and keep them updated. So they have been very aware as have also been the rest of the boards of the townships involved in this cooperative effort. I tell them about the discussions we have had and the process that we have been going through. So it was not a surprise to any of them, so they were comfortable voting for it.³²

Another elected official who is a part of the same joint planning commission takes the discussion a step further:

I don't want buy in from the individual jurisdictions' PCs This is not our plan. It has to work the other way around – the plan has to be the PCs' plan They have to be involved in this from the ground up They are not agreeing to *our* plan – that has to be clear. Although it seems as if the joint planning commission is driving the regional planning processes, we need the support of the

³² Local elected official, personal communication, October 26, 2007

existing individual planning commissions. If not, this effort will not go anywhere.³³

During a joint planning commission meeting, others add to this assessment:

It is very important that our planning consultants are involved in this right from the beginning and that they feel invited to this process. Planning consultants typically have a good working relationship with the individual planning commissions and the individual boards. They should play an important role in this so that when it comes time to adopt this regional plan and enforce it, there is complete agreement among the board members, planning consultants, and the planning commission members that this is the right thing to do for our region. So we need to make sure that our planning commission members, board members, and planning consultants either come to these joint planning commission meetings or are informed about what goes on at these meetings. That way if there are any objections, they will be heard during our regional planning process and there will be no surprises in the end.³⁴

This discussion shows that internal conflicts impact planning processes in several ways. Conflicts can create hostile working environments and produce stalemates when it comes to making planning decisions. Conflicts can render planning processes ineffective and remove a sense of legitimacy from planning outcomes. A divided government also seems to create divided factions among the electorate, thus reducing the overall support in a jurisdiction for its planning efforts. All of these concerns affect plan implementation. Some conflicts seem irreparable (unless a turnover of the elected board produces different outcomes), while other conflicts can be remedied through constant information sharing and communication among the governing ranks of local governments.

5.2.9 Absence of leadership

“[There’s] no local champion for planning.”

“[There’s] no leadership at the city government level.”

³³ Joint Planning Commission meeting, January 16, 2008

³⁴ Joint Planning Commission meeting, December 12, 2007

“Cooperation requires that someone assume a leadership role. We have not had such a person or people assume the role.”

“[There’s] no overall county leadership.”³⁵

The absence of leadership impedes cooperation tremendously and is apparent at several levels of the intergovernmental system. At each level the lack of leadership creates the conspicuous absence of the following: a sense of direction of where the state, region, county or municipality is headed; a voice representing the entity and its plans for the future; a strong commitment to the issues at hand; commitment to getting others involved in these issues; and forums for concerns to be resolved. For example, lack of leadership at the state level means that the state government is slow to pass enabling legislation to aid the cause of local planning, fails to provide incentives or mandates to promote local cooperation, and fails to set at least minimum standards or agendas in for cooperation at the local level. In Michigan, local officials blame weak state-level leadership for the lack of comprehensive state land use policies and reform, as well as the notable absence of state funding opportunities, recognition, and incentives for cooperative efforts. For example, Michigan passed the Joint Municipal Planning legislation in 2003. This legislation allows localities to establish joint planning commissions instead of operating under several individual planning commissions. Several localities have established such joint planning commissions (JPC) and consequently joint master plans. Many of the localities with JPCs include combinations of a city and several townships or a village and several townships; i.e., joint planning between urban and rural areas. In most such

³⁵ All four quotes are from survey responses

instances, the objective seems to be to protect rural areas and invest in the urban core – a laudable goal but one that would be hard to achieve without the appropriate implementation tools. Michigan municipalities are not enabled to transfer development rights regionally; even when many municipalities implement a joint master plan, municipalities cannot transfer rights across political boundaries. Michigan municipalities are frustrated at this piecemeal approach to land use reform. They see it as an indication of the lack of leadership at the state level.

At the regional level, the lack of leadership is apparent when regional planning agencies do not proactively organize workshops and information sessions for local officials, do not prepare regional plans or set regional land use goals, and do not organize collaborative projects for local officials around regional issues. At the county level, the dearth of leadership is felt when the county does not prepare an agenda-setting county plan, organize forums for local interaction, provide the latest and most updated information to local officials, or provide staff support to local cooperative efforts. At the local level, the lack of leadership is reflected in the absence of the following: communication channels to interact with neighboring officials, a conduit for information from the external world and a means of expressing local needs at larger forums, an individual to spearhead regional planning and eliminate the effects of history and politics, and a trusted mediator to facilitate cooperative processes. The lack of any of these types of leadership impedes the initiation of cooperation at the local level.

5.3 Impediments to cooperation at the negotiating table

Although initiating cooperation might be one of the most difficult tasks to accomplish, sustaining a cooperative effort at the negotiating table and during discussions is equally arduous. Obstacles to sustained cooperation manifest themselves when elected officials make that first decision to cooperate, get to the table, and then find after minimal interaction that they face insurmountable obstacles. My results indicate that these obstacles fall into several categories. Elected officials might find that their differences are irreconcilable. For example, they have completely different goals, they are unable to compromise, they are haunted by historic conflicts and annexation issues, they are faced with internal conflict within their own jurisdictions, they lack leadership, or they face tremendous capacity problems. In the following sections, I will examine these issues in more detail.

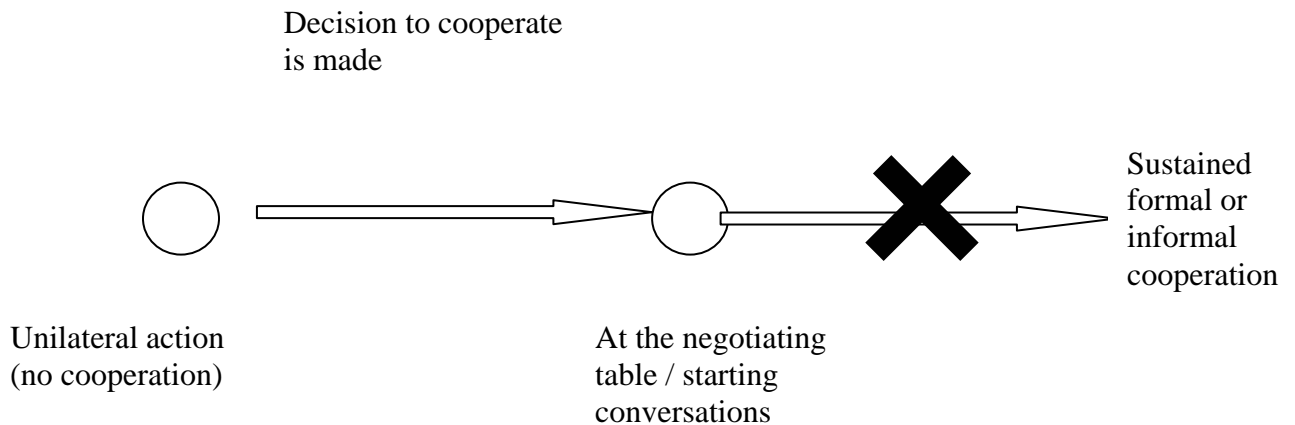


Figure 5.2 Obstacles to sustained cooperation

5.3.1 Different goals and needs

“We thought they would come around – but realized they didn’t care about anything environmental.”

“They did not want to compromise.”³⁶

When elected officials initiate conversations with their neighbors, they might do so with several considerations in mind: they might not know their neighbors’ goals or needs but might be willing to find out; they might already know that localities in their area have similar or at least compatible needs; they might know that their needs are different but hope they can compromise. At the table, however, they often find that several of their initial premises were miscalculated.

First, elected officials might come to negotiations without understanding each other’s needs and realize at the table that they have irreconcilable differences. Second, they might discover that having similar goals and needs does not always mean that cooperation will ensue; they soon find that they do not agree on processes to implement to resolve these needs, or they find they do not have the necessary commitment to follow through with the cooperative effort. Third, elected officials might find that they have compatible goals but too weak of a foundation on which to build a cooperative effort. Finally, elected officials might realize they have different goals and priorities, but also conclude that an unacceptable compromise would have to be reached to satisfy everyone.

Elected officials might draw these conclusions at the table for a variety of reasons. I would like to focus on the last two of the above-mentioned possibilities. Several years ago Mumford recognized the role of education, adjustments, and flexibility in the formulation of regional plans. He warned, “Regional plans are instruments of communal

³⁶ Both quotes are from survey responses

education, and without this education, they can look forward only to partial adjustment. Failing intelligent participation from the smallest unit up . . . and failing adjustments, the plan does not leave a way that is open to change . . . renewal and flexibility” (Scott 1969). Highlighted in this statement is the importance of learning in cooperative processes. When elected officials encounter compatible rather than common goals, they face a few difficulties. As one elected official explains:

When we have compatible goals we find that we have to educate the other party on our issues and needs because they have not experienced them, and they find it hard at times to off the bat understand why we are so worried about what we worried about. The burden is on us to inform them and similarly be open to learning about their issues.³⁷

This is because learning in political life is rooted for the most part in the pragmatic; the concrete everyday experiences of elected officials in their local surroundings form the basis of their actions. When elected officials do not experience a deteriorating downtown, or a loss of agricultural land, they are not acquainted firsthand with either the implications of these problems or the urgency of the actions that are needed to rectify them. Where shared experiences do not exist, local officials have to rely on two types of learning to occur at the table so that compatible can form the basis of cooperation. In the first type of learning, local officials must at least be open to changing their preconceived notions of how to approach a problem, and therefore the strategies that might be required to solve the problem. This might not necessarily mean compromising on their own goals and needs, but rather understanding that strategies that run counter to what they initially anticipated might have to be employed to provide mutual benefits. For example, a common goal of farmland protection might be realized simply by providing large acre

³⁷ Local elected official, personal communication, October 26, 2007

agricultural zoning. Compatible goals of farmland protection and urban core investment might mean that rural townships agree not to seek commercial growth and to direct development towards the city. For its part, the city might agree to serve township development at its outskirts and not to annex township land. The first type of learning is called single loop learning.

“Very large cities always want it their way - very unwilling to change.”

“[We] could not reach an agreement – no compromise.”

“They didn't want what we did.”³⁸

When elected officials realize that they have different goals for their individual jurisdictions and for the region as a whole, they have to compromise to come to an agreement at the table. Whether such a compromise can be achieved depends on several factors. First, because compromises mean weighing different policy alternatives, most compromises require elected officials to alter, reshape, and restructure their basic ideologies, norms, value systems and priorities, all of which play a role in how elected officials weight policy options. For this restructuring to occur, elected officials have to engage in learning that could potentially alter their underlying goals, incompatible norms, and theories of reality. This second type of learning is called double loop learning. Double loop learning is difficult because this kind of fundamental re-education and change is painful for most decision makers.

³⁸ All three quotes are from survey responses

Second, compromises reflect a policy change, and this change occurs through policy-oriented learning. Policy learning refers to relatively enduring alterations of the behavioral intentions that result from experience. Policy learning might occur because of changes to the perception of several external dynamics or an increased knowledge about the problem at hand. In this way, policy learning transforms core belief systems and allows members of a coalition to form ideological similarities. Ideological similarities in turn allow coalition members (in this case, elected officials) to converge on certain policy options. Soon a compromise ensues. Such a cooperative process, in which similar ideologies drive compromises, is fundamentally organized around a logic of thinking (Friedmann 1987).

Third, differences in goals and needs often stymie a policy process, resulting in all talk and no action (a common criticism of the collaborative process). While double loop learning and policy learning both reflect fundamental changes to an individual's belief system and can be extremely enduring, they take a long time to develop. Further, coalitions and cooperative processes are not always held together by learning and ideological similarities. Sometimes coalitions of individuals who drastically differ from each other can develop and be sustained through time if such coalitions are organized for their potential to generate action (Stone 1989). In other words, when pressing issues are at hand, individuals would rather compromise to get things done than hold up the entire policy process. When such compromises are made to hurry action, elected officials hope that the incremental nature of policy processes in general will give them the opportunity

to seek reciprocity at a future date. A cooperative process aimed at producing results is fundamentally organized around a logic of action (Friedmann 1987).

One elected official explains why several attempts at cooperation fail. Very often elected officials start interactions with each other hoping for an uneven playing field – one that would benefit them. In such situations, compromises are impossible to achieve. Ideally, officials would come to negotiations with the following attitude:

“I am not going to come into this negotiation looking to get the better of you and you are not going to come into this negotiation looking to get the better of me. We are going to lay our problems out on the table and try to find good mutual solutions to them.” But that is not the spirit in a lot of communities. Somebody thinks someone else owes them something because of some incident that happened several years ago. They still think that they are still locked in the memory of past defeats but they are creating present ones to overcome in the future.³⁹

5.3.2 Internal conflict

Scholars of communication realize that one of the fundamental rules of a collaborative process is ensuring that information is relayed back and forth between the negotiating table and the constituents. The literature indicates that this is the only way to generate buy in from the constituents – in this case, the rest of the governing board, staff, and citizens of a locality. When elected officials are at the negotiating table, they play the role of policy brokers. In this capacity, elected officials broker compromises both at the table with the other members of the cooperative effort and back home with their constituents. The primary goal of a policy broker therefore is to minimize conflict, particularly internal conflict within his or her jurisdiction. Elected officials in the Manchester area joint planning process in Washtenaw County strongly emphasize the importance of

³⁹ Local elected official, personal communication, October 22, 2007

communication at every meeting. When asked why they consider it to be of utmost importance in their cooperative process, they point to internal conflict that could have been eased had effective communication been the norm.

The Village of Manchester and neighboring Manchester, Bridgewater, Sharon, and Freedom Townships originally intended to form the Manchester Area Joint Planning Commission. Although Sharon Township had participated in informal cooperative efforts with the other Manchester area localities for more than 10 years, when it came time to formally endorse the process, quite suddenly, Sharon Township bowed out. According to Gary Blades, Sharon Township's supervisor, his board of trustees never even voted on the measure. "The direction [the vote] would have gone is very obvious," said Mr. Blades. "Rather than have them vote 'no,' I chose not to take a vote."⁴⁰ Elected officials from other Manchester area localities say that this internal conflict was caused primarily by a lack of communication and information sharing on the part of the Sharon Township officials at both ends (i.e. CEO to the elected board and vice versa). One elected official explains, "Historically Sharon Township has always participated but has also maintained some independence. This is part of their complication – that they couldn't come to a compromise over how much to participate and how much independence to maintain and their internal conflict over this issue was never remedied."⁴¹

Finally, ongoing cooperative processes come to a complete halt when leadership is absent and when the capacity to sustain a cooperative effort is weak.

⁴⁰ Rudolph, Stephanie. 2007. As Sprawl Looms, Wary Townships Try Joint Planning. Michigan Land use Institute <http://www.mlui.org/growthmanagement/fullarticle.asp?fileid=17197>.

⁴¹ Local elected official, personal communication, November 11, 2007

Table 5.1 A comparison of the obstacles to initiating and sustaining cooperation

Obstacles to initiating cooperation	Obstacles to sustaining cooperation
Status quo	
Local knows local best	
I don't like what my neighbor is doing	
Why cooperate when there is no need?	
We have irreconcilable differences	We have irreconcilable differences
False ceiling	
History of political conflict (annexation)	History of political conflict (annexation)
Internal conflict	Internal conflict
Leadership	Leadership
	Inability to compromise
	Capacity

Table 5.1 above compares the obstacles to initiating cooperation and the obstacles encountered at the table. My results indicate that some obstacles prevent elected officials from getting to the negotiating table but do not play a role in hindering cooperation at the table. These include protecting the status quo (not wanting change), seeing no need for cooperation, operating under the idea that local officials know how best to solve their own problems, thinking they have achieved their maximum cooperative potential (i.e., believing they are doing enough already), and questioning their neighbor's judgment. By getting to the negotiating table or by starting conversations with neighboring localities, elected officials acknowledge that they are willing to deviate from the status quo of independent decision making. By starting conversations with their neighbors, elected officials also acknowledge that there is a need for cooperation and "greater than local action" to solve land use problems, that they trust their neighbor enough to explore cooperation, and that they have not reached their maximum cooperative potential on land use issues. The obstacles common to both initiating and sustaining cooperation are the

differences in goals and needs of localities, the history of political conflict and annexation issues, internal conflict within the localities, and the absence of leadership to initiate and sustain an effort. The obstacles precluding only sustained cooperation include the inability of elected officials to come to an agreement or compromise while negotiating, and the lack of capacity to sustain cooperation.

In conclusion, elected officials have to overcome several obstacles to initiate and sustain a cooperative effort. Annexation issues and historic political conflict seem to be particularly difficult to overcome. One elected official observes, “A million years ago someone from township A did something to someone from township B. It never seems to go away. Institutional memory is long lasting when it comes to those kinds of things. You know and then it gets to the point where people don’t even know why they are upset anymore, but they are.”⁴² Not surprisingly, when asked what caused the failure of prior cooperation attempts, several respondents to the survey said that they didn’t know. When will annexation issues go away? Local elected officials in Michigan speculate that such issues are relegated to the back burner when elected officials seek solutions to pressing issues or when they encounter leadership changes and turnovers in their elected board. Some officials advise slowly building up trust again through small cooperative endeavors and small successes. Obstacles to cooperation are the hardest to overcome, however, when they are implicit and when elected officials encounter several obstacles at the same time. Given this daunting list of reasons that elected officials do not cooperate with each other, the next question I ask is: What factors might nonetheless lead to inter-jurisdictional cooperation of local planning and development management efforts?

⁴² Local elected official, personal communication, November 28, 2007

Chapter 6

Descriptive analysis

Before proceeding to the chapter with the regression results, which explains the factors predicting cooperation, I provide descriptive results from the survey data analysis in this chapter. The descriptive data are organized based on the key independent and dependent variables used in the regression models. The results presented in this chapter are drawn from the municipality, RPA and county planning agency surveys.

6.1 Dependent variable

6.1.1 Cooperation on land use issues

About 49% of municipalities indicated some level of cooperation around land use planning activities. When analyzed by jurisdiction type, 51% of responding townships, 61% of responding villages and 41% of responding cities indicate that they cooperate on land use planning and zoning issues (see figure 6.1). Analysis of Variances (ANOVA's) show that there are no significant differences in either the decision to cooperate [$F(2,182) = 679, p = 509$] or the extent of formal cooperation across jurisdiction types [$F(2,184) = 703, p = 497$]. Among the several impediments to cooperation are those that are induced structurally, created institutionally, and/or shaped through preference structures. Structural impediments to cooperation might exist in different ways: home rule structure

of a state; and the distribution of power across different levels of government (e.g. state, regions, counties, and municipalities). One type of manifestation of the structural impediment to cooperation might be through the existence of different types of jurisdictions (e.g. townships, cities and villages) in a state. These types of governments are very different from each other in terms of organization and administration, and often have different needs. By virtue of the powers they possess (typically attributed to cities) and / or the independence they seek (typically attributed to townships), it has been suggested that one of these municipality types could be the bottleneck for land use cooperation.⁴³ This research shows that cities, villages, and townships in Michigan do not differ in terms of how much they cooperate or whether they cooperate at all on land use issues. For example, annexation problems, which seem to be a tremendous impediment to cooperation, are borne equally by all of these municipality types (explained in greater detail in chapter 5).

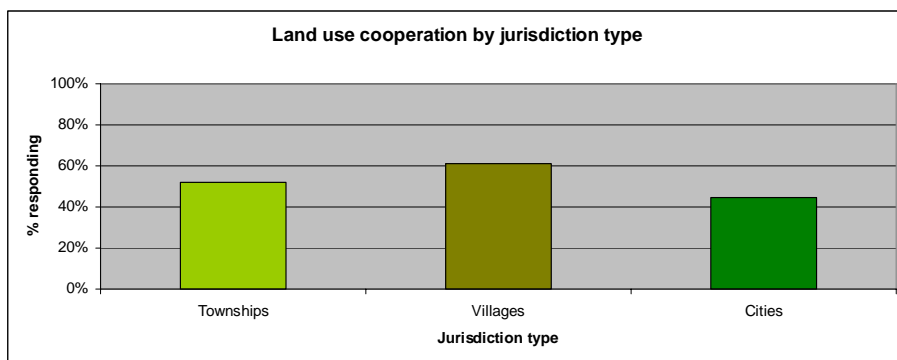


Figure 6.1 Extent of land use cooperation by jurisdiction type

⁴³ Several survey respondents indicated that the “cities” or the “townships” in Michigan never contemplated the idea of cooperation because of what they represented as political jurisdictions. Several city officials noted that townships were managed by individuals who sought independence and autonomy and several township officials noted that the cities were never willing to cooperate because they were self-sufficient.

The cooperation mechanisms used ranged from a continuum of informal talks and meetings among planning commission members, to more formal means such as establishing joint plans and ordinances and forming Joint Planning Commissions. The percentage of respondents indicating the use of these mechanisms is depicted in Figure 6.2.

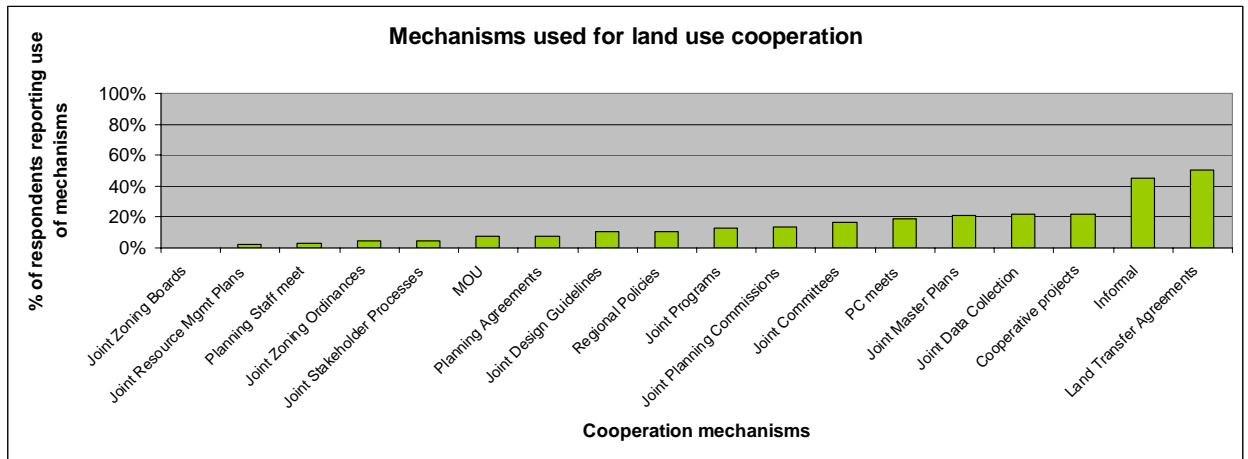


Figure 6.2 Types of mechanisms used for land use cooperation

As the figure indicates, a Conditional Land Transfer Agreement or PA 425 agreement (used by 51% of cooperating municipalities) is the most commonly used cooperative mechanism for land use planning purposes followed by informal cooperation (45%) among local decision makers. Analysis suggests that about 21% of municipalities have written joint master plans and 14% reported considering, discussing, or having established joint planning commissions. Further, about 11% of municipalities indicated using regional land use policies (e.g. urban growth boundaries) and developing joint regional design guidelines. The most informal mechanism used for cooperation in Michigan is collaborative projects among municipalities and the most formal mechanism

used for cooperation is a joint zoning ordinance. Michigan municipalities on average received a formality score of 4 with a standard deviation of 1.5.

On average Michigan municipalities use any “one” of these mechanisms to engage in cooperation, with some municipalities using as many as ten of the listed cooperative mechanisms. Also, analysis indicates that 70% of the municipalities engaging in formal cooperation also engage in informal cooperation, while 30% engage in only formal cooperation. Of all the municipalities that engage in land use related cooperation, 21% cooperate only informally, 24% cooperate only formally, and 55% of municipalities cooperate both formally and informally. This finding confirms the two alternate ways of conceptualizing cooperation (apart from the binomial conceptualization) that were outlined in chapter 3. That is, cooperation might be conceived as a scale with informal cooperation leading up to formal cooperation, and cooperation might also be conceived as a nominal scale where informal and formal cooperation are considered distinct categories.⁴⁴

6.2 Independent variables

6.2.1 Formal institutions

County role

⁴⁴ There is the chance of course that those selecting the formal mechanisms might not have checked any of the informal cooperation categories assuming that informal cooperation is implicitly a part formal cooperation. That is, the sense that to engage in formal cooperation one has to converse with elected officials in other jurisdictions, which is a form of informal cooperation. However, in the survey, I provided no indication of how the listed mechanisms would be later coded so as to not bias respondents towards picking the more formal categories or somehow think that some mechanisms were more important or would be ranked higher than the others. There is also the chance that those engaging in informal cooperation now will solidify their efforts and formalize them in the future.

Counties in Michigan do not have regulatory authority over local plans, ordinances or local planning processes. Counties typically play an advisory role in the planning process, providing numerous forms of assistance to local governments. Results from the survey of county planning agencies in Michigan indicate that 90% of counties comment on local master plans. This however, is the only consistent function that counties in Michigan perform. County role with regard to general planning and zoning seems to be widely dispersed - 20% of counties reported that they plan and zone for local governments; 30% of counties assist local governments with master plan preparation; 35% of counties indicated that they provide technical assistance to local governments while 55% reported that they provide data for plan preparation.

Regional role

Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs - also referred to as the State Planning and Development Districts) in Michigan, like the counties, do not have regulatory authority over local planning processes and plans. However, while 90% of counties report having a countywide land use plan, only 40% of regional agencies have regional plans in place. Results from the survey of regional planning agencies in Michigan indicate that RPAs perform a range of functions with about 70% reporting that they comment on master plans and assist with local plan preparation and 90% reporting that they provide technical assistance and data to municipalities. These statistics when compared with county statistics reveal that county planning departments and RPAs are performing many duplicative roles. Figure 6.3 depicts both the county and RPA role in facilitating general local planning.

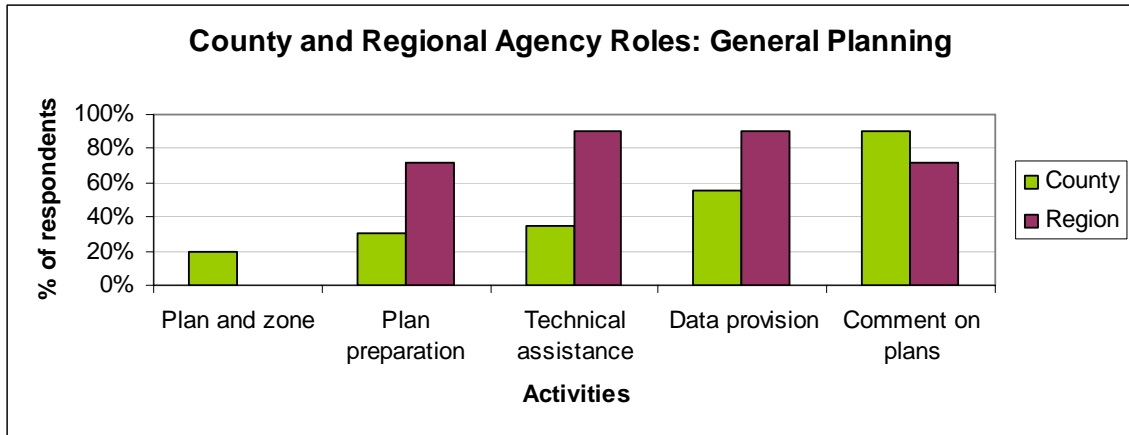


Figure 6.3 County and RPA role: General Planning

In addition to their role in the general planning process, counties and regional planning agencies perform several functions that are aimed at facilitating cooperation among municipalities in the county. These functions range from providing technical and financial assistance for local cooperative efforts, to providing several opportunities for local elected officials and planning staff to interact. The county and regional role in facilitating local cooperation was examined using both surveys of officials from municipalities and surveys of county and regional officials.

Respondents from municipalities were asked to rate the effectiveness of the county planning department and regional planning agency at performing several functions that are important for facilitating cooperation (see figure 6.4). On a scale of 1 (extremely ineffective) to 5 (extremely effective), municipalities indicated that county and regional planning agencies were moderately effective (median of 3) at providing technical assistance for cooperation, providing a forum for problem solving, providing leadership, providing a fair representation of area-wide interests, and setting area-wide priorities and

goals. Most importantly, county and regional planning agencies were rated as ineffective in providing mediation support (median of 2) and extremely ineffective in providing financial incentives (median of 1) for local cooperation on planning and zoning issues.

The formal institutional variable that is used for regression purposes is one that combines the several functions on which municipalities evaluated the effectiveness of the RPAs and county planning agencies. This composite variable has an observed range of 18 – 88 out of a possible range of 18 - 90, with a mean of 44 and a standard deviation of 16. This suggests that there is tremendous variation in how effective county and regional planning agencies are at providing support for local cooperation.

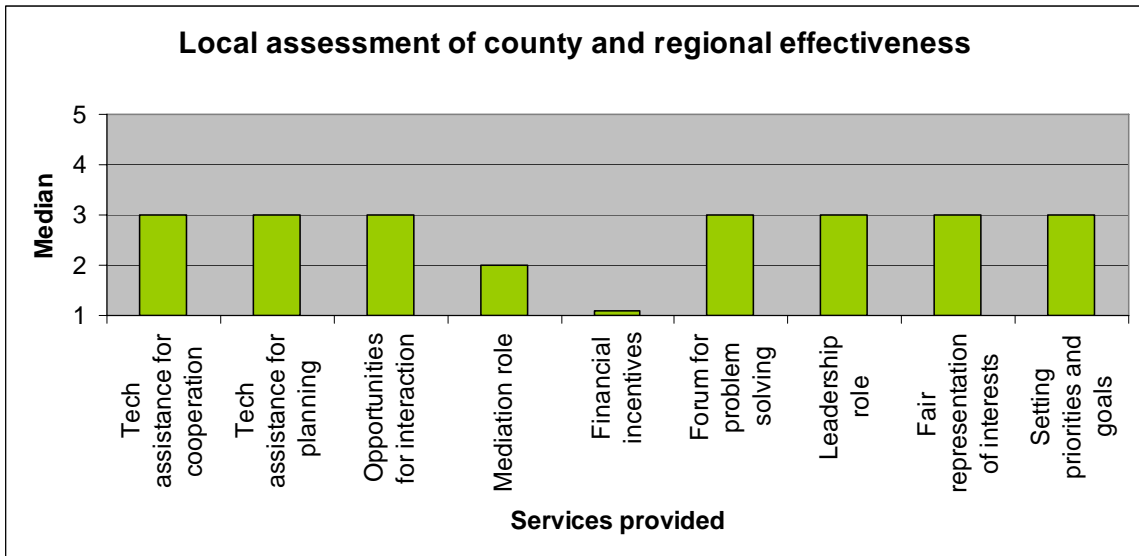


Figure 6.4 Municipalities’ assessment of County and RPA effectiveness

In a separate survey, county and regional officials were asked to prioritize the same list of functions that municipalities previously evaluated. Results are shown in figure 6.5. Two results are important: on average, county and regional agencies consider providing financial incentives for local cooperation and mediation services for local governments as their lowest priorities. This assessment is consistent with how effective municipalities thought county and regional planning departments were at providing mediation support and financial incentives.

The survey of county officials also revealed additional information on how county planning departments impact local cooperation. Some counties are more proactive than others at providing opportunities for local elected officials and planners to interact through workshops, conferences, committees, and working groups. This is important because analysis of the data from the county planning agency survey (based on simple pairwise correlation) indicates that the number of forums counties provide for interaction among local decision makers was significantly correlated with the extent of local cooperation around planning and zoning issues within the county ($r=.84$, $p<.01$). The analysis also shows that the ability of counties to organize forums for municipalities is dependent on the resources available at the county level. In fact, the number of county organized forums for local interaction was significantly correlated with the number of staff in the county planning department ($r=.57$, $p<.05$). This finding highlights the importance of strengthening the resources of county planning departments, as not all counties have the capacity to actively engage municipalities in cooperative planning processes.

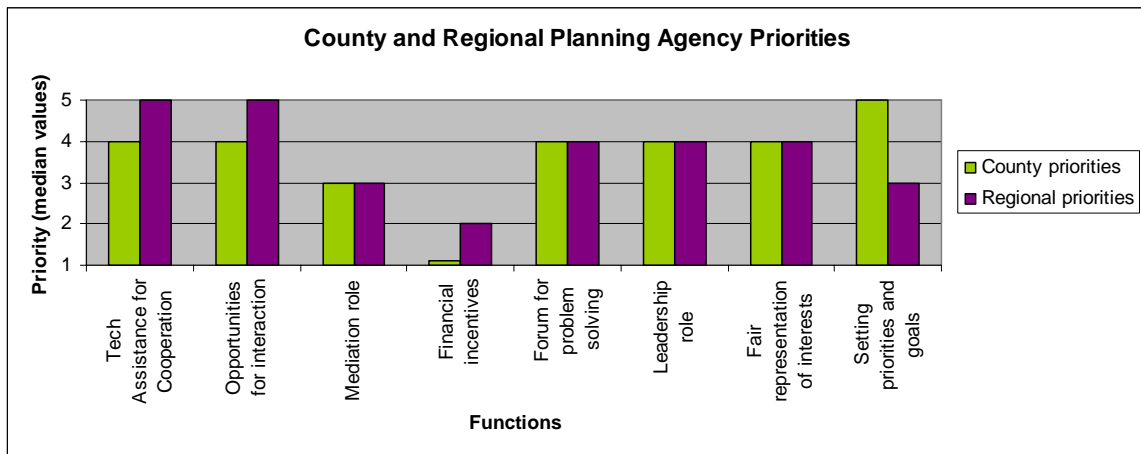


Figure 6.5 County and RPA priorities

These data provide valuable information on those county and regional roles that need to be emphasized to increase cooperation among municipalities.

First, when municipalities were asked to offer suggestions on incentives that could be provided to better facilitate cooperation, most respondents indicated the need for “carrots” such as financial incentives, awards, and recognition for cooperating municipalities. Yet, counties and RPAs list providing financial incentives for cooperation as one of their least priorities. Second, several municipalities indicated the lack of agreement on core regional issues and problems, inability to reach agreements at the table, the lack of communication among participants, and unwillingness of participants to compromise as key impediments to cooperation. Prior academic research suggests that these issues can be resolved if professional mediation, conflict management, and negotiation opportunities are available to local decision makers. Yet, both counties, and

regional agencies list providing mediation services for cooperative efforts as one of their least priorities.

6.2.2 Informal institutions:

Extent of cooperation on services

As anticipated, a vast majority (94.5%) of respondents indicated that their jurisdiction cooperated with other municipalities on service delivery (see figure 6.6). Transit (23%), Police (31%), Parks (36%), Water and Sewer (51%), and Fire (76%) are services that are most commonly addressed through cooperative arrangements. Michigan municipalities on average engage in about 4 services arrangements with a standard deviation of 2. Some municipalities operate without a single service related contract while others partake in as many as 10 service related contracts.

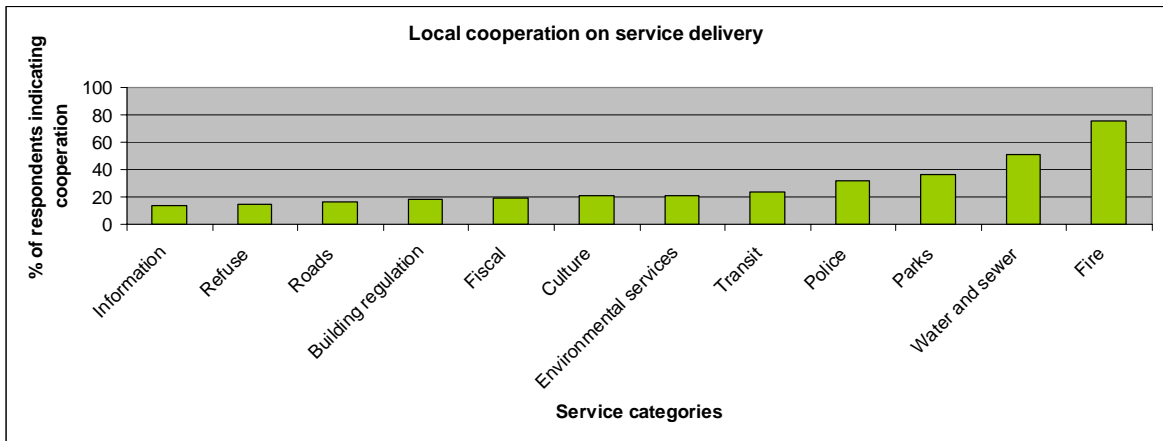


Figure 6.6 Extent of cooperation on service delivery

Extent of regional governance culture

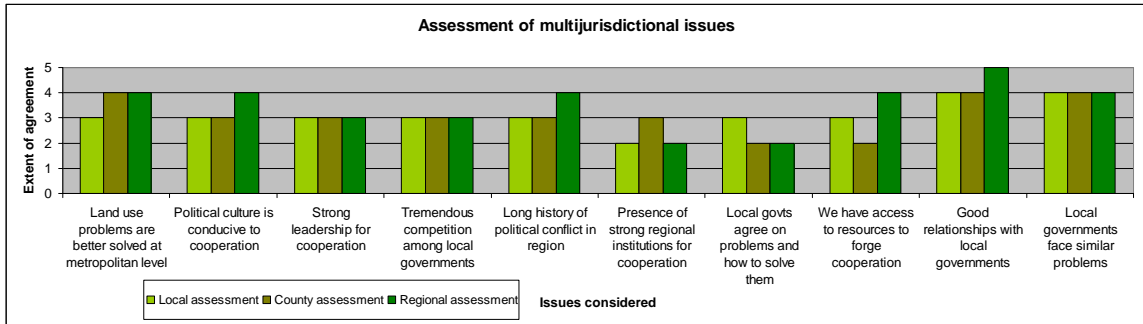


Figure 6.7 Municipality, county and RPA assessment of regional governance culture

Municipalities, counties and regional agencies were also asked for their assessment of several informal institutional factors thought to affect cooperation. The results are provided in figure 6.7. Several results are worth noting. First, municipal, county, and regional decision makers on average agreed that they shared good relationships with decision makers from surrounding municipalities. Second, all three types of decision makers on average agreed that there was an absence of strong regional institutions that fostered cooperation in their regions. Third, with the exception of regional decision makers, both county and municipal decision makers on average indicated that they had limited access to the financial, technical, institutional networks, and resources needed to forge cooperative alliances among elected officials on land use issues. Finally, while all three types of decision makers indicated that most municipalities in their region faced similar problems, they all also indicated that municipalities in their regions did not agree on what the problems were and how to solve them. This last finding relates back to the

importance of providing mediation and consensus building services for municipalities through county planning departments or RPAs.

All these informal institutions together inform the extent to which an area has regionalist tendencies. This composite variable, called extent of regional governance culture in an area, was compiled by adding all the listed informal institutional categories, and it is included in the regression models as previously explained in chapter 4. This extent of regional governance culture variable has an observed range of 22 – 49, out of a possible range of 10 – 50. The average value is 34 with a standard deviation of 5.

Unsuccessful cooperation

Twenty three percent of respondents indicated that their jurisdiction was involved in an unsuccessful attempt to cooperate on planning and zoning issues. The common impediments to cooperation were discussed in detail in chapter 5. Out of those municipalities that have engaged in unsuccessful cooperative efforts, 41% report no cooperation on land use issues. 48% however, have proceeded to give cooperation a second chance and have ended up formalizing their cooperative effort. 11% indicate that they are attempting to cooperate again but at an informal level. This finding also provides some credibility to a new understanding of how informal institutions affect cooperation (explained in detail in chapter 7). That is, evidence suggests that when municipalities become a part of cooperative efforts that have somehow failed to materialize they do not completely give up. 59% of municipalities with failed cooperative attempts have gone on to cooperate again on land use activities. 80% of those cooperating after the unsuccessful

attempt have formalized their cooperative effort. This perhaps indicates a heightened need for formality when prior cooperative efforts have failed. This formality seems to protect municipalities from renegeing partners, unstable relationships, and non-binding contracts – all of which they might have experienced during their unsuccessful attempt at cooperation.

6.2.3 Decision maker related characteristics

Internal support for cooperation

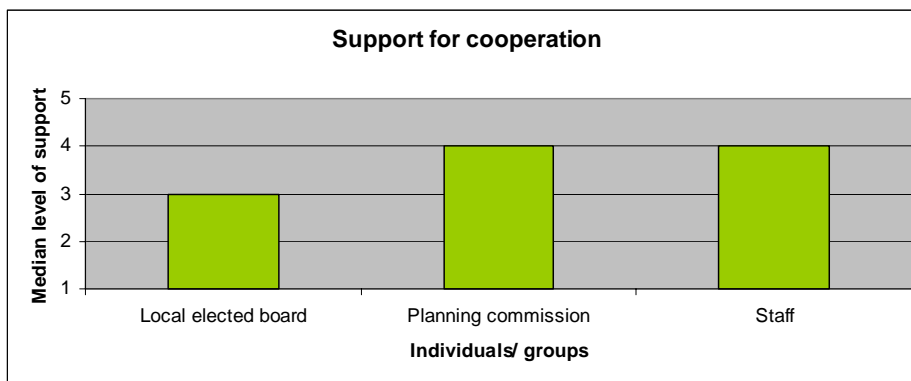


Figure 6.8 Extent of support for cooperation on planning and zoning efforts

Municipalities were asked to rate the extent to which certain individuals and groups supported the idea of cooperation on planning and zoning issues on a scale of 1 (very low support) to 5 (very high support). The results are shown in figure 6.8. Support for cooperation ranged from moderate to high levels of support. Respondents indicated on average that planning commissions and staff showed high levels (median of 4) of support for cooperation. The average internal support of planning staff, planning commissions and local elected boards combined in Michigan is 3 with a standard deviation of .9. The range of observed values was from 1-5.

Training

64% of municipalities responded that they had received training on the benefits of cooperation on planning and zoning issues. At least 32% of municipalities indicated that neither the members of the planning commission nor the members of their local elected boards had undergone land use planning related training. Further, about 38% of municipalities indicated that neither their elected board members nor their planning commission members had received training on growth management techniques.

6.2.4 Environmental factors

Growth Trends

Municipalities were asked to provide an assessment of the extent of past and future anticipated growth pressure (see figure 6.9). More than 62% of municipalities indicated that they anticipated facing moderate growth pressure in their jurisdictions. When analyzed by jurisdiction type, townships seem to be anticipating the most growth over the next 5 years, with about 12% of townships indicating tremendous anticipated future growth pressure compared to no villages and 3% of cities indicating the same amount of growth over the next 5 years. This finding emphasizes perhaps the need for regional cooperation in terms of dealing with this amount of anticipated growth. An elected official from one of the case study municipalities observes, “if we don’t plan ahead for growth, the only thing we can do when growth comes our way is to spread it out. That is the only way townships can handle the growth. You see we rely on septic tanks. We cannot increase density when we have septic tank systems. We need certain setbacks to

make septic tanks work. The other option is to provide water and sewer. But that will only encourage more growth. That is why you see so much development is spread out. It is a bad situation either way – unless you plan ahead.”⁴⁵

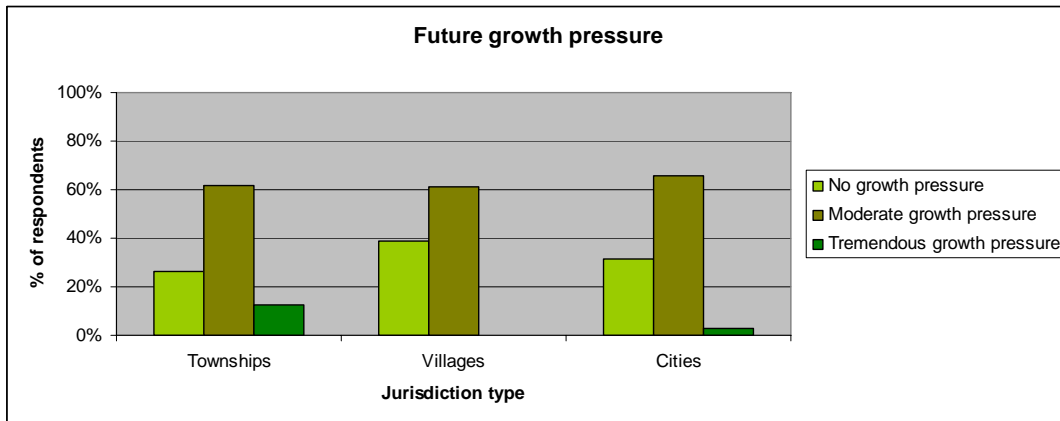


Figure 6.9 Growth trends by jurisdiction type

Political conflicts

Municipalities were also asked if they had faced land use related lawsuits, and experienced controversial land use decisions (see figure 6.10). 30% of responding municipalities indicated that they had experienced land use related lawsuits over the past 5 years. 51% of responding municipalities indicated controversial land use decisions in the same time period.

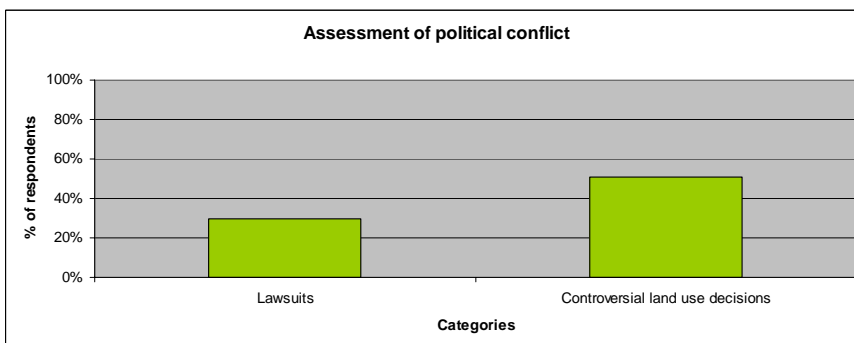


Figure 6.10 Assessment of political conflict

⁴⁵ Local elected official, personal communication, October 24, 2007

6.3 Capacity and the role of planning consultants

Interviews revealed that most municipalities and counties in Michigan lack adequate resources to plan, zone, and enforce land use policies effectively. Only 34% of Michigan municipalities indicated that they employed full time staff for planning and zoning purposes. About 54% of municipalities indicated that they employed part time staff. Of the responding counties, 50% indicated that they employed full time staff and 50% indicated that they employed part time staff. Although regional agencies seem to be doing better in terms of capacity than counties and municipalities, the distribution of staff across regional agencies is highly varied with a range of 3-80 staff members per agency.

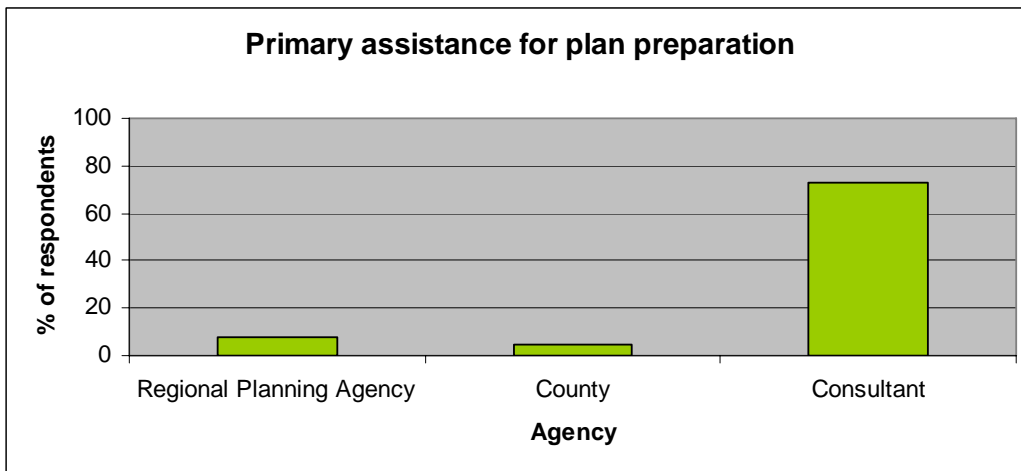


Figure 6.11 Primary assistance for local master plan preparation

Given this assessment it is not surprising to note that over 73% of local master plans are prepared by planning consultants (see figure 6.11). Less than 10% of respondents indicated that they used their county and regional planning agencies for plan preparation. Several municipalities indicated that planning consultants are more likely to provide

unbiased advice on what municipalities “ought” to do in terms of planning and zoning. This places planning consultants in the unique position of having the opportunity to provide both assistance and information on cooperation to decision makers at the local level -especially when adjacent local governments hire the same consultant independently.

6.4 Motivations for cooperation

When asked why municipalities should cooperate with each other on land use issues, most decision makers indicated that cooperation was important to ensure the compatibility of land uses and development patterns, and the consistency of land use policies and decisions across jurisdictional lines. Decision makers were not convinced that a number of the land use challenges faced by municipalities could not be solved exclusively at the local level or that some problems relating to land use planning, social equity, and environmental protection might be better solved at a metropolitan or regional level. Similarly, decision makers on average were tentative about justifying cooperation on land use issues using arguments of sustainable land use patterns. These observations might be indicative of at least two contrasting phenomena.

First, these results might be indicative of a more individualistic way of thinking. That is, elected officials might find it easier to think about benefits from cooperation to their individual municipalities when cooperation on land use issues is justified using arguments of compatible and consistent land use patterns. Second, elected officials might find it easier to serve as proponents of cooperation, if they couch their arguments for

cooperation in terms of achieving consistent and compatible land use patterns. Ensuring consistency through cooperation does not entail relinquishing authority or independence. This might be an easier argument to see in terms of initiating cooperation. The questions that remain, however, are whether cooperation that is aimed at achieving consistency and compatibility can serve as the vehicle through which more substantive cooperation can be sought and whether this transition will be able to produce the kinds of distributional equities that planners seek.

6.5 Incentives for cooperation

Although 9% of the respondents from municipalities indicated that the state should not intervene in local planning processes even if the intervention is through the provision of incentives, there seems to be considerable interest in state sponsored incentives for cooperation from the other respondents. About 30% of respondents indicated the need for financial incentives for cooperation. This is not surprising considering that only 20% of municipalities that are currently cooperating have received grants to further their cooperative efforts. Other suggestions included more education and training for cooperation, making cooperation mandatory, establishing state level guidelines for cooperation, streamlining of administrative requirements for land use planning, policy based incentives (e.g. tax base sharing, revenue sharing, and priority funding), and more recognition and awards for cooperating communities. These suggestions are not surprising either. The responses also suggest that only 16% of municipalities that are currently cooperating have received recognition for their cooperative efforts and that not many decision makers have received training on basic land use principles or specialized

growth management techniques. Further, several respondents expressed frustration that leadership on regional cooperation from the state was notably absent.

6.6 Conclusions

Several interesting conclusions can be drawn from this descriptive part of the data analysis. First, despite obstacles, constraints and the lack of many incentives to cooperate, municipalities in Michigan are cooperating to some extent on planning and zoning issues. These cooperative efforts range from informal conversations among municipalities to more formal joint plans and joint planning commissions being established among multiple local government units. Apart from the conditional land transfer agreements, most of the ensuing land use cooperation is through informal mechanisms such as collaborative projects, meetings and handshakes among local staff and elected officials. The formation of joint planning commissions, regional policies, joint plans and ordinances are still in their infancy in Michigan.

Second, the analysis indicates that county and RPAs have the basic infrastructure in place to play a larger and clearer role in facilitating local cooperation. Several roles played by county planning departments and RPAs significantly impact the extent of local cooperation on planning and zoning issues in Michigan (as will be detailed in chapter 7). County and regional agencies also provide many similar services to municipalities. Division of labor between these two agencies would help direct some valuable and much needed resources more efficiently.

Third, respondents indicated the need for financial incentives and mediation services to alleviate the impediments to cooperation and to get decision makers to both come to the table and stay there. Yet, both county planning agencies and RPAs indicate that providing financial incentives and mediation services are their lowest priorities. Municipalities agree, indicating that counties and RPAs are extremely ineffective at performing these two services.

Finally, municipalities are facing severe financial constraints and these constraints are reflected in the resources they have available for planning and zoning purposes. This implies that planning consultants have more of a niche in developing local master plans and advising joint planning efforts. Little is known academically about the role planning consultants play in shaping land use and regional outcomes. More investigation is needed in this area.

Chapter 7

Factors predicting cooperation

The descriptive data for all the variables included in the regression models were presented in the previous chapter. As discussed earlier in chapters 3 and 4, the dependent variable “cooperation on land use issues” could be operationalized in different ways, and each operationalization captures a different aspect of the variable. The conceptualizations behind the different operationalizations were explained in the previous chapters. In this chapter, I present results from all three regression models, with each regression constructed around a different conceptualization of the dependent variable. There are several significant results, all of which prove to be interesting. I also weave in results from the interviews of planners and elected officials from the case-study sites as part of the explanation of the significant findings. I begin the chapter by discussing the first regression model, which contemplates the extent of formality of cooperative efforts. In the next section, I discuss the second regression model, which predicts cooperation. Finally, I present results from the multinomial regression model, which explains informal and formal cooperation. The regression outputs are summarized in table 7.1.

7.1 Regression model 1: Factors affecting extent of formal cooperation on the cooperation continuum

In this regression model, I hypothesized that the extent of formal cooperation on land use issues is affected by four key factors: formal institutions, informal institutions, environmental factors, and decision maker-related factors. These factors were then operationalized into several variables and included in the model. The following figure 7.1 depicts these variables and highlights the ones that proved to be significant. The significant variables are shown in bold font with a description of the direction of the significant effect.

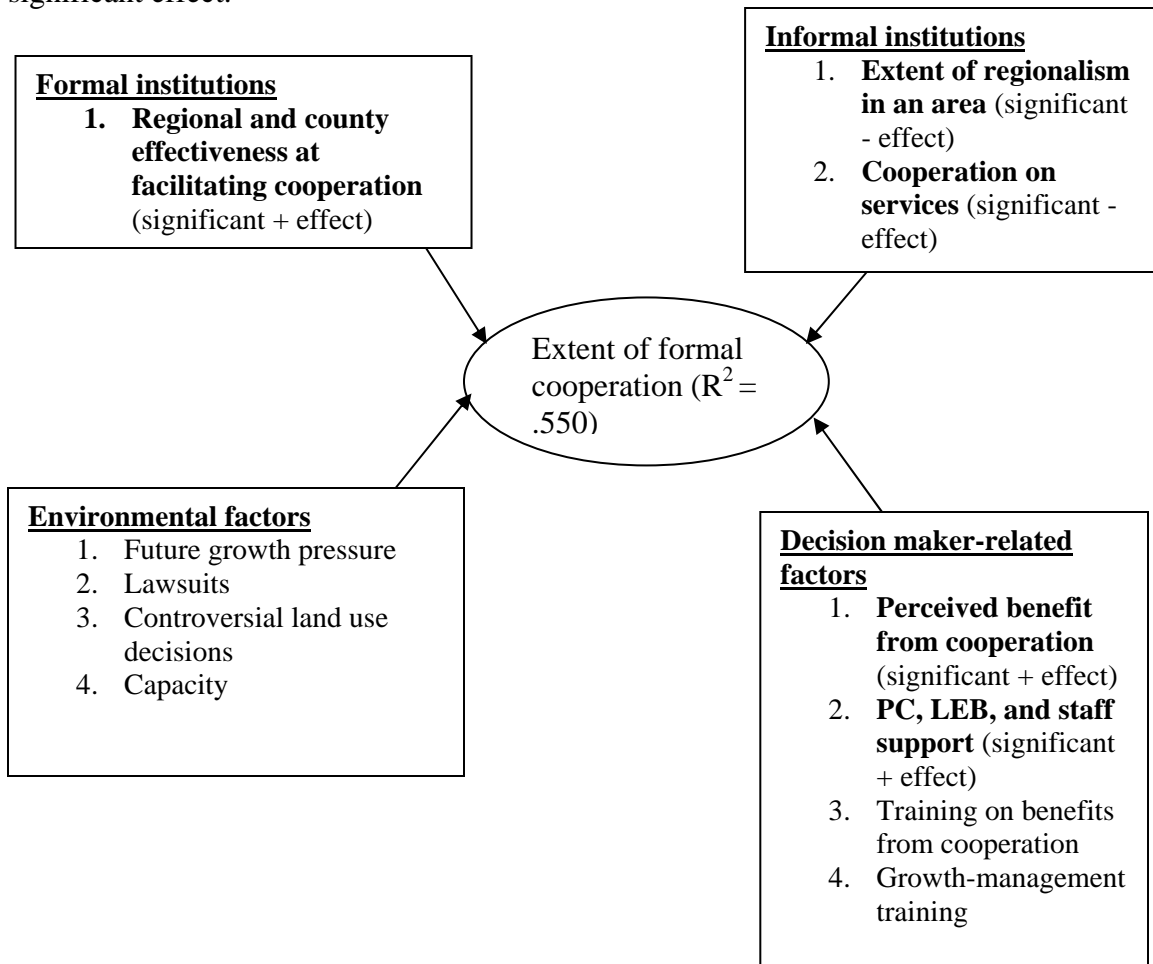


Figure 7.1 Findings from regression model predicting cooperation on the continuum

Regression results indicate that five variables from the conceptual model have significant effects on the extent of formal cooperation. These variables have the following impacts. The effectiveness of county and regional institutions at supporting cooperative efforts is a measure of formal institutions in an area. This variable has a significant positive impact on the extent of formal cooperation. The level of internal support for cooperation in a municipality (i.e., the support of local elected boards, planning consultants, and planning staff) and the extent to which elected officials perceive benefits from cooperation are both measures of the receptivity to cooperation of the governing ranks in a municipality. Both variables have positive impacts on the extent of formal cooperation. Two other variables were included as measures of decision-maker receptivity to cooperation: cooperation-specific training and growth management-related training. Neither of these training-related variables was significant. The extent of local cooperation on services and the extent of regional governance culture in an area were both used as measures of the informal institutions in an area. Both variables had significant negative impacts on the extent of formal cooperation. None of the environmental variables are significant predictors of the extent of formal cooperation. In the following sections, I elaborate on and offer possible explanations for the significant relationships mentioned above.

7.1.1 Internal support for cooperation

Internal support is treated as a composite of the extent to which the elected board as a whole, the planning commission as a whole, and the planning staff all support cooperation on land use activities. Together these three groups of individuals, from the perspective of local governance, make the most significant land use planning decisions.

Together they also present a unified vision of the scope of land use planning in a locality. Finally, these three groups of local actors collectively represent the intra-local dynamics of cooperation (i.e., the political receptivity for cooperation) and have the ability to create a cohesive political environment for the implementation of cooperative efforts. This composite “internal support” variable has a positive impact on the formality of cooperative efforts. I explain this finding by first establishing the reasons that the support of each of these three key local actors for local cooperative efforts is important.

As the formality of cooperative mechanisms increases, localities experience tremendous changes to their existing governing structures. Elected boards will no longer have complete control over the composition of their planning commissions and their planning and zoning regulations. Individual planning commissions will be dismantled for the most formal cooperative effort (e.g., if a joint planning commission is formed) or at the very least will have to share control with planning commissioners from other jurisdictions. Planning commissioners and planning staff also risk losing the following: control over and access to planning-related information; a certain position in the internal command structure of a jurisdiction; credibility, legitimacy, and certain established trust levels with governing members of a locality; rapport and working relationships that have developed over the years within a jurisdiction; and familiarity with how things are done within a locality. These changes would alter their job descriptions tremendously. These three groups of actors stand to lose a great deal from engaging in more formal cooperation (the status quo, familiarity, control), so as formality increases, internal support for cooperation often dwindles. The irony, however, is that internal support is most needed as the

formality of cooperation increases, and the extent of support for cooperation determines the formality of cooperative efforts in a locality.

Regression results show that the extent of internal support for cooperation in a jurisdiction has a positive impact on the extent of formality of cooperative efforts. To understand the positive nature of this relationship (i.e., why the support of planning commissions, planners and elected boards is important in predicting the extent of formal cooperation), one has to delve more deeply into the roles these actors play in local planning processes. The elected board has the final authority in determining whether a locality will engage in a cooperative effort. This authority is more apparent in formal cooperative efforts because such efforts typically require the vote of the elected board. Unless the support of the elected officials is expressed formally through a majority vote, more formal cooperative mechanisms cannot be instituted. That is, as the formality of a cooperative effort increases, so does the need for a municipality's elected board to reinforce its support for the cooperative effort or endorse it formally (i.e., through written agreements). Therefore when the board's support is only tentative, cooperative arrangements tend to be more informal, since the tendency is to explore cooperation rather than to implement cooperative strategies that will alter the landscape of planning in a jurisdiction. With one vote the elected board can make or break a cooperative effort. Therefore their support is tantamount to ensuring that formal cooperation occurs.

My case study analysis and subsequent interpretation of the elected official interviews in both the Chelsea and Manchester areas, suggests that although planning commissions

have only an advisory role in local planning and development management, they are considered the bastions of local planning. Since they are charged with the mission and responsibility of writing and implementing the master plan and its ordinances, the planning commission is considered the guardian or gatekeeper of local planning regulations. Some elected officials assign ownership to planning commissions in the way they speak of the master plan, referring to it as “their” (i.e., the planning commission’s) plan. Elected officials consider planning commissions to be much more knowledgeable about the intricacies of everyday planning and zoning and see themselves as a little more removed from the “implementation” of local planning ordinances and everyday planning issues. This naturally increases the stake of planning commissioners when it comes to making any decisions about joint planning. Because of the key role elected officials attribute to planning commissions, elected officials warn that the idea of joint planning should not be a top-down idea emanating from the elected board, but rather a bottom-up idea evolving from the planning staff and planning commission all the way to the elected board. This view provides some information about the roles that different actors are expected to play in the planning process.

In Michigan, most jurisdictions are financially strapped and do not employ planning staff; only 30% of respondents say their jurisdiction employs full-time staff for planning purposes. Further, 77% of respondents indicate that they use planning consultants for master plan preparation. Most localities in Michigan therefore consider planning consultants as part of their planning staff. Planning staff are viewed as liaisons not only between the general public and the government, but also between the different actors in

the local planning system. The planning staff have their fingers on the pulse of the general public and its needs, and their primary responsibility is to inform government of the citizens' views on major planning undertakings. Similarly, planning staff are expected to gauge the credibility of planning tools and the applicability of these tools in the locality they serve. Elected officials also seem to trust their planning staff much more than they do the county and regional planners. This is because of the sense that planning staff are under contract with the locality and therefore should have the locality's best interests at heart. They are therefore expected to provide a fair evaluation of whether the locality would be well advised to pursue a particular activity. This in turn means that if planning staff are skeptical about the idea of joint planning, it could stymie attempts to formalize an effort (i.e., increase the risk factor). Elected officials explain that because of the level of trust and assumption of credibility that typically exist among planning staff, planning commissions and elected officials; the planning staff's lack of support for cooperation would cast doubt on joint cooperation as a good idea for a particular locality.

In the planning process, elected officials rely on planning staff to do research, provide assistance, generate ideas to spur the joint effort forward, facilitate joint meetings, educate elected officials on regional tools and policy options, and in general provide information pertinent to the plan or effort at hand. In this way, planning staff catalyze cooperative efforts by providing new ideas for elected officials to think about and by providing a direction in which to move. When planning staff do not support cooperative efforts, it not only raises questions about whether joint planning should be on the local agenda, but also reduces the constant influx of information and ideas that seems

necessary to move cooperation towards implementation (i.e., towards formality). For example, the planners for the Manchester-area joint planning effort constantly encourage elected officials to take steps toward establishing a joint planning commission, all the while providing information about other communities in Michigan that have undertaken such a task. Being privy to this information alleviates some of the fears that elected officials bring to the table and makes the formalizing process smoother.

Finally, most elected officials are wary of joint planning – especially formalizing an effort, since formal cooperation typically requires long-term commitment. The internal conflict that is created when not all three sets of actors support cooperation increases the risk of committing to more formal cooperation and focuses the risk only on the few individuals driving the effort forward. A unified front assuages doubts about whether joint planning is an ideal for which a particular locality should strive. One elected official observes that as the cooperative mechanisms become more formal, “there needs to be complete agreement among the board members, planning staff, and the planning commission members right from the outset, else nothing is going to get enforced or implemented.”⁴⁶

My assessment of the roles that these three actors play in local planning (based on case study interviews) indicates that elected officials expect planners to be idealists and think the way urban planners think – by viewing the world through a normative lens. They expect planning commissioners to be both independent from politics and connected to it, so they can be grounded in the pragmatic, but remain receptive to ideas from the planning

⁴⁶ Local elected official, personal communication, November 11, 2007

staff. Being grounded means evaluating whether the tools that the planners offer provide benefits to their locality (of course with planners under the commission's mandate assisting with this evaluation). Finally, they expect themselves as elected officials to think the way politicians do and evaluate whether the ideas brought to the table are feasible politically.⁴⁷ Considering the different worlds in which these actors operate, unified support for cooperation covers all the bases (the credibility of an idea, its applicability to a given locality, and its political feasibility) and provides the cushion that elected officials need to make decisions that will lead them towards formalizing their cooperative efforts.

7.1.2 The county and regional role in local cooperation

Results indicate a positive relationship between county and regional planning agencies' effectiveness at providing support for local cooperative efforts, and the extent of formality of cooperative efforts. This can be expected for several reasons. Counties and regional agencies provide several services to local governments that have impacts on the extent to which localities can formalize their cooperative activities. These services include providing technical assistance for local cooperative efforts, providing opportunities for local elected officials to interact, playing a mediation role during such interactions among elected officials (thus facilitating cooperative processes), providing financial incentives for cooperation, establishing forums for regional problem solving, serving as leaders and champions of local cooperative efforts, providing a fair representation of area-wide interests, and setting land use priorities and goals for localities to follow. The variable "effectiveness of county and regional planning

⁴⁷ Local elected official, personal communication, October 22, 2007

agencies” is a composite of the effectiveness of county and regional planning agencies at performing the above-mentioned services. I therefore explain the positive relationship between the overall effectiveness of county and regional planning agencies and the formality of cooperative efforts by explaining how the effectiveness of county and regional agencies at performing each of these services individually affects the formality of cooperative efforts positively.

Since the early 1940s, after the failure of numerous attempts to create regional governments, most states witnessed a proliferation of regional councils, which promoted voluntary cooperation among municipalities and other planning entities. The role of county and regional planning agencies since then has been focused on gathering, analyzing, and providing information to municipalities. Counties and regional planning agencies are now regarded primarily as technical agencies with the expertise to advise localities on how to solve their local and regional problems, develop comprehensive plans, and educate elected officials on the impacts of their plans. The distinction between such agencies and local (municipal) planning commissions is often made clear: county and regional agencies function as “planning groups,” whereas local planning commissions constitute the “action groups” where plans and ideas can become a reality. Elected officials in Michigan regard county and regional agencies as exactly that – agencies with the experts who in turn have access to information. Most municipalities in Michigan do not have full-time planning staff. Several elected officials also indicate that they do not have the financial resources needed to hire planning consultants or other staff to provide the necessary technical assistance needed for cooperation. By technical

assistance, local elected officials mean assistance interpreting state-level legislation and statutes, outlining legal cooperative arrangements possible in Michigan, providing examples of communities that have succeeded at forging cooperative arrangements, identifying funding sources and opportunities for municipalities wanting to pursue cooperation, and explicating both policies and outcomes that cooperative efforts should consider as part of their policy process. One component of the county and regional agencies' role in promoting local cooperation is to fill in the gaps created by the lack of permanent, local-level staff dedicated to providing technical support for cooperative efforts.

Scholars writing about cooperation emphasize the importance of repeated interactions among actors for cooperation to evolve voluntarily. Considering the lack of mandates for cooperation in Michigan, voluntary cooperation is the only kind that can occur. Elected officials indicate that forums and collaborative projects organized by the county provide at least three key benefits: opportunities for substantive interaction with other elected officials, opportunities to build relationships with other officials, and opportunities to learn. In the same vein, county and regional agencies, through the area-wide projects they organize, also create opportunities for local elected officials to foray into joint decision making. These projects (e.g., the Washtenaw Area Transportation Study) provide elected officials with a sample of cooperation that progresses from formulating an idea to developing policy options and eventually to thinking through the possibility of implementation. If implemented, these small projects provide elected officials with successes. These successes represent incremental steps that can then provide the

foundation on which elected officials can build their future cooperative efforts. One elected official explains:

You know, you slowly take an advocate like me that goes into the lion's den – that is, our CEO meetings. I slowly introduce ideas to the CEOs and we talk about successes achieved together at these other forums. You know, I say “We made this work.” That is why I am so excited about making the other thing work – if we can make that work, it will be a model for everybody else. At the end of the day, is that particular old agreement the be-all and end-all? No! The agreement formed at those forums organized by the region and the county is the starting point. It makes sense to do that.⁴⁸

Twenty-three percent of survey respondents indicate that their locality has been involved in at least one unsuccessful cooperative effort. When asked why the cooperative effort failed, 38% of these respondents explain that the participants could not compromise at the table. The collaboration literature stresses the important role that mediators or facilitators play in cooperative efforts, but Michigan municipalities do not have the resources to independently hire such facilitators. Further, Michigan, unlike growth-management states (e.g., Florida), does not have state-designated dispute-resolution and mediation agencies to facilitate local land use-related cooperative processes. In this setting, to the extent that county and regional agencies can staff local cooperative efforts, they can expect to affect the formalization of cooperative efforts positively. One elected official evaluates the role played by county staff in their local cooperative effort: “They have moved us along, no doubt. Our effort would not have gone at the speed that it has without the county’s facilitation.”⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Local elected official, personal communication, November 28, 2007

⁴⁹ Local elected official, personal communication, October 26, 2007

County and regional planning agencies can also encourage municipalities to formalize their cooperative efforts by providing financial support. When elected officials begin to formalize their cooperative efforts, they seek financial support for a variety of reasons. For example, when elected officials explore the possibility of a joint master plan, they typically require money to pay for training, to hire a planning consultant to study the individual master plans and write drafts of the joint master plan, to hire experts to provide information about potential policy options for the joint plan, to hold public visioning sessions and stakeholder meetings, and to hire facilitators for these visioning sessions. Typically, localities fall short of the budget needed to accomplish these various activities. Elected officials explain that some of the most challenging discussions they have while considering formalizing their cooperative effort focus on the financial feasibility of the effort. They explain:

The concerns initially were about just how we were going to be able to achieve it [a joint master plan]. Are we really going to be able to get the resources? And most of these resources are time commitment and financial commitment. The commitment from the county through staff time and money is a big help in making this possible. I don't think we would do this without the county. We just don't have the financial resources to do it.⁵⁰

Others add:

[The] staff time provided by the county, [the] assistance provided by the county . . . [and] the resources that we are getting from the county are critical. They are not only helping us with doing research but just the mere getting documents together, making copies, getting things out to us, doing some mailings, helping us put together informational brochures, helping plan visioning sessions. All this takes time and money. Those are the kinds of resources that make a formal cooperative effort work. Without the county, we probably [would] not be able to do this.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Local elected official, personal communication, October 26, 2007

⁵¹ Local elected official, personal communication, November 11, 2007 and Local elected official, personal communication, January 17, 2008

The politics at the county and regional levels alter the relationships between municipalities and the county and regional planning agencies. Much of the politics is focused on the notion of representation. As early as 1950, the politics surrounding regional planning in southeast Michigan predominantly reflected the minimal representation for Detroit and its special districts in the Supervisors Inter-County Committee (now SEMCOG). The same brand of representational politics continues today. In Washtenaw County, the urban-rural disconnect alters representation at the County Board of Commissioners. There are 28 municipalities in Washtenaw County, of which 16 are located to the west of Ann Arbor and therefore regarded as the western part of the county. There are 11 commissioners at the county level. Of these 11, only 2 commissioners serve the 16 western municipalities (because of the “one person one vote” philosophy), while 9 commissioners represent the 13 eastern municipalities (see figure 7.2). The dynamics of representation based on population create tremendous political clashes between the county and the municipalities. An official in Washtenaw County observes, “You know we were actually called ‘out-county’ for a while. We find it very upsetting to be called ‘out-county,’ you know. We are as important to the county because we are trying to protect our farmland and our open spaces, and that is very very important to the overall culture of Washtenaw County.”⁵² Another explains:

People think there is big old bad Ann Arbor that steers the ship, and our commissioners cannot get a majority vote because the needs of the eastern side are different from the western side and they have the numbers. So there is some natural tension that is unavoidable. The farmers in the western part think the county is going to turn us into some socialist haven and they are going to prevent it.⁵³

⁵² Local elected official, personal communication, October 26, 2007

⁵³ Local elected official, personal communication, November 28, 2007

Another official adds that over the past few decades, the county has become more Democratic. The only two Republicans on the county board of commissioners are the two commissioners representing the 16 western municipalities. The sense is that when push comes to shove, when there is a need for action on policies that have a bigger impact on the rural than the urban areas of the county, the rural areas simply do not have the representation. This arrangement therefore reinforces the systemic distribution of political power at the county level and highlights both the power of eastern municipalities over the western municipalities, and the power of the eastern municipalities to produce political action in their favor.

As this discussion suggests, the animosity between county and regional governments and municipalities is often deep rooted and long lasting. Planning departments at the county and regional level are often subject to the same skepticism by virtue of association with the larger politics of government at this level. To the extent that planning departments can remain independent from such politics and assist localities in their jurisdiction uniformly and fairly, they can alter perceptions, repair trust, and build credibility. As elected officials formalize their cooperative efforts, they often worry that they might get locked into a system that they have to depend on (such as the assistance of the county), a system that fundamentally disfavors them. Alleviating such fears of unfair representation at the departmental level seems to affect local cooperation positively

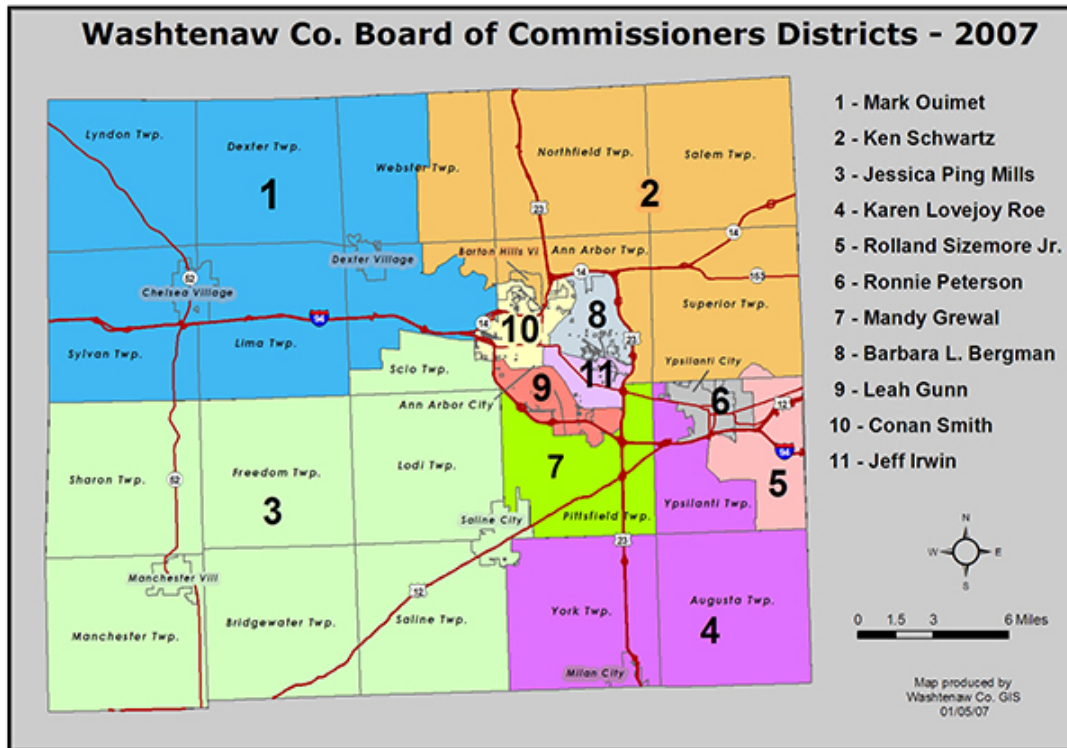


Figure 7.2 Representation on the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners

The extent to which county and regional agencies emphasize cooperation as part of their working agenda is part of the package of activities that county and regional planning agencies perform to induce local cooperation on regional issues. Although county and regional planning agencies in Michigan do not have the authority to implement master plans and zoning ordinances, they can play an active role in setting the direction and priorities for planning in a region. When county and regional agencies prioritize certain land use policies, much-needed county and regional resources are directed to developing and implementing these policies. For example, when county and regional planning agencies prioritize their coordinating role (i.e., encourage local cooperation on regional issues), they undertake several activities that reflect this priority. They often direct more resources towards coordinating local planning, including greater county and regional

involvement in local and area-wide master-plan preparation, more organized forums for local interaction, increased financial support for local cooperative initiatives, and, most importantly, allocated staff time for cooperative endeavors. In the following sections, I provide contrasting accounts of two Michigan counties' land use priorities and how these priorities affect local cooperation.

Washtenaw County planners explain that regional planning has been a priority for the county for several years. Consequently, the Washtenaw County Planning Department engages municipalities tremendously in the preparation of the county master plan, and it staffs municipal master planning efforts even when such efforts are driven by local planning consultants. One planner explains:

It is very important for us to maintain good relationships with planning consultants and be involved in local master planning processes even if we are not hired to do so. When we engage in local planning processes in this manner, we can ensure that municipalities consider what would be appropriate for the larger landscape. When we have good relationships with the planning consultants, we can encourage them to think regionally. We can also then encourage planning consultants to push their clients [municipalities] to think regionally, consult the county master plan, check for consistency of local preferences with area-wide priorities, and still not have consultants feel like we are infringing on their process.⁵⁴

There are currently five regional planning groups functioning in Washtenaw County. These regional groups together comprise 23 of the county's municipalities. The Washtenaw County Planning Commission (renamed the Planning Advisory Board) recently amended its bylaws to include members from these six regional planning groups. The intention behind this structural change was to ensure that the county provides a voice for regional planning within its governing ranks, so that county policies and plans can be

⁵⁴ Local Planner, personal communication, March 19, 2008

better directed to encourage regionalism.⁵⁵ Planners in Washtenaw County believe that making regional planning a priority and involving municipalities in county-level policies is the only means, aside from planning authority at the county level, by which the county can influence local governments to think regionally. By virtue of emphasizing regional planning at the county level, Washtenaw County has instituted several mechanisms through which municipalities can be induced to cooperate on land use issues.

In contrast, an Oakland County planner provides a different perspective on county-level priorities:

In Oakland County, we have not emphasized regional land use planning. We also simply do not write master plans for municipalities anymore, or assist them directly with that process. It is simply not a county priority. We cannot compete with planning consultants in Oakland County in terms of assisting with municipal planning and do not have a desire to. We have a different kind of relationship with our localities. We provide a lot of technical assistance and information, and a lot of assistance and incentives for economic development.⁵⁶

When asked about the prospects for joint land use planning in Oakland County, she responds with skepticism that most Oakland County communities are built-out with few opportunities for joint planning. The Oakland County tactic has therefore been to emphasize economic development at the county planning department level. In 1994, the Oakland County Planning Department merged with the Economic Development Division. Oakland County does not have a county-level master plan, and the only targeted planning and zoning services the planning department offers are the recently mandated municipal master plan reviews, and land use inventories. Research indicates that there are no

⁵⁵ Explained by Local Planner, personal communication, April 15, 2008

⁵⁶ Local Planner, personal communication, January 25, 2007

regional planning efforts underway in Oakland County. Further, there is a notable absence of county-instituted mechanisms for municipal cooperation.

Finally, leadership from the county and regional level plays an important role in enabling localities to move towards formalizing their cooperative efforts. Such leadership is reflected in the ability of county and regional planning agencies to stay informed of and to inform local efforts, insulate municipalities from the larger aspects of county and regional politics, and refocus attention on the regional land use issues at hand. When there is leadership, county and regional planning agencies make good-faith efforts to understand local needs, increase trust through personal contacts and interactions with elected officials, and provide credibility and legitimacy to the role they play in assisting local planning efforts.

Together, all of the functions that county and regional agencies perform constitute the institutional support structure for local cooperation in an area. The effectiveness of county and regional planning agencies at performing these functions affects the formality of local cooperative efforts positively.

7.1.3 Cooperation on services

Contrary to my expectation, the extent of cooperation on services has a negative impact on the extent of formal cooperation on land use issues. My original expectation was based on the idea of using cooperation on services as a proxy for “prior cooperation,” with the understanding that such prior cooperation on services (which is typically easier

to fathom) would create a more conducive setting for cooperation to occur on land use issues (which is typically more difficult to accomplish). Results, however, show that when the number of service-related contracts among municipalities increases, the formality of cooperation of land use issues decreases. After contemplating this negative impact, I offer some possible explanations. The notion of motivations and commitment are central to understanding this inverse relationship between cooperation on services and the formality of cooperation on land use issues. The first explanation I offer is that the proliferation of service agreements in an area is an indication of economically driven motivations for cooperation, which stand in contrast to what typically stimulates cooperation on land use issues.

Cooperation around land use issues, as discussed in the previous chapters, requires a tremendous amount of commitment from elected officials. As cooperation on land use issues becomes more formal, the extent of needed commitment increases tremendously because of the short-term sacrifices (of autonomy and control) that elected officials need to make to reap the long-term benefits (better land use patterns). Further, cooperation around land use issues is typically not motivated by financial needs. Granted, there may be secondary financial benefits in the long run, but elected officials typically do not write joint master plans to save costs. In fact, if elected officials wanted financial efficiency, they would look to cooperative service arrangements for answers. When municipalities undergo severe economic hardships, it is even more difficult to garner the commitment needed to engage in cooperation around land use issues. Therefore it is conceivable that the greater the economically driven motivations for cooperation, the less likely elected

officials are to enter into formal land use agreements that will neither save money nor be easy to execute. The greater the economic benefits they seek, the more elected officials might deviate away from cooperating on land use issues (which are typically considered a resource drain) and move towards more cooperative service arrangements. In this manner, as elected officials become a part of a large number of service arrangements, they might be less likely to digress from that path of tangible benefits to explore cooperation on land use issues. Eventually, instead of contributing to a comprehensive package of land use reform, cooperative service arrangements might become ends in themselves. As service-related cooperative arrangements become “ends,” elected officials might feel as if they are doing enough to cooperate. In other words, they might develop a false ceiling of cooperation on land use issues. These explanations are conceivable for several reasons.

In institutional settings like Michigan that lack a strong mandate for local cooperation, there is often a notable lack of state legislation establishing statewide goals for cooperation, best management practices, minimum standards for what constitutes cooperation on land use issues, and assessments or examples of outcomes that ought to be produced through cooperation. In the absence of such guidelines, elected officials themselves determine justifications for engaging in cooperation and develop their own expectations of cooperation. That is, elected officials define cooperation differently and expect varying outcomes from it. Consequently, the regionalist vision of cooperation as the means to ends of regional equity, resource protection, and efficient development patterns might not be one that is commonly shared by all of the state’s municipalities (pro

forma or through local commitment). In fact, the only problem that seems visibly common to all Michigan municipalities is the current state of Michigan's economy. One official asks:

What are most supervisors and elected officials going to say when you ask about the fundamental problems in Michigan? A lot of fundamental problems supervisors are going to say right now is economics. It's impacting our local budgets and we are getting less state revenue sharing than we might anticipate. It is impacting our tax base. So our main problem people will say is economics, and what really can [we] as supervisors do about economics? That is the question we ask. It impacts our budgets. It impacts our all of our citizens.⁵⁷

Most policy makers in Michigan have also focused on finding solutions to this economic problem. Rather than emphasizing cooperation to achieve regional fiscal and racial equity, environmental protection, infrastructure efficiency, and land use sustainability, calls for cooperation in Michigan have been directed at finding solutions to economic hardships. Municipal cooperation in Michigan has been encouraged primarily to help municipalities achieve efficiencies, economies of scale, and cost savings.

During her State of the State address in 2004 (and again in the 2007 address), Michigan's Governor Jennifer Granholm called on localities to think regionally:

So now is the time for quiet courageous local leadership to get beyond turf and politics to promote efficiency and stretch dollars to maximize services to the public ... to consider new partnerships with one another: pooling resources, sharing services, technology, office space, even employees. I applaud those local units of government who have torn up turf and replaced it with creativity and collaboration.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Local elected official, personal communication, October 22, 2007

⁵⁸ Granholm, 2004. State of the State address. *Our Determination, Our Destination: A 21st Century Economy*.

In her State of the State address in 2007, titled *Our Moment, Our Choice: Investing in Michigan's People*, Governor Granholm suggested that the state would provide incentives for consolidated or shared services by increasing revenue sharing to the cooperating municipalities.

In Governor Granholm's statement as well as many other calls for cooperation, much of the focus in Michigan has been to urge municipalities to cooperate around services. No one draws a direct connection between cooperating on services and cooperating on land use issues. Further, localities are not being challenged to think about the larger regionalist vision behind cooperation. With most of the emphasis on services, it is quite conceivable that municipalities think about cooperation purely from an economic standpoint without considering linking shared services to a more comprehensive managed-growth strategy. When the ultimate goal of cooperation is to reduce costs, the priority becomes sharing more services rather than finding a way to use shared services as a means of enacting shared regional policies. That is, the more elected officials cooperate to achieve costs savings and administrative efficiencies, the more cooperation around services becomes an end in and of itself. The more accustomed elected officials become to the predominant economic calculus used to make service-related cooperation decisions, the less appealing cooperation on land use issues seems. Finally, the more elected officials become a part of tangible and near-term win-win situations (likely with service-delivery cooperation) the less likely they are to accept win-loss or loss-loss scenarios (likely in the near term with land use cooperation). This is especially true when such scenarios are characterized by tremendous uncertainty about both the benefits and costs to municipalities and the timeline during which these costs and benefits will begin to accrue.

The Chelsea-area communities in Washtenaw County have several service-related cooperative efforts in place. Incidentally, elected officials in this area have also been part

of an informal land use alliance called the Chelsea Area Planning Team (CAPT) for the past 18 years. This alliance, which coexists with at least six formal service agreements, is the only cooperative effort directly focused on land use planning in this area. When asked about cooperation around land use issues in the area, Chelsea-area elected officials refer first and foremost to their service arrangements, not the CAPT. Most of the discussion at the CAPT meetings focuses on budgets and fiscal issues, with land use concerns receiving only fleeting mention. Economic and service issues take precedence, and a tremendous amount of energy is directed towards creating new service authorities for other service areas. The most urgent policy efforts seem directed at using current cooperative service arrangements and establishing new ones to maintain the area's self-sufficiency and independence from other Washtenaw County localities. Some elected officials in this area criticize key leaders as being empire builders – creating large service authorities with motives other than that of coordinated land use policy. One elected official from CAPT explains:

When you have intangible benefits versus tangible costs, as with land use planning situations – duh. Even a far-sighted person like me can see the difficulties in selling that politically. Most service agreements we seek provide us with win-win settings, and that is tangible – that is immediate. I mean, for all of our CAPT and our joint meetings every month, what I have been saying is that I still perceive each of us participant jurisdictions as attending primarily to our parochial needs. And as we continue to do that we are fine with adding to our service arrangements to tell ourselves that we are cooperating and [to] gloss over the parochialism – when technically we are not really addressing land use issues.⁵⁹

Further, elected officials explain that the need to provide services more efficiently was the primary motive behind initial efforts to cooperate in the Chelsea area. One official elaborates:

⁵⁹ Local elected official, personal communication, October 22, 2007

We have transplants to our townships, as all townships do, people who have located here from urban areas, and they expect the same high level of service. It is an extreme challenge. To me the only way to provide any services at all other than what is statutorily required is through collaboration, because of the costs of providing these services independently.⁶⁰

As Chelsea-area jurisdictions were negotiating several joint service authorities, they recognized the need for an informal forum for discussing general planning concerns in the Chelsea area – hence CAPT was created. A Chelsea area official observes, “I don’t think the idea behind CAPT was to create a group that would come up with a regional vision for the Chelsea area. I don’t think the idea of municipal cooperation was floated as the *sine qua non* to have this group.”⁶¹

In other words, as the primary motivations for cooperation tend towards establishing service arrangements, the focus on cooperating formally around land use issues seems to decrease. Further, because most service contracts allow municipalities to retain individual autonomy and control, it seems difficult for municipalities that employ a number of such service contracts to restructure their thinking to reflect what formal joint planning requires: an emphasis on regional rather than individual benefits. In such cases, more informal land use cooperation that does not require municipalities to sacrifice local autonomy and control seems to be the more accessible option.

My interview with an elected official from the Chelsea area supports this finding. Regarding joint master planning and whether the Chelsea-area communities would consider such an idea, this official remarks, “I find it incredibly stupid that in Michigan

⁶⁰ Local elected official, personal communication, November 29, 2007

⁶¹ Local elected official, personal communication, October 22, 2007

every single township should provide every single available land use. If we engage in regional planning, then we don't have to provide for every single land use in our jurisdiction because we can justify that this land use exists in the larger region.”⁶²

Another official adds, “Why should we provide for mobile home parks in all our municipalities when the demand is not there and when there is a mobile home park just next door?”⁶³ Some Chelsea-area officials are cynical about this kind of reasoning and imply that the Chelsea-area municipalities at best would use regional planning as a fig leaf for preserving the status quo in their own municipalities, and at worst would continue to engage in informal cooperation. These officials question whether joint planning can truly occur if municipalities are primarily concerned about their individual benefits, and they explain the lack of formal land use agreements as a result of such thinking. These officials also point to the regional plan that CAPT produced several years ago as evidence of a mindset that is not favorable to joint planning.⁶⁴ Although the regional plan was only an amalgamation of the individual master plans, when the time came to adopt this regional plan, several participant municipalities declined to do so. CAPT has not produced much since then, apart from remaining an informal forum for elected officials to converse.

Across I-94W and 10 miles south on M-52 are the Manchester area communities. At about the same time that CAPT was created, in the early 1990's, the municipalities in the Manchester area created their own informal land use alliance called the Southwest

⁶² Local elected official, personal communication, November 29, 2007

⁶³ Local elected official, personal communication, October 24, 2007

⁶⁴ Local Planner, personal communication, March 14, 2008, Local elected official, personal communication, October 22, 2007 and Local elected official, personal communication, November 28, 2007

Washtenaw Council of Governments (SWWCOG). Although the SWWCOG communities also have some cooperative service arrangements in place, the primary motivation for the formation of SWWCOG, which has today evolved into the Manchester Area Joint Planning Commission, was not to explore means of sharing services efficiently. Rather, SWWCOG was established because the Manchester-area communities recognized that land use issues fundamentally transcended local political boundaries. The service arrangements came later, as these elected officials realized that achieving small successes would help propel their planning efforts further, while providing other tangible benefits. They seemed to have understood from the outset that the Manchester area was going to experience growth in the next few years, so elected officials needed to find a way to proactively deal with it.

An elected official from the Manchester area explains:

No, you do not get cost savings typically from doing joint planning – not in the way you save costs by cooperating around services. But when you do joint planning, you have the ability to jointly decide what is best for an entire area, to control growth on an area-wide basis, and to protect the quality of life and community character that way. To do this you have to completely change your mindset from that of simply contracting for services – you have to realize you cannot operate in a vacuum.⁶⁵

In the Manchester area, the joint planning commission is currently working on a regional plan that will direct development towards the village and protect rural areas in the surrounding townships. Today, the win-loss equation seems to be weighted equally. The townships will agree to stay rural and not compete with the village for development. Dense development will be directed towards the village, which will prevent the

⁶⁵ Local elected official, personal communication, November 11, 2007

townships relying on septic tank systems from spreading the development out. The village will guarantee that they have no plans to become a city or annex township land, will agree to maintain the local character of the access routes to the Manchester area, and will provide the primary community, commercial, and recreational infrastructure for the township residents.

What happens if the win-loss equation changes? What will become of this effort if in five years the village residents realize that the idea of greater density around the village has decreased their quality of life? One elected official addresses this issue:

If that would happen, someone -- SWWCOG, village leadership, township leadership -- will not have been doing their job, because it is not enough to just go ahead and create the structure, organization, and outcome that we think is going to work best. It has to be continually looked at to make sure that it is the best and we have to keep on communicating that to the residents. There's got to be a balance between the rights of the public and the rights of the individuals. We have to find a way to locate that balance and educate the public continually about it. In fact, we should be educating them about that now -- so that nobody thinks they are the winners or the losers. We are a regional community. If we reframe things that way then we are all winners. Everything is shared equally -- good and bad.⁶⁶

In Michigan, cooperation around service provision typically involves contracts among municipalities that do not produce substantive changes to land use patterns. At its most basic level, it is an economic exchange in the marketplace among participating municipalities. Of course, it is not always that easy, especially if municipalities are trying to use infrastructure decisions to solve annexation issues. Even with that caveat in mind, most service contracts (e.g., water and sewer authorities) created at the local level do not aim to redirect growth to urban areas, limit expansion outside, or ensure concurrency of

⁶⁶ Local elected official, personal communication, November 11, 2007

infrastructure with growth. Moreover, they do not imply the creation of designated urban service districts. More formal cooperative efforts mean that elected officials must contemplate the above-mentioned substantive growth-management strategies. The evaluation of the Chelsea-area and Manchester-area cooperative efforts indicates that cooperation on infrastructure and cooperation on land use issues are fundamentally different. They require different intentions and different mindsets. Municipalities enter service contracts by evaluating them using an economic calculus. Engaging in such service-related cooperation seems to provide immediate noticeable benefits – such as greater police patrol in neighborhoods and more streamlined building permit application processes – all of which seem to satisfy constituent demands for greater services and budgetary cost-saving necessities. At the same time, elected officials retain autonomy, control and independence. All these considerations make it easier to add more service contracts to previously existing ones to carry the momentum forward. Proposals to deviate from this path of increasing returns to cooperate on land use issues are therefore met with reluctance and resistance. What seems more acceptable are informal cooperative arrangements around land use issues (e.g., sharing data), which are much more comparable to service agreements, provide the same kinds of benefits and few costs, and do not deviate much from the path to which elected officials have become accustomed. The more elected officials cooperate on services, the less willing they seem to be to make fundamental changes to the way they think and evaluate cooperation – something that the Chelsea- and Manchester-area case studies indicate is necessary to formalize cooperation on land use issues. When elected officials engage in a large number of service agreements, they also seem to regard such service-related cooperation as an end in itself

and seem to perceive themselves as undertaking substantial efforts (doing enough) to solve cross-boundary issues.

7.1.4 Informal institutions

Informal institutions typically provide the background conditions within which cooperative efforts are framed. Results indicate a negative relationship between informal institutions for regionalism (regional governance culture) in an area on one hand, and the extent of formal cooperation, on the other. Several analyses were performed to evaluate this divergent finding. First, the variable “regional governance culture,” which is a composite of several survey questions, was deconstructed into its component parts. This was done to understand whether the negative effect of regional governance culture on the formality of cooperative efforts was an artifact of variable aggregation. Several regression analyses were subsequently run including, first, using only the direct survey questions measuring governance culture and, second, using several different combinations of the survey questions used to measure “regional governance culture.” None of these regressions produced coefficients substantially different from the original operationalization used for this variable, and the analyses thus substantiate the original finding.

Second, several analyses were performed to understand whether latent variables or subpopulations within the sample might be driving the results. At least three variables were isolated as potential latent variables that might render the relationship between regional governance culture and formality of cooperation spurious. These include

regional/geographic differences within the sample, jurisdiction type, and population. Geographic Information System based analyses were used to ascertain whether regional differences existed within the sample. Visual inspection of the resulting maps did not produce any cause for concern. Difference of means tests, and ANOVAs were used to test the relationship between regional governance culture and both jurisdiction type and population. Neither of these tests indicated that jurisdiction type and population were latent variables of concern. The caveat with these tests is that it is entirely up to the researcher to identify the variables that were not included in the regression model and eliminate them as threats to the validity of the regression model. Identifying and controlling for all the variables that serve as threats to a regression model, however, is an impossible task. Therefore, cluster analysis was used.⁶⁷ Cluster analysis represents a data analysis technique that isolates natural data groupings in the sample for the variables in question. Controlling for the two subpopulations that were isolated during cluster analysis did not change the negative impact of regional governance culture on the formality of cooperative efforts.

Finally, because this finding is a deviation from what was initially anticipated (see original hypotheses in chapter 2), neither the survey questions nor the case study interview protocols were tailored to specifically evaluate this divergent finding. That said, several other results from this study allude to the negative relationship between regional governance culture and the formality of cooperative efforts. For example, simple pairwise correlations reveal significant positive correlations between the level of political conflict among municipalities ($r=.263, p<.01$), the extent of competition among

⁶⁷ Thanks to Ed Rothman from CSCAR for running cluster analysis on my sample.

municipalities for growth and development ($r=.233$, $p<.01$), and whether respondents agreed that land use related problems might be better solved at a metropolitan or regional level. That is, when political conflict and competition among municipalities increase, so does the recognition of the need for regional level land use planning. Also, an analysis of municipalities that were previously involved in unsuccessful cooperative attempts (see chapter 6) reveals that 59% of these municipalities have cooperated subsequently on land use issues. Further, 80% of the cooperating municipalities have formalized their cooperative efforts. That is, municipalities with tumultuous pasts, particularly with regard to a general culture of cooperation, have tended to formalize their cooperative efforts. Finally, pairwise correlations also suggest a significant positive relationship between the extent of political conflict in a region and the perceived benefits from cooperation ($r=.285$, $p<.01$).

All of these results taken in conjunction with the negative impact of regional governance culture on the formality of cooperative efforts suggest strongly and consistently that the finding itself is not an artifact of variable construction or other data related abnormalities. Rather, these findings taken in totality suggest that the need for formal cooperation might be interpreted in different ways. That is, a governance culture that is conducive to cooperation neither alleviates the costs of formal cooperation nor makes it easier for municipalities to cooperate formally. Instead, a regional governance culture characterized by conflictive relationships among municipalities, disagreements, and competition necessitates formal cooperation to both remedy the land use problems created by the history of past conflicts, and the political environment itself. Although this dissertation

does not offer definitive evidence of these interpretations, in the following paragraphs I discuss further potential explanations for why regional governance culture has a negative impact on the formality of cooperative efforts.

On its face, the negative effect of regional governance culture on the formality of cooperative efforts might seem counterintuitive. However, it is conceivable for the following reason. Municipalities might not feel the need for formal cooperation when general informal institutions in an area provide for a culture that is extremely favorable to cooperation. In other words, elected officials in an area with strong informal institutions for cooperation might trust each other to implement informally agreed-upon regional policies even in the absence of a joint agreement governing such implementation.

Formalizing cooperation in land use settings is tremendously difficult for reasons already described. However, once an effort is formalized, tremendous benefits can be derived, most of which ease the pressure on participants to keep the effort moving. First, through formalization, municipalities become part of binding contracts. This ensures participation and action, limits the possibility of participants renegeing, and alleviates reciprocity concerns to some extent. Second, formalization typically adds structure to a cooperative effort and allows for participant roles to be well defined. Third, formalization provides stability to a cooperative effort. This means that the formal effort will continue to exist through turnovers of elected officials and the uncertainties of the political process. In this manner, formal efforts help preserve institutional memory. Finally, because formal efforts have well-defined expectations of participants, and both implicit and explicit rules

for interaction, they relieve the pressure on key individuals to play the leadership role at all times.

The need for cooperation in municipal government can be justified by several factors. Independent and autonomously functioning municipalities might pay little attention to area-wide problems. By virtue of functioning independently, they might fail to redefine themselves as a region and recognize regional issues of common concern. This quest for local autonomy and independence might derive from several years of political conflict among jurisdictions wherein the chance of establishing even minimal working relationships is rendered both impossible and improbable. Autonomous jurisdictions might also compete with each other for much-needed resources and economic gains, reinforcing the prevailing separatism of municipal government. Finally, there might be a conspicuous absence of institutions that unite municipal governments. This would in turn produce a patchwork quilt of municipal policies. All these conditions signal the absence of a regional governance culture or regionalist tendencies in an area. Consequently, when such regionalist tendencies are absent, the need for cooperation increases.

It is conceivable, therefore, that formal cooperative arrangements could provide the necessary stability to sustain municipal cooperation in a region where the culture for cooperation is low, historic political conflicts are high, there is a noticeable absence of local leadership to spearhead local cooperative efforts, there is tremendous competition for development, there are limited institutions to promote cooperation, there is limited agreement on the regional land use issues, and there is lack of agreement on the solutions

to the identified regional problems. Conversely, in an area where there is a general culture of regional governance and municipalities have a good working relationship with each other, there might be less of a need to formalize land use cooperation. That is, municipalities might feel comfortable enough with each other to cooperate informally and still anticipate the benefits of formal cooperation. In other words, when regionalist institutions in an area are high, the trust levels among municipalities might be high enough to allow them to agree on joint land use policies informally and trust that municipalities will implement these joint policies individually without having to comply with a formal agreement. The need for formal cooperation on land use issues seems to be low when the informal institutions in an area are very conducive to cooperation. This accounts for the negative relationship between these two variables.

7.1.5 Benefits from cooperation

Finally, the more elected officials believe that cooperation will afford benefits to their municipality, the greater the extent of formal cooperation on land use issues. The regression results presented here do not distinguish between individual and group benefits (i.e., benefits accruing to an individual municipality and benefits accruing to a group of municipalities or a region). In other words, the survey question simply asked whether municipalities expected benefits to their municipality from cooperation. It did not distinguish between regional and individual benefits. However, case study interviews provide information on this distinction.

In 1999, General Motors and the Ann Arbor Railroad announced plans to build a massive auto distribution facility in rural Milan Township, 20 miles south of Ann Arbor along US23S, amidst thousands of acres of prime farmland. There would be room in this facility for 50,000 cars, four times Detroit Metropolitan Airport's capacity, parked on enough asphalt to cover 35 Meijer parking lots. Two miles long and a half-mile wide, the facility would have gobbled up one of the area's largest contiguous parcels of farmland and established the township's first industrial beachhead. In order for this to fit into the community, Milan Township needed to change its master plan, rezone the 1,000 acres from agricultural to industrial land use, and approve a special use permit. Incidentally, the property under question is located at the border of Milan Township and London Township. Contiguous to this proposed facility, less than 100 feet away, are residential subdivisions and farmland located in neighboring London Township. London Township residents and officials opposed the proposed development because of its lack of consistency with the land uses proposed in their master plan and the impact the project would have on the land uses in their municipality. However, London Township residents and officials have no official say in the Milan Township planning process, because of the political boundary separating the two townships. The concerned officials and residents appealed to the Monroe County Planning Commission to render a verdict in their favor and oppose the proposed development project. After reviewing the proposed development for consistency with the existing and proposed area-wide land use patterns, the Monroe County Planning Commission voted 6-1 against recommending the proposed development. Because the county's role in Michigan is only advisory (even for development projects of regional impact and significance), the Milan Township Planning

Commission chose to ignore the county's advice and recommended that the project be approved. Soon the Milan Township elected board voted in favor of the project as well, even as neighboring London Township officials continued to urge them to consider the impact the project would have on London Township.

This case has become one of the quintessential examples of how the lack of cooperation can result in inconsistent land use policies across municipalities. Most elected officials refer to this case while talking about inconsistent boundary land uses. "We don't want to plan for open space along our border and the township over next to us plans that space as an industrial area. So the benefit of cooperating formally and perhaps planning at least those boundary uses jointly is that we can at least ensure the compatibility of land uses across boundaries."⁶⁸ Such cooperation, elected officials indicate, is in their best interest.

Other elected officials suggest that cooperation would enable municipalities to control their own destiny. This would occur in at least two ways: first, as a defense against mandates from the state or state-level policies that might force municipalities' hands; second, as a defense against future growth. Both of these benefits from cooperation, elected officials explain, provide tremendous individual and collective benefits to municipalities. One official elaborates:

We want to cooperate out of our own volition and considering what the state has been legislating in terms of consolidating townships, etc., we want to proactively decide to cooperate and through cooperation decide what we want on our own terms before the state comes in and tells us what we should want.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Local elected official, personal communication, November 11, 2007

⁶⁹ Local elected official, personal communication, October 26, 2007

Another official questions the state's judgment on policies such as the one that recently allowed municipalities to establish on-site community septic tanks:

We have real concerns about that Not that it couldn't work, but would you rather have one septic system for 1000 homes, or 1000 separate septic tanks for 1000 homes? Well, we know 1000 septic systems for 1000 homes will work. We have lived with that for a long time and our fathers before us. We know that that can work. We know commercial septic systems can work, too, but not under a homeowners' association – no way. So we think by people banding together we can control how much growth we get to some extent – where it goes to a great extent and to minimize the impact and minimize any adverse impacts as much as we can.⁷⁰

Whoever feels this way also seem to believe that there is strength in numbers. Elected officials in the Manchester area have experienced successes with cooperation before.

Several gravel pits have long operated in the Manchester area, and area officials report that gravel pit operators have historically resisted several of the local planning laws governing their operation. Moreover, there have been lawsuits and several controversies over gravel pit permits in the Manchester area. By talking with each other, elected officials from several of the municipalities realized that they were all receiving a number of applications for gravel pits and facing the same issues with regard to permit approval.

They decided to work together on a mineral extraction ordinance. One official reports:

It has worked for us very well. Especially as we encounter operating gravel pits right now that do not want to abide by the local laws. When they went into court complaining about our ordinances, we told the judge that several of the area municipalities had this same ordinance. We've got [the ordinance] in all of these townships, we said. It made a lot of difference to the judge. We have learned that it is good to cooperate.⁷¹

Another official echoes, "You know the strength-in-numbers philosophy We were finding that as we independently went up against the big guys it was hard to be

⁷⁰ Local elected official, personal communication, November 11, 2007

⁷¹ Local elected official, personal communication, January 17, 2008

recognized, but as a cohesive unit I think we have made a lot of headway, not only with other local governments, [but also] with the county and with the state.”⁷² Elected officials anticipate that cooperation will lead to more legally defensible regulations, an important benefit on the individual municipality level.

The new Joint Municipal Planning legislation in Michigan affords municipalities protection against claims of exclusionary zoning and needed development. It does so by allowing them to satisfy land use requirements by providing for such land uses in the larger region, rather than in each individual municipality. For example, if several municipalities decided to write and enforce a regional plan, then the state would guarantee that not all municipalities have to provide for every land use, if the demand for that land use can be satisfied by providing it in just one municipality or in the area most appropriate for it in the larger region. Elected officials believe that this kind of cooperation provides tremendous individual benefits.

7.2 Regression model 2: Factors affecting a municipality’s decision to cooperate

In this regression, I treated cooperation on land use issues as a dummy variable. This is a very simple and straightforward conception of cooperation that does not distinguish between informal and formal cooperation. In this conception, I construe cooperation as the simple decision by elected officials to cooperate or not to cooperate. In this interpretation, several variables could be hypothesized as affecting a municipality’s decision to cooperate.

⁷² Local elected official, personal communication, October 26, 2007

The variables included in this regression model fall under four key factors hypothesized to affect cooperation on land use issues. These variables and their effect on the decision to cooperate are illustrated in Figure 7.3 below. The significant variables are also expressed in bold font. Several of the variables in the model predict a municipality's decision to cooperate significantly. The environmental factors affecting cooperation in this model are captured through the extent of perceived future growth pressure in a municipality, whether a municipality has experienced controversial land use decisions, and whether a municipality has been named in land use-related lawsuits. Of these environmental factors, the perceived growth pressure and controversial land use decisions in a municipality positively affect the decision to cooperate. Of the listed decision maker-related factors, the extent of internal support for cooperation in a municipality and the perceived benefits from cooperation have significant positive effects on cooperative decisions. Whether elected officials have received training on the benefits of cooperation does not significantly impact a municipality's decision to cooperate. Further, none of the formal institutions and informal institutions for cooperation in a region is a significant predictor of a municipality's decision to engage in cooperation. In the following section I explain the significant findings.

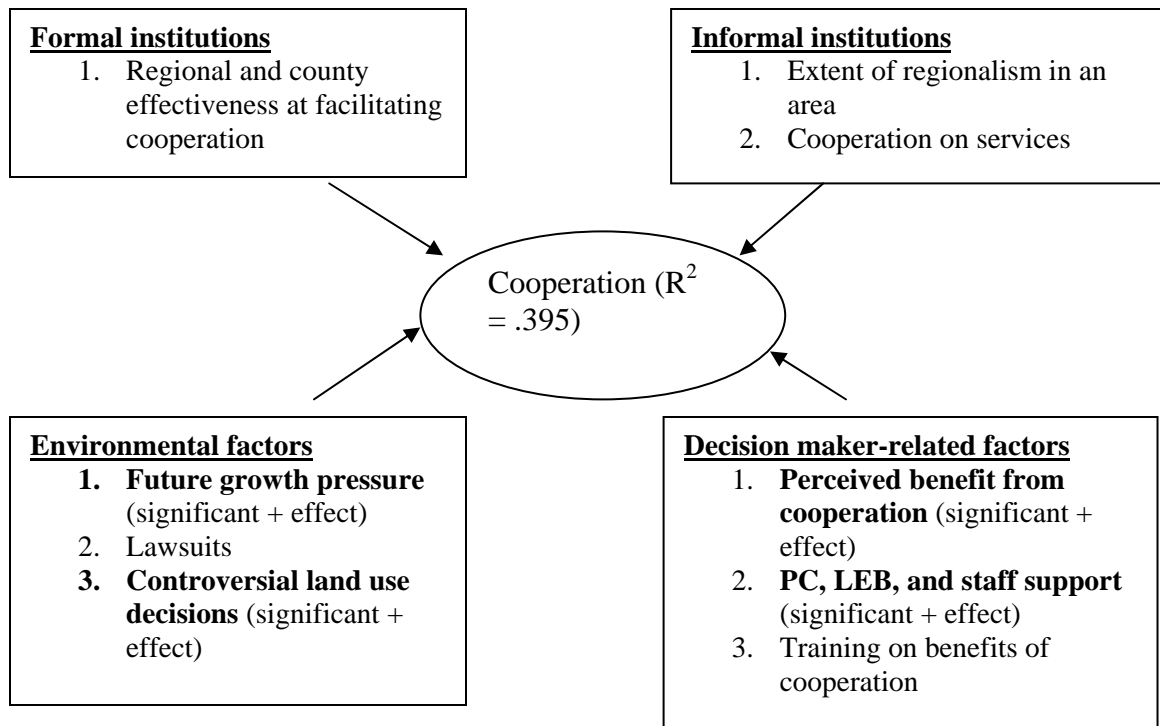


Figure 7.3 Findings from regression model predicting the decision to cooperate

7.2.1 Future growth pressure

Of the three environmental factors included in this research model, perceived growth pressure and controversial land use decisions in a municipality positively influence the decision to cooperate. These results are conceivable for several reasons. When asked to explain their initial decision to cooperate, several elected officials indicated that a large part of their decision to cooperate was born out of their effort to be proactive about managing growth. These elected officials believe that cooperation is their first line of defense against rapid growth. They explain that the vestiges of rampant growth are everywhere in Michigan. One elected official captures this sentiment well as he remarks, “Some of us have been around too long, a long time, and can remember how small Ann Arbor was at one time, and how much it has grown and how much the Livonias and Cantons and other cities that are 6-mile-by-6-mile cities have grown, [to] the same size of

townships. Imagine that - complete cities now! They were farms way back then.”⁷³ As this sentiment suggests, a good number of elected officials know what happens when municipalities are faced with the possibility of growth, the temptation to increase the tax base and relax laws to allow for greater protection of property rights, and the results of local inaction in managing this future growth. Another elected official remarks,

We know we are going to get growth - especially residential growth. I used to be in the farm business. Unfortunately, today residential is our best crop, and residential is the one that votes. But what we need to do as elected officials is find the balance between public and private rights, residential and commercial growth, and increasing the tax base yet keeping the sense of community.⁷⁴

Others echo this thought: “We have to grow. We cannot build a wall around ourselves. So let’s plan for commercial growth but let’s plan it where it doesn’t detract from downtown, it pays for the services, and it doesn’t distract from the sense of our community.”⁷⁵ A number of elected officials expressed fear of losing their identity as a community and fear that they would no longer be able to refer to their area as a community if uncontrolled growth were to occur.

The important caveat, however, is that the growth-pressure variable in my study is the “perceived” growth pressure in a municipality. I would argue that if a researcher faces a choice between studying the effect of the calculated growth pressure in a municipality and studying the effect of perceived growth pressure, the perception variable would be more pertinent and the better choice. Although cooperation often ensues as a response to certain environmental conditions, the cooperation examined in this study is not

⁷³ Local elected official, personal communication, October 26, 2007

⁷⁴ Local elected official, personal communication, November 11, 2007

⁷⁵ Local elected official, personal communication, October 26, 2007

spontaneous or unconscious, but rather a conscious decision and a deliberate action undertaken by municipalities. In such scenarios, the story is much clearer when the perception variable is included, because it indicates the extent to which elected officials have internalized the external pressures that they face. That is, it shows the extent to which elected officials can anticipate growth pressure by looking at the population, jobs and building permit numbers; internalize it; and perceive it as an environmental condition affecting their municipality. Although the quantitative part of my study cannot speak directly to the differences between the real and perceived growth pressures (I have included only perceived growth pressure as a variable), my case-study communities do provide some insight.

The Chelsea-area municipalities certainly face more future growth pressure than the Manchester-area municipalities. The growth pushing outwards towards Chelsea comes from the Ann Arbor area through Dexter Village. Although the Chelsea area faces tremendous growth pressure, my conversations with elected officials in the area focused more on the question of service provision for the growing needs of the population, rather than a fear of loss of community due to future growth. My interviews did not leave me with the feeling that the Chelsea area was preparing itself for incoming growth through proactive planning. The concern about perceived growth pressure was more apparent in my conversations with Manchester-area officials. This perception of growth pressure has provided the momentum officials needed to craft Manchester's joint planning effort, which is fundamentally focused on preserving rural character and providing options for managing regional growth. While Chelsea faces more serious growth pressure, the fact

that elected officials seem somewhat removed from it in their thinking has distracted them from converging on the common problem of anticipated growth and using it as a foundation on which to build cooperation.

While this disconnect between perceived and real growth pressure seems puzzling, it can be explained to some extent through two observations. On one hand, elected officials in both Chelsea and Manchester agree that the Manchester area is the county's best-kept secret. On the other hand, the appeal of Chelsea seems to have been discovered already. Small indicators such as the truck traffic cutting right through downtown Chelsea highlight this observation. The second observation is that the Manchester area is better defined than the Chelsea area. For example, southwest of Ann Arbor, the Saline area is well distinguished from the Manchester area. West of Ann Arbor, however, the Dexter and Chelsea areas are neither well defined together nor separated adequately. The sense of "community" that Manchester elected officials hold so dear and fear losing to growth seems to heighten their perception of growth pressure. In contrast, the Chelsea-area municipalities have not defined their larger "community" yet. Today CAPT is contemplating increasing its boundary to include the Dexter-area communities. The perception of growth pressure is perhaps not as heightened here, because municipalities do not know what they are going to lose should growth come their way.

7.2.2 Controversial land use decisions

Regression results indicate that controversial land use decisions increase the likelihood of cooperation. Elected officials explain that while land use-related lawsuits make elected

officials dig in their heels and defend their jurisdiction, controversial land use decisions provide a window of opportunity for local action. In this way lawsuits seem to make municipalities reactive, while controversial land use decisions have the potential to make municipalities proactive. When municipalities face controversial land use decisions, they get a sampling of what is to come in the event that they fail to fix the “broken” land use policy at hand. Scholars studying cooperation have long insisted that the potential for cooperation increases tremendously in the event of uncertainty. Controversial land use decisions represent such uncertainties. When municipalities are faced with land use controversies, they are also faced with several unknowns: they might see a referendum; they might have set a precedent for future controversies; current land use policies might be rendered null and void; or there might be uncertainty over the extent of damage (for example, inconsistencies might be identified in the master plan, in the zoning ordinance, or perhaps even in both documents; there might be problems with the interpretation of these documents; or they might have to retroactively consider prior decisions similar to the one causing the controversy). When uncertainties manifest in this way, municipalities are faced with incomplete knowledge and information about the future, to the extent that the gap between the knowledge at hand and the knowledge needed to solve the crises widens. At such times they seek knowledge and information, legitimacy, and strength in numbers – all of which might be possible through cooperation with their neighbors.

Results also indicate that elected officials engage in cooperation when they anticipate benefits from such cooperation. Further, the internal support structure for cooperation in a municipality is also a significant predictor of whether a municipality engages in

cooperation. Explanations for these two findings were provided under the previous regression model and could be extended to mean similar things in this model.

7.2.3 Discussion

This section provides a comparison of the model explaining the extent of formality of cooperative efforts on the cooperation continuum and the model predicting the decision to cooperate.

The two regression models specified above provide many interesting findings. First, at least two environmental factors seem to be important in predicting a municipality's initial decision to cooperate. These environmental factors, however, do not play a significant role in determining the extent of formality of a municipality's cooperative effort.

Conversely, neither formal nor informal institutions have a significant impact on a municipality's initial decision to cooperate. But both types of institutions have significant impacts on the extent of formal cooperation among municipalities. The two variables that have significant impacts on both the initial decision to cooperate and the extent of formal cooperation are the extent of internal support in a municipality for cooperation, and whether elected officials in a municipality perceive benefits to accrue from cooperation.

These results suggest that environmental conditions act as tipping points or triggers in inducing municipalities to take that step towards cooperation. The role county and regional agencies play in providing support structures for cooperation and providing an institutional environment that is conducive to cooperation does not seem to help

municipalities make the initial decision to cooperate. However, these formal institutions help municipalities formalize their cooperative efforts. The results also highlight the importance of decision maker-related characteristics that play a role in determining both cooperative decisions and their formality. This suggests that much cooperation in land use settings ensues because of deliberate and conscious choices on the part of a municipality's governing ranks. When municipalities can garner internal support for cooperation and understand the benefits of such cooperation, it creates a very receptive internal environment for cooperation (both the initial decision to cooperate and the formal cooperation) on land use issues.

7.3 Regression model 3: Factors predicting informal versus formal cooperation

In the final regression model predicting cooperation, I use a different conception of cooperation as the dependent variable. For this regression, I formulate cooperation as a nominal variable with three categories: no cooperation, informal cooperation, and formal cooperation. Instead of treating formal cooperation as higher on a ranked scale than informal cooperation, this conceptualization treats formal and informal cooperation as equally important concepts that can be considered ends in themselves. In treating cooperation this way, I am suggesting that an alternative view of cooperation might exist, wherein informal cooperation could be conceptually distinguished from formal cooperation. The regression model is constructed to develop an understanding of the factors that predict informal versus formal cooperation. This regression model therefore has two components: the first component predicts informal cooperation, and the second

component predicts formal cooperation. Further, “no cooperation,” which is coded “0,” is used as the reference category. The results from the multinomial regression are presented below in figure 7.4

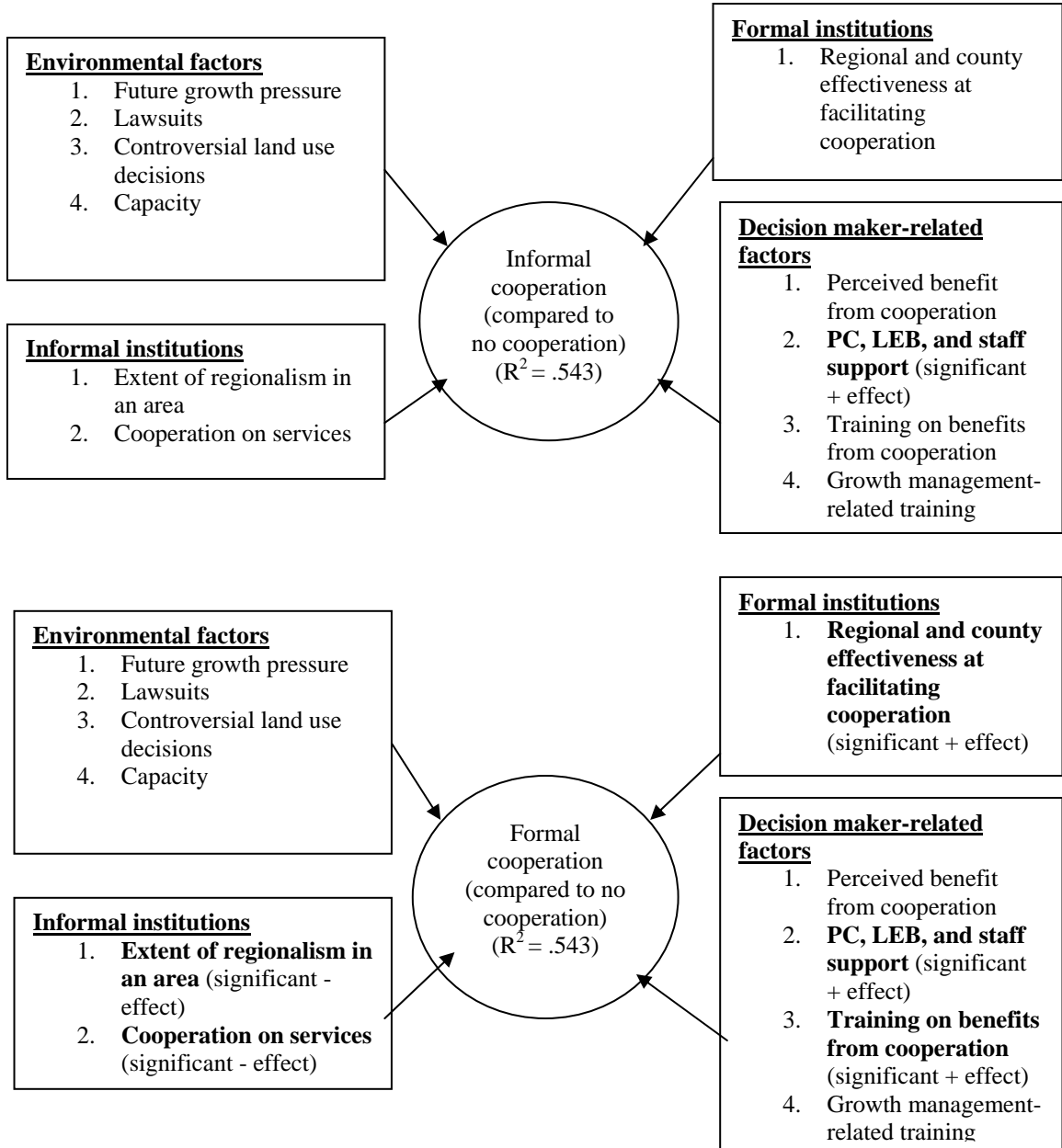


Figure 7.4 Findings from regression model predicting informal and formal cooperation

The part of the model predicting informal cooperation does not have many significant variables. The extent of internal support for cooperation is the only significant predictor

of informal cooperation. There might be at least two explanations for this finding. First, there is a numerical discrepancy in the number of cases contributing to the “no cooperation” and “informal cooperation” categories. That is, the category coded “zero,” reflecting no cooperation, has 92 cases. The category coded “one,” reflecting informal cooperation, has only 25 cases. The part of the model predicting informal cooperation therefore might not be stable enough for the 11 independent variables that are included in the model. With that caveat in mind, the second more substantive explanation is that there might not be an adequate difference between municipalities that do not cooperate and those that cooperate informally. If this result were to hold true through the addition of more cases, it would give more credence to the idea of cooperation on land use issues as more of a ranked scale, with formal cooperation much higher on the scale than informal cooperation. Another interpretation might be that informal cooperation is conceptually different from formal cooperation, but not different enough from no cooperation at all. From a planning perspective, in terms of setting standards for cooperation, this would mean that formal cooperation represents the desirable end (as a ranked scale would also suggest).

The second component of the multinomial regression model predicts formal cooperation. This component yields several significant results. None of the environmental variables are significant predictors of formal cooperation. The presence of formal institutions (i.e., the effectiveness of county and regional agencies at providing support for cooperation) is a significant predictor of formal cooperation and has a positive effect on it. Both informal institutions -- the extent of regional governance culture in an area and the extent of

cooperation on services -- have significant negative impacts on formal land use cooperation. Finally, of the decision maker-related characteristics, the extent of internal support for cooperation and whether elected officials have received training on the benefits of cooperation have significant positive impacts on formal cooperation around land use issues. These results are similar to those from the ranked regression model, with one exception. The explanations for these results are therefore conceivable for reasons already provided in the earlier sections.

The exception provides an interesting result to consider. In the model that treated cooperation as a ranked variable, the variable measuring the perceived benefits of cooperation was a significant predictor of the extent of formality of cooperative efforts. In this model, in which cooperation is considered a nominal category and independent variables predict formal cooperation from no cooperation at all, the perceived-benefits variable is not significant anymore. Instead, the variable measuring training received on the benefits of cooperation is significant. In other words, when non-cooperating elected officials receive training on the benefits of cooperation, they are more likely to cooperate formally. When the route to formal cooperation is through informal cooperation, however, the perceived benefits from such cooperation have a positive impact. At such times, training on the benefits of cooperation does not have a significant impact – signaling perhaps that elected officials experience these benefits themselves as they progress from informal cooperative activities to formal land use agreements. When elected officials have not cooperated informally, they are less likely to have experienced

the benefits from cooperation themselves. They therefore need training to educate them on the benefits of cooperation and consequently to induce them to cooperate formally.

The multinomial regression model described above consisted of only 3 categories: no cooperation; informal cooperation; and formal cooperation. Municipalities were placed in these categories based on their most formal cooperative effort. This meant that the municipalities engaging in both formal and informal cooperative efforts were coded as participating in formal cooperation. That is, even if a municipality participated in a majority of informal efforts but also participated in at least one formal cooperative effort, this municipality was classified as participating in formal cooperation (see chapter 4). To resolve any doubts about whether this coding presents an underlying bias towards treating formal cooperation as higher than informal cooperation, particularly in cases where a municipality engages in both formal and informal cooperation, another multinomial regression model was proposed.

In this second model, 4 categories were included: no cooperation; informal cooperation; formal cooperation; and both formal and informal cooperation. Municipalities were placed in each of these categories based on whether a “majority” of their cooperative efforts were informal or formal. Those municipalities that participated in an equal number of informal and formal cooperative activities were placed in the fourth category called “informal and formal cooperation”. Results from this second model are provided in table 7.1. Multinomial logistic regression shows that the independent variables that significantly predicted formal cooperation in the first model remain significant in the

second multinomial regression model. Also, this model suffers from the same problems associated with the first model. The “informal cooperation” and “informal and formal cooperation” categories do not have sufficient cases. This second multinomial regression model offers an alternate way of operationalizing informal and formal cooperation as nominal categories and confirms the results from the first multinomial regression model. The interpretations provided above therefore, can be applied to this model as well.

Table 7.1 Regression Results

Results of OLS regression multiple regression on extent of formality of cooperative efforts

Extent of formality of cooperative efforts

Independent variables	B	Beta	t	Sig.
<i>Environmental conditions</i>				
Capacity – Full time staff	-.787	-.167	-1.103	.28
Future Growth Pressure	-1.732	-.212	-1.270	.21
Land use related lawsuits	2.105	.218	1.112	.27
Land use related controversies	-.879	-.091	-.465	.64
<i>Informal institutions</i>				
Cooperation on services	-6.940	-.308	-2.069	.04
Extent of regional governance culture	-.373	-.456	-2.408	.02
<i>Decision maker related characteristics</i>				
Cooperation related training	3.994	.267	1.643	.11
PC, staff, and LEB support for cooperation	2.270	.459	2.376	.02
Growth management related training	.007	.001	.008	.99
Perceived benefits from cooperation	6.922	.407	2.339	.02
<i>Formal institutions</i>				
Effectiveness of regional and county planning agencies	.115	.445	2.259	.03

N: 192
 F-Ratio: 2.888
 Significance: .013
 R²: .550

Results of the Binary Logistic regression on cooperation

Cooperation

Independent variables	B	Wald	Sig.
<i>Environmental conditions</i>			
Future Growth Pressure	3.580	4.123	.04
Land use related lawsuits	.514	.872	.35
Land use related controversies	4.032	4.150	.04
<i>Informal institutions</i>			
Cooperation on services	.183	1.073	.30
Extent of regional governance culture	.918	1.741	.18
Prior unsuccessful cooperation	.409	1.364	.24
<i>Decision maker related characteristics</i>			
Cooperation related training	1.138	.027	.87
PC, staff, and LEB support for cooperation	2.178	4.229	.04
Perceived benefits from cooperation	10.549	3.854	.04
<i>Formal institutions</i>			
Effectiveness of regional and county planning agencies	1.001	.790	.37

N: 192
 Chi² (10): 24.980
 Significance: .005
 R²: .395

Results of the First Multinomial Logistic regression on informal cooperation

Informal Cooperation

Independent variables	B	Wald	Sig.
<i>Environmental conditions</i>			
Future Growth Pressure	0.838	0.612	0.43
Land use related lawsuits	1.696	1.418	0.23
Land use related controversies	-0.623	0.217	0.64
Capacity	-0.503	0.546	0.46
<i>Informal institutions</i>			
Cooperation on services	-1.772	0.29	0.59
Extent of regional governance culture	-0.33	3.565	0.06
<i>Decision maker related characteristics</i>			
Cooperation related training	0.398	0.046	0.83
PC, staff, and LEB support for cooperation	2.124	3.766	0.05
Perceived benefits from cooperation	22.488		
Growth management related training	0.577	0.724	0.39
<i>Formal institutions</i>			
Effectiveness of regional and county planning agencies	0.001	0.326	0.56

N: 192
 Chi² (22): 39.972
 Significance: .011
 Pseudo R²: .543 or .628

Results of the First Multinomial Logistic regression on formal cooperation

Formal Cooperation

Independent variables	B	Wald	Sig.
<i>Environmental conditions</i>			
Future Growth Pressure	0.027	0.001	0.97
Land use related lawsuits	-0.803	0.45	0.50
Land use related controversies	0.074	0.003	0.95
Capacity	-0.547	1.476	0.22
<i>Informal institutions</i>			
Cooperation on services	-6.536	3.681	0.04
Extent of regional governance culture	-0.466	7.197	0.00
<i>Decision maker related characteristics</i>			
Cooperation related training	5.613	3.721	0.04
PC, staff, and LEB support for cooperation	2.406	5.801	0.01
Perceived benefits from cooperation	23.584	0	0.99
Growth management related training	0.149	0.05	0.82
<i>Formal institutions</i>			
Effectiveness of regional and county planning agencies	0.004	4.245	0.03

N: 192
 Chi² (22): 39.972
 Significance: .011
 Pseudo R²: .543 or .628

Results of the Second Multinomial Logistic regression on formal cooperation

Formal Cooperation

Independent variables	B	Wald	Sig.
<i>Environmental conditions</i>			
Future Growth Pressure	.211	0.031	0.861
Land use related lawsuits	-.901	0.423	0.516
Land use related controversies	.844	0.303	0.582
Capacity	-.790	1.974	0.162
<i>Informal institutions</i>			
Cooperation on services	-8.141	4.614	0.032
Extent of regional governance culture	-.549	8.096	0.004
<i>Decision maker related characteristics</i>			
Cooperation related training	6.004	3.738	0.049
PC, staff, and LEB support for cooperation	3.013	7.409	0.006
Perceived benefits from cooperation	22.855	0	0.99
Growth management related training	.251	.111	0.739
<i>Formal institutions</i>			
Effectiveness of regional and county planning agencies	0.004	3.806	0.049

N: 192
 Chi² (33): 52.485
 Significance: .017
 Pseudo R²: .643 or .707

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Taken altogether, the findings in this dissertation can be summarized into a few key points.

First, cooperation cannot be viewed as a one-dimensional concept. I have employed three conceptualizations of cooperation in this study. The first conceptualization measures the initial decision of a municipality to cooperate, the second conception measures the extent of formality of the cooperative efforts in place, and the third separates informal cooperation from formal cooperation. Using each of these constructions of cooperation in regression models, provides somewhat different and extremely interesting results.

Second, environmental factors, particularly the perceived future growth pressure in a municipality and controversial land use decisions act as tipping points or triggers for the initiation of cooperation. Although interesting, this arguably reflects a reactionary approach to cooperation in Michigan. In other words, municipalities make decisions to cooperate after encountering pressing environmental conditions. Environmental factors produce uncertainties in a municipality's future regarding both the quality of its physical environment and the future validity of the municipality's existing regulative planning

institutions. Controversies cast serious doubt on the ability of planning institutions to hold up to further scrutiny because they have been challenged before and the “unknown” associated with growth pressure arises primarily from interdependencies among municipalities. That is, a single municipality might not be able to predict neighboring municipalities’ actions, and, in the case of a defined region, there might be uncertainty about whether municipalities can independently enact regionally consistent land use policies.

Both controversial land uses and growth pressures create uncertainties and therefore demand action. To produce cooperative action, however, the region needs to be well defined. That is, municipalities should be able to identify the core group or cluster of jurisdictions that are interdependent with each other; share common concerns; and contribute to the regional identity of an area. The group of municipalities whose participation is needed to address regional issues should be clear. Well-defined regions offer some advantages. Municipalities are better able to identify physical interdependencies, which makes the benefits of cooperation easy to calculate.

Case studies of the Manchester and Chelsea areas in Washtenaw County indicate that the Manchester-area municipalities have been better able to act – to cooperate – to deal with both growth pressures and controversial land use decisions. The Manchester-area municipalities operate within a well-defined region. That is, they know where their interdependencies lie and how they are related to each other; this knowledge enables them to define the cluster of municipalities that will comprise their region. This region is

based on the Manchester school district boundaries and, partly, on the portion of the Raisin River watershed in Washtenaw County. Because of their well-defined boundaries, Manchester municipalities have been able to identify common issues of concern. Area officials have a common understanding of how growth pressures might undermine the existing character of their community or exacerbate existing problems in their region. Thus elected officials in the area have been able to converge because they have a common understanding of the problem at hand.

This kind of coalition formation is substantiated by the advocacy-coalition framework. The well-defined group and the group's common concerns also ensure that the benefits of managed growth in the region are more apparent. When the benefits are more apparent, internal support for cooperation is easy to conjure. Interviews reveal that the Manchester-area officials evaluate the benefits of cooperation in the following manner. First, as indicated in previous chapters, Manchester-area officials warn that land use cooperation will be difficult if evaluated in terms of benefits accruing to an individual municipality. By reframing their reference and thinking about the larger region, they are able to assess benefits to the collective region. Further, several officials from this area indicated that to cooperate around land use issues, one cannot think in terms of just the short-term benefits and costs accruing to the individual municipality, but rather that the evaluation of cooperation should be based on the region, the greater good, and the long term. This signals the need for a more cultural approach to decision making. Comments such as "It is the right thing to do" and "[We] need to balance the interests of a municipality against [those] of the region" substantiate this.

When municipalities in the Manchester area encounter controversial land use issues, they can turn to a well-defined group to turn to satisfy their need for information. Area officials justify cooperative action during such circumstances as arising from “the strength-in-numbers mentality” and the sense that “the cooperation provides some credibility, justifiability, and legitimacy to regulatory planning institutions.” Here, as evidenced by the mineral extraction scenario described in chapter 7, the urgency of the need for action garners internal support for cooperation. Area officials explain, “Even when we all don’t agree, sometimes we just need to get things done.” This sentiment is consistent with the regime theory-based postulation of how alliances form – from the fundamental need for action. Both of these theoretical justifications for cooperation are alive and well in the Manchester area.

In contrast, in the absence of a well-defined regional boundary – i.e. a well defined group of municipalities comprising of the larger region, interdependencies are not well established in the Chelsea area. That is, municipalities seem uncertain about how they are interconnected, which leads to the fundamental conundrum of cooperation around land use issues that separates it from other more conventional types of cooperation. In the Chelsea area, the absence of a well-established physical interdependence undermines a common perception of growth pressure and an understanding of its impacts. Further, benefits and costs are difficult to calculate in the absence of a “regional” justification for problem solving. This combined with the lack of a moral compass on which to justify cooperation makes generating internal support for cooperation improbable.

Third, several factors affect the extent to which municipalities formalize their cooperative efforts on the cooperation continuum. The effectiveness of regional and county planning agencies at providing support for local cooperation is one such factor. This is not surprising considering that these agencies were established for the singular purpose of facilitating local cooperation. The fact that county and regional planning agencies do not play a role in the initiation of local cooperation perhaps is indicative of the general reluctance of planning agencies to make normative statements about cooperation. That is, planning agencies in Michigan operate pragmatically. Political realism is essential for their institutional survival and affects their ability to maintain credibility. They cannot push too hard for fear of alienating local officials. They conceive their job as one of facilitating cooperation – not initiating it. One official observes, “If the county planner marched in here and told us we had to cooperate or else . . . it is not going to happen. You can only facilitate and slowly, at an acceptable rate, [or] else everyone looks at the county or the RPA with suspicion.”⁷⁶ Another official echoes this thought:

There are some people who are very leery / apprehensive over the county being involved with us in our joint planning effort. They think there is an ulterior motive there. They ask, “Why would the county spend the money and staff time if they did not want something?” I say, “Well, they want the same things we do.” They say, “Well, I don’t know about that.”⁷⁷

County and regional officials also realize that in a permissive setting like Michigan, they do not have the regulatory authority to lead the charge on a vigorous pursuit of local cooperation. They also realize that the only way to sustain local cooperation in Michigan,

⁷⁶ Local elected official, personal communication, November 28, 2007

⁷⁷ Local elected official, personal communication, November 11, 2007

where there are no institutionalized channels for forging and sustaining such cooperation, is to allow cooperation to emerge from the bottom-up. They cannot be boosters for cooperation but what they can do is provide stability and support once a decision to cooperate has been made. That said, some of the most needed services for facilitating local cooperation are financial assistance and mediation services. The state of Michigan's current economy, and evidence unearthed in this study about the sheer number of cooperative efforts that fail at the table, justify this need. Yet, county and regional agencies list financial and mediation services as their least priorities – perhaps a reflection of the fact that economic shortages also affect planning agencies, in that they are financially strapped and understaffed.

Fourth, results from the regression models indicate that the proliferation of service agreements impacts formal cooperation negatively. This finding suggests that as elected officials cooperate around services, they expect several similar benefits from land use cooperation without much loss of independence and autonomy. However, it is typically, not possible to attain such net individual benefits in cases where cooperation is sought around land use issues. Having become accustomed to an economic calculus of decision making, elected officials might find it difficult to form other justifications for land use cooperation. In this way, elected officials will continue to cooperate around services, since deviating from this path of service contracting to land use cooperation might provide net costs. In fact, both the calculus approach and the theory of path dependence explain institutional persistence (continuing to cooperate around services rather than using service-related cooperation as the vehicle to better land use policies) as the product

of such an evaluation, which sees deviations from prevailing institutions as making individuals worse off. In this way, the persistence of service-related cooperation might also become an end in itself.

Fifth, results also indicate that the relationship between regional governance culture and formal cooperation is negative. In other words, the greater the regional governance culture in an area, the lesser the amount of formal cooperation. In this dissertation, regional governance culture is used as a term that captures whether the political environment and governance culture in a region are conducive to cooperation. The political conflict in a region, the competition among municipalities for growth and development, whether elected officials in a region have a common understanding of how to address regional problems, and whether elected officials in a region understand the extra jurisdictional impacts and the scale of land use problems contribute to how the variable “regional governance culture” is measured and operationalized. There might be at least two possible explanations for this unexpected result. The first is that informal institutions could be interpreted as either increasing or decreasing the need for formal cooperation. In other words, when the regional governance culture in an area is high, the prevalent normative culture ensures that individuals can be held to their word, that reciprocity is ensured, and that interactions are sustained – even without the boon of formal cooperation. In contrast, the risk of non-cooperation creates a demand for rules to promote stability (Maser, 1998, p. 541). In the absence of such risks, the need for formal cooperation might be absent. The second explanation is that the regional governance culture creates a perception or an illusion of a tremendous amount of regional activity,

when in truth, the favorable attitudes towards cooperation and regional relationships might not actually result in cooperative behavior.

Sixth, this study also presents some interesting information about the effects of anticipated benefits and training, on formal cooperation. On one hand, when the path to formal cooperation is through informal cooperation, elected officials seem to learn about the benefits of cooperation which in turn encourages them to formalize their cooperative efforts. On the other hand, training received on the benefits of cooperation is a significant predictor of formal cooperation from non-cooperation, but anticipated benefits from cooperation is not. More specifically, training on the benefits of cooperation predicts whether non-cooperating entities will engage in formal cooperation, while anticipation of benefits from cooperation predicts whether individuals will move up the scale from informal to formal cooperation.

Seventh, a majority of local plans in Michigan are written by planning consultants. On several occasions, planning consultants write plans for many of the municipalities in an area. In the Manchester area, for example, three of the four municipalities engaged in the regional planning effort employ the same planning consultant independently. Can planning consultants, by virtue of the local knowledge they possess and the position they occupy in the local decision-making structure, encourage local cooperation? Writing one joint plan instead of three individual plans would definitely mean a financial loss for planning consultants. How do they view the costs and benefits of joint planning? One planning consultant from Washtenaw County offers his thoughts on this question:

Let me tell you this – I am a planner and a business man. I am a planner first, though, and a businessman second. I wear both these hats and think about both

these roles. From the business sense, I have to keep my business afloat, and that thinking would tell me that three governments working together is not profitable for me. But I like this idea of joint planning, of cooperative planning – that is the planner side of me – so I am supportive of this idea. I am losing money by supporting this idea, but I will because it is good for this area.⁷⁸

The role that planning consultants play in local planning processes in general, and cooperative efforts in particular, remains a black box. More exploration is needed in this area

Eight, in considering whether the environment in Michigan is ripe enough to allow sweeping changes to the current land use system and regional planning requirements, policymakers might weigh a few alternative scenarios. On one hand, voluntary cooperation takes a long time to materialize; most of the cooperative efforts that have been formalized to joint planning commissions in Michigan today have been in place for more than 10 years. It takes patience for voluntary cooperation to evolve and eventually materialize into something that can have concrete impacts on local land use. One official explains:

When you want to change something voluntarily, you cannot change it right off the bat. Because it is human nature – we all resist change. If we are going to have change, it has to come at a rate [at which] we can accept it and grow with it and move into it Coming from a rural background, a lot of us understand that to get a good crop and harvest a good crop, you need to plant the seed; you got to give it time to grow and nurture it. Give it what it needs and hopefully you get a good crop. If I . . . go into my township hall and say I want to change this, this, this, this right now, it will never happen. My board will just back right out of it. If I say “Maybe we ought to look into this someday,” and give it time, and after six months say something again, and a year later say something again, I can get it done. If I just go in and say we need this and we need it right now, it is not going to happen, and it’s just the way it is.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Planner, Joint Planning Commission meeting, January 12, 2008

⁷⁹ Local elected official, personal communication, November 11, 2007

On the other hand, mandated cooperation will require tremendous oversight and enforcement. It is also subject to the criticism that meaningful cooperation will be replaced by pro-forma compliance. Incentive-based approaches to cooperation offer a middle ground and an incremental approach to achieving cooperation. However, incentive packages have to be well crafted so that they not only promote more cooperation than a voluntary approach would allow, but also incrementally add up to a comprehensive package of land use and growth-management reform as seen in the mandated states.

Finally, only a few municipalities in Michigan cooperate on planning and zoning issues in a manner that results in changes to the planning institutions and internal decision making structures in a municipality.. These municipalities have established Joint Planning Commissions and have written joint master plans and joint zoning ordinances. Although the effects of these joint policies remain to be seen, these municipalities have found a way to think about the long-term consequences of their policies and actions. One elected official discusses the importance of taking the long view:

What will our legacy be? You don't need a push from the state or county or anyone else. The only push you should need is a crystal ball to see what you will look like in the future. The Village of Manchester has a park called Carr Park. The Carr family owned that park in the 30s. They gave it to the village at that time. For a long time it was just bush and a couple of broken-down picnic tables. Sometime in the 40s, the village council decided they didn't need it and started the proceeding to give it back to the heirs. The local merchants found out about it, got public opinion, and forced the village to stop and keep it. Today that park is used all the time – that park is heavily used. It is an asset to the village and the surrounding townships, all because a few people said, "Wait a minute, someday this could be something," while others said, "Let's get rid of it." That's the side I want to be on. I want somebody to say, "Damn, they were smart back then."

8.1 Recapitulation of basic research premises and contributions

The aim of this research project was to first ascertain whether land use cooperation can evolve in Michigan, which is representative of many of the permissive planning states that do not institute substantial mandates and incentives to facilitate such cooperation. If evidence of cooperation could indeed be found in Michigan, the second aim was to develop an understanding of the factors that determine such cooperation. Also, a portion of this research effort was dedicated to understanding the key impediments to land use cooperation. The literature review revealed that a majority of studies of local government cooperation focused primarily on whether municipalities cooperate around service delivery functions (see for e.g., Thompson, 1997; Bartle and Swayze, 1997; Pagano, 1999; Meek, Schildt, and Witt, 2002; Thurmaier and Wood, 2002; Wikstrom, 2002; Agranoff and McGuire, 2003). Further, several of these studies measure the outcome variable cooperation as a simplistic binary category or a frequency count of the number of cooperative activities performed by municipalities.

A secondary aim of this research therefore was to theorize about the different dimensions of cooperation and investigate whether the factors that determine cooperation change depending of how cooperation is conceived. Finally, most studies of cooperation have examined the key factors affecting cooperation in isolation from each other. For example, scholars have singularly focused on whether environmental factors (e.g. fiscal capacity), structural factors (e.g. type of municipal administration), cultural factors (e.g. networks), and decision maker related factors (e.g. training) have affected cooperation on service delivery without developing models that account for several combinations of these

explanatory factors. Studying these factors in isolation has also meant that most studies of cooperation have employed either quantitative or qualitative analyses but not a mixture of both.

This research presents a more complete picture of how cooperation evolves, by considering a comprehensive model of cooperation that accounts for the roles played by each of these four factors in determining cooperation. The conceptual framework used in this dissertation is derived from Giddens' theory of structuration and allows for a mediation of the roles played by both structure and agency in determining outcomes. This approach favors using a mixed methodology for data analysis so that both macro (e.g. environmental factors) and micro factors (e.g. decision maker preferences) of decision making can be analyzed. In many ways, this research is a response to calls for mixed methods approaches (see Godschalk and Brower 1989) to study institutionally complex issues such as growth management and regional cooperation. By using case studies and surveys of elected officials, this dissertation provides one example of how Giddens' theory might be used as the overall framework for studying regional cooperation.

Although scholars have lamented the difficulty of defining and measuring concepts like "cooperation", there has been limited theoretical advancement in the literature in terms of how such a concept might be operationalized. Further, few questions have been raised about whether cooperation is a more dynamic concept than it is construed to be. This dissertation provides evidence that this is indeed so, and argues that different ideas of what constitutes cooperation should be operationalized into analytically distinct variables.

This dissertation finds that the act of initiating cooperation is different from the act of formalizing a cooperative effort. Similarly, the factors that determine whether a municipality engages in cooperation are not always the factors that determine whether a cooperative effort is formalized. In keeping with this assessment, the obstacles to initial cooperation are not all the same obstacles that impede sustained cooperation. For example, most of the organizational theory literature contemplates the evolution of cooperation as arising from the fundamental need to manage uncertainties. In the land use context, such uncertainties manifest foremost as the environmental pressures on a municipality. These environmental pressures (e.g. growth pressure) serve as external threats and are often beyond an individual municipality's control, thus necessitating cooperation. In this way, this research confirms that environmental factors are key explanatory variables of cooperation. However, this finding only holds true when the variable being predicted is initial cooperation. In other words, although they serve as triggers of cooperation, environmental factors do not significantly predict the extent of formal cooperation. This distinction is worth noting. Similarly, this research confirms the skepticism with which most planning scholars view the role of regional planning agencies in permissive planning states. That is, the planning literature in general is skeptical of the ability of regional level planning agencies to induce local cooperation in states where such agencies have minimal regulatory roles. This dissertation confirms this assertion. However, this dissertation also finds that regional level planning agencies play significant explanatory roles in determining the extent of formal land use cooperation. This finding is another distinct departure from past theorizing about the factors that contribute to the evolution of cooperation. In this manner, this dissertation argues for a more conceptually

refined idea of cooperation and for a more inclusive framework for evaluating the factors affecting cooperation.

Another set of contributions made by this research relates to the role played by informal institutions in facilitating cooperation. Scholars who have previously studied cooperation have made two assumptions about informal institutions: first, that prior cooperation will result in greater future cooperation; and second, that because political factors serve as the largest impediments to cooperation, cooperation will be greater in areas where there are minimal political conflicts among municipalities, where municipalities have good working relationships with each other, and where the political culture in an area is conducive to cooperation. This dissertation provides a different interpretation of the role of informal institutions in determining cooperation and in doing so makes significant contributions to existing theories of cooperation. The assumptions about the impact of prior cooperation on future cooperation would suggest that the number of intergovernmental service delivery agreements in a municipality would affect cooperation positively. This research shows that cooperation on services does not have a significant impact on municipalities' decision to cooperate. Further, service related cooperation has a negative impact on the extent of formality of land use cooperation. This finding emphasizes the need for refinement in terms of thinking about what "prior cooperation" means. What kind of prior cooperation? How much prior cooperation? What if this prior cooperation is unsuccessful? At a minimum, examining these questions in greater detail will provide a more nuanced and clarified understanding (if not divergent understanding) of the taken for granted assumptions in studies of cooperation.

This research also shows that a regional governance culture characterized by minimal conflicts among municipalities, general agreement on area-wide problems and good relationships among municipalities does not significantly impact the decision to cooperate. Further, this regional governance culture has a negative impact on the extent of formal cooperation. This finding suggests that the connections between broader attitudes, beliefs and cultures, and subsequent behavior are not always straightforward. Further, this finding raises important policy related questions of whether a regional governance culture can be considered as a substitute for cooperation rather than a determinant of cooperation.

This dissertation makes important contributions to the general growth management literature where most of the focus has been on states with substantial state level mandates and incentives for cooperation. By examining cooperation in a remarkably understudied permissive planning state, this dissertation explores both the promises and perils of voluntary municipal cooperation. While this research shows that municipalities in Michigan do cooperate on land use issues, these cooperative efforts exhibit varying levels of formality. The municipalities that decide to cooperate formally on land use issues seem remarkably resilient to political instabilities and have been able to garner the commitment and internal support needed to sustain such an effort. But this kind of voluntary cooperation takes a long time and not all municipalities decide to take this route of formalizing their cooperative effort by establishing joint master plans and ordinances.

The impediments are many and primarily manifest in the form of local resistance to giving up control and autonomy, and the lack of recognition of the need to cooperate.

This dissertation finds that the need for cooperation seems to be first and foremost generated by external pressures (e.g. perceived future growth pressure). This finding raises questions of whether it is problematic to let crises or perceived threats drive the need for cooperation. On one hand, this research reveals that internal support for cooperation, and the formality and longevity of cooperative efforts are high when such efforts are organized to counter environmental pressures that are perceived to fundamentally alter the valued characteristics of a municipality. On the other hand, by allowing municipalities to tailor cooperative efforts to counter threats to locally significant resources, one might have to compromise on eliciting systematic protection for those resources that are critical from a statewide perspective. To offer systematic protection to statewide significant resources, several growth management states mandate cooperation in specific geographic areas or on specific policy issues. For example, in Vermont, the state enforces only the affordable housing component of local plans. Other states have instituted additional requirements for cooperation in areas that are specifically designated as statewide environmental protection areas (New Jersey Pinelands and Florida State Areas of Critical Concern; Portland Metro; NC coastal region). The debate about whether cooperation should be viewed more as a general ideal to advance regional planning or whether it is sufficient to regard the usefulness of cooperation as a “fix” to local and regional problems is one that remains

8.2 Future research

First, this study should be replicated in the other Great Lakes states and in states that offer similarly permissive institutional settings for planning. Further, many scholars have described cooperation as a necessary condition for effective planning and resource protection. Because this study did not evaluate the development patterns arising from cooperation, the next step would be to evaluate planning outcomes on the ground. In other words, does cooperation actually produce better land use patterns? Is cooperation a sufficient condition for the outcomes that planners desire? An extension of this study might also evaluate the joint plans produced as part of cooperative efforts and compare the quality of such plans with individual master plans to ascertain whether joint plans have the potential to advance regional goals more substantively than individual plans. The quest for regional planning has resulted in at least three different models of governance: those of Florida (mandated), New Jersey (incentivized) and Michigan (permissive). Yet there have been no comparative studies to determine whether these models and their respective state-level institutions produce different regional outcomes. Finally, further research might evaluate the potential of Joint Planning Commissions, which seem exclusive to Michigan, to produce regional-level outcomes. Scholars might also explore whether there are comparable alternatives to JPCs in the other states and study the efficacies of these kinds of municipality level cooperative arrangements.

Future research could also explore alternative conceptualizations of cooperation, a concept that scholars have found extremely difficult to measure. The sample size used in this study was sufficient to answer several of the questions that were posed in this

dissertation. But one of my regression models did not have enough power to predict informal cooperation. Adding cases to this study as a follow-up might help in this regard. Further, because cooperation by its very nature involves a number of feedback loops, path analysis might render some interesting findings about the indirect and direct effects of the independent variables. For example, the environmental factors included in this study spur cooperative efforts but do not aid in formalizing them. Path analysis might help identify whether these environmental factors have indirect effects on formal cooperation through other intervening or endogenous independent variables.

Finally, this study included only data obtained through survey research. Socio-economic data might be added to understand, for example, if there are systematic differences in perceived versus calculated growth pressures and to control for other factors.

Appendix 1



An assessment of intergovernmental cooperation and growth management in Michigan

1. Your Name: _____ Your title: _____

2. Name of your jurisdiction: _____

3. How does your jurisdiction engage in planning and zoning functions (please select one)

We do our own planning and zoning The county plans and zones for our jurisdiction

We do not have planning or zoning We share planning and zoning functions with the county

Other (please explain) _____

4. Does your jurisdiction have a master plan? Yes No

5. Does your jurisdiction have a zoning ordinance? Yes No

6. How many staff members does your jurisdiction employ for planning and zoning purposes?

_____ Number of Full Time Staff _____ Number of Part Time Staff

7. Who primarily assisted your jurisdiction with the preparation / update of your master plan?

Regional Planning Agency County Consultant None

Other If other, Please specify: _____

8. Does your jurisdiction share natural resources such as inland lakes or high quality natural areas such as state/national parks with other local governments? Yes No

9. How many local governments does your jurisdiction share political boundaries with? (please provide a number for each local government type)

General Law Townships _____ Charter Townships _____ Villages _____ Cities _____

10. How would you characterize the extent of participation by the following groups on land use planning and zoning-related issues in your jurisdiction?

	Extent of Participation					Don't know
	Very low	Low	Moderate	High	Very high	
Citizens	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Citizen groups (e.g. neighborhood groups)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Non-profits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Businesses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Other Organizations (e.g. chambers)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

11. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means extremely “ineffective” and 5 means extremely “effective”, how effective have your county planning department and regional planning agency been at the following?

	Effectiveness of the county planning department					Effectiveness of the regional planning agency					N/A
	Extremely ineffective					Extremely effective					
Providing technical assistance and staff support for cooperative land use efforts	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing technical assistance and staff support generally for planning and zoning purposes	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing opportunities for interactions among decision makers	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Playing a mediation role among local decision makers	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing financial incentives for encouraging cooperation	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing a forum for regional /countywide problem solving	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing leadership for cooperative planning efforts	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing “fair” representation of the range of regional /countywide interests	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Setting regional /countywide land use priorities and goals	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. Have you found any other organizations to be more successful at performing the above functions than the county and/or the regional planning agency? Yes No

If yes, which organizations and in what capacity?

13. To what extent do you think the following individuals or groups in your jurisdiction support the idea of local and regional cooperation on land use planning and zoning issues?

	Very low support	Low support	Moderate support	High support	Very high support	Don't know
You personally	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Local elected board	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Planning commission	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Planning department / staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Your constituency / citizens	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

14. To what extent do you personally agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
Some problems relating to land use planning, social equity, and environmental protection might be better solved at a broader scale (i.e. at the metropolitan or regional level)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	—
The political culture in our region is very conducive to cooperation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	—
We have strong leadership from public officials on land use cooperation in our region	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	—
Our region is characterized by tremendous competition among local governments for growth and development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	—
Our region has a long history of political conflict among jurisdictions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	—
Our region is characterized by strong regional institutions that serve as coordinating mechanisms for land use planning in the region	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	—
Local governments in our region generally agree on what the regional land use problems are and how these problems ought to be solved	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	—
Our jurisdiction has access to the financial, technical, institutional networks and resources needed to forge cooperative alliances around land use issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	—
Our jurisdiction has a history of good working relationships with our neighboring jurisdictions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	—
Our jurisdiction and neighboring jurisdictions face very similar land use challenges	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	—
Our jurisdiction's land use policies have tremendous impacts on countywide and regional development patterns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	—

15. Does your jurisdiction cooperate with other local jurisdictions or the county on the provision of the following services?

Services	Yes – with other local governments	Yes – with the county	No – we do not cooperate	Don't know
Fiscal services (e.g. property assessing)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information services (e.g. GIS)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Building regulation (e.g. enforcement)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Police (e.g. patrol, crime lab)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fire (e.g. inspection, ambulance)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Refuse collection (e.g. solid waste, recycling)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water and sewer (e.g. collection, treatment)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transit (e.g. public bus)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parks and recreation (e.g. senior centers, trails)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Cultural services (e.g. museums, zoos)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental services (e.g. water quality, erosion)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Roads and bridges (e.g. construction)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

16. Has your jurisdiction in the past five years participated in the following types of land use forums and activities organized at the regional or multi-county level? (*Entities organizing such activities and forums might include Regional Planning Commission/ Council of Government or other*)

Land use related activities at regional / multi-county level	Name of the committee / working group / coalition / workshop / conference	Name of entity organizing such efforts
Committees	_____	_____
Working/Study groups	_____	_____
Coalitions / Alliances	_____	_____
Workshops	_____	_____
Conferences	_____	_____
Other _____	_____	_____

relevant non-profits and organizations)

17. Has your jurisdiction in the past five years participated in the following types of land use related activities and forums organized for jurisdictions within your county? *Please include activities organized by all relevant organizations including non-profits and county planning departments.*

Land use related activities	Name of the committee / working group	Name of organizing entity
Committees	_____	_____
Working/Study groups	_____	_____
Coalitions / Alliances	_____	_____
Workshops	_____	_____
Conferences	_____	_____
Other _____	_____	_____

18. How often do you meet decision makers from neighboring localities at land use related events/ forums held at the county or regional level? (please check one)

- At least once a week
 At least once a month
 At least a few times a year
 At least once a year
 About once every two years

19. Does your jurisdiction currently cooperate on land use planning and zoning issues with neighboring jurisdictions?

Yes No If no, please skip directly to question 22.

If yes, in what ways does your jurisdiction cooperate on land use planning and zoning issues with your neighboring jurisdictions (please see options below and indicate all that apply)?

Mechanism used for cooperation	List the names of jurisdictions you currently have such arrangements with
Joint agreements (e.g. P.A 425 agreements)	_____
Memoranda Of Understanding	_____
Joint Planning Agreements	_____
Joint master plans	_____
Joint resource management plans	_____
Joint design/planning /regional guidelines	_____
Joint Planning Commissions	_____
Joint zoning boards	_____
Joint zoning ordinances	_____
Joint Programs (e.g. open space preservation programs)	_____
Regional land use policies (e.g. growth and service boundaries)	_____
Planning commissions and staff meet	_____
Joint committees / study groups / alliances	_____
Informal meetings / talks / handshakes among elected officials	_____
Joint data, asset mapping and information repositories	_____
Joint Stakeholder meetings	_____
Collaborative land use projects (when need arises)	_____
Share planning staff	_____
Other	_____

20. Has your jurisdiction received financial support from external sources for its cooperative land use effort?

Yes No

21. Has your jurisdiction received recognition for its cooperative effort? (e.g. honors and awards)

Yes No

22. Has your jurisdiction received designations in general? (e.g. Main Street Designation, Center of Regional Excellence, Cool City Designation)

Yes No

23. Has your jurisdiction been a part of any unsuccessful attempts to cooperate with neighboring jurisdictions? (please also consider efforts that are at a standstill / stalemate currently)

Yes No

If yes, why was this effort unsuccessful?

24. Is your jurisdiction a member of a Regional Planning Association or Council of Government?

Yes No

25. Is your jurisdiction a member of other organizations and non-profits that focus on land use planning related issues? If yes, please list the names of these organizations where your jurisdiction holds membership (e.g. Western Michigan Strategic Alliance)

26. Number of members on your: Elected board: _____ Planning commission: _____

27. Approximately how many of your elected board and planning commission members have received formal training in the last five years in the following areas? (please provide a number)

<u>Training Program</u>	<u>Elected board</u>	<u>Planning Commission</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
Economic development tools	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental and coastal management techniques	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public administration and/or public finance	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Land use / master planning	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Growth management / smart growth principles and techniques	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other _____	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>

28. Have you or other members of your elected board and planning commission attended training programs, lectures, or seminars that have specifically addressed the benefits of cooperation?

Yes No

29. To what extent has your jurisdiction faced growth pressures over the past 5 years? (please select one)

No growth pressure Moderate growth pressure Tremendous growth pressure

30. To what extent do you anticipate your jurisdiction will face growth pressures during the next 5 years? (please select one)

No growth pressure Moderate growth pressure Tremendous growth pressure

31. Has your jurisdiction over the last 5 years experienced a substantial turnover(s) in the makeup of its local elected board? Yes No

If yes, was this turnover(s) through
 general elections recall elections or both

Was this turnover(s) primarily because of land use issues? Yes No

32. Has your jurisdiction been named in any lawsuits pertaining to land use issues / decisions?
 Yes No

33. Has your jurisdiction experienced controversial land use decisions and development disputes?
 Yes No

34. Have there been clashes between Pro-growth and No-growth or Slow-growth interests in your jurisdiction? Yes No

35. Is your jurisdiction predominantly (please select one)

Urban Rural Suburban Other: _____

36. For how many years have you served in your current position? _____ years

37. Have you in the past served this jurisdiction under a different position? Yes No

38. Have you in the past held political office(s) in other jurisdictions? Yes No

39. Have you in the past held a land use related position(s) in other jurisdictions and/or organizations?
 Yes No

40. Have you in the past 5 years been a member of the board of non-profits and other organizations focused on land use related issues? Yes No

41. Have you in the past 5 years been a member of professional organizations? (e.g. Michigan Association of Planning) Yes No

42. Does the elected board in your municipality believe that your jurisdiction would benefit from cooperating with neighboring jurisdictions on land use planning issues? Yes No

43. How important are the following justifications of why local governments should cooperate with each other on land use planning and zoning issues?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
To ensure the compatibility of land uses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

and development patterns across jurisdictional lines

To ensure the consistency of land use policies and decisions across jurisdictions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To minimize fiscal, social and environmental inequalities among jurisdictions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To improve planning and zoning capacity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To provide efficiency (e.g. cost savings)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Because places where people live work and play are often distributed across jurisdictional lines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Because sustainable land use patterns (e.g. compact growth and open space preservation) are best achieved at a regional scale	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Because the land use challenges faced by most jurisdictions today cannot be solved exclusively at the local level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

44. What incentives should policy makers in Michigan provide to promote local government cooperation on land use issues?

45. If your jurisdiction does not currently cooperate with neighboring jurisdictions on land use planning and zoning issues, please explain why.

Thank you for completing this survey! Please return it to us in the enclosed envelope.

Appendix 2

An assessment of intergovernmental cooperation and growth management in Michigan – County Perspective



1. Your Name: _____ Your title: _____

2. Name of your County: _____

3. How many local units of government do you have in your county? Please provide a number for each local government type:

General Law Townships _____ Charter Townships _____ Villages _____ Cities _____

4. Does the county have a master plan? Yes No

5. Does the county have a zoning ordinance? Yes No

6. What role does the county play in local master plan preparation? (select all that apply)

We plan and zone for some local governments

We assist some local governments with master plan preparation i.e. write master plans for some government units

We provide technical assistance to consultants and local governments for plan preparation e.g. build out analysis

We provide data for local master plan preparation

We comment on local master plans, when local governments solicit our comments during plan preparation and plan updates

Other _____

7. Does the county do planning and zoning for any of the local units of government?

Yes No

If yes, how many local units of government are under county planning and zoning? _____

8. Overall, how would you characterize the relationship between the county planning department and the following agencies or entities

	Extremely negative			Extremely positive			N/A
County Board of Commissioners	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Local elected officials	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Local planners	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Planning Consultants	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Regional Planning Agency	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	

9. How many staff members does the county planning department employ?

_____ Number of Full Time Staff _____ Number of Part Time Staff

10. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means “very low priority” and 5 means “very high priority”, how would you rate the following priorities of the county planning department?

	County planning department priorities					N/A
	Very low priority				Very high priority	
Providing technical assistance and staff support for <u>cooperative</u> land use efforts	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing technical assistance and staff support <u>generally</u> for planning and zoning purposes	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing opportunities for interactions among decision makers	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Playing a mediation role among local decision makers	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing financial incentives for encouraging cooperation	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing a forum for regional /countywide problem solving	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing leadership for cooperative planning efforts	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing “fair” representation of the range of regional /countywide interests	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Setting regional /countywide land use priorities and goals	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other _____	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. To what extent do you think the following individuals or groups in your county support the idea of local and regional cooperation on land use planning and zoning issues?

	Very low support	Low support	Moderate support	High support	Very high support	Don't know
You personally	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
County Board of Commissioners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
County Planning Department staff generally	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Local elected officials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

12. To what extent do you personally agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
Some problems relating to land use planning, social equity, and environmental protection might be better solved at a broader scale (i.e. at the metropolitan or regional level)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
The political culture in our region is very conducive to cooperation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
We have strong leadership from public officials on land use cooperation in our region	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Our region is characterized by tremendous competition among local governments for growth and development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Our region has a long history of political conflict among jurisdictions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Our region is characterized by strong regional institutions that serve as coordinating mechanisms for land use planning in the region	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Local governments in our region generally agree on what the regional land use problems are and how these problems ought to be solved	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Our county has access to the financial, technical, institutional networks and resources needed to forge cooperative alliances among local elected officials around land use issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Our county has a history of good working relationships with the local governments in the county	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Local governments in our county face very similar land use challenges	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

13. Does the county master plan specifically address the importance of regional cooperation?

Yes No

14. Does the county organize specific activities / workshops on the importance of local and regional cooperation?

Yes No

15. Does the county offer training sessions on local and regional cooperation?

Yes No

16. Does the county dedicate staff for local and regional cooperative planning initiatives?

Yes No

17. Does the county offer financial support for local and regional planning initiatives?

Yes No

18. Has the county over the past five years organized any of the following types of land use related activities and forums for local governments within your county?

Land use related activities	Name of the committee / working group
Committees	_____
Working/Study groups	_____
Coalitions / Alliances	_____
Workshops	_____
Conferences	_____
Other _____	_____

19. Have any or several local governments in your county received designations as special demonstration communities? (e.g. Main Street Designation, Center of Regional Excellence, Cool City Designation)

Yes No

20. Have any or several local governments in your county been a part of unsuccessful attempts to cooperate with neighboring jurisdictions? (*please also consider efforts that are at a standstill / stalemate currently*)

Yes No

If yes, why was this effort unsuccessful?

21. What are the key reasons why local governments in your county do not currently cooperate with neighboring jurisdictions on land use planning and zoning issues?

22. Are there any or several non-profits in your county that are organized around providing support for local and regional land use cooperation? (e.g. Western Michigan Strategic Alliance, United Growth for Kent County) – Please list the names of these non-profits.

23. Do any or several local governments in your county cooperate on planning and zoning issues?

Yes No (if no, please skip to question 24)

If yes, do local governments in your county employ any of the following kinds of mechanisms for cooperative planning and zoning efforts?

Mechanism used for cooperation **List the names of jurisdictions in your county that employ the following cooperative mechanisms**

Joint agreements
(e.g. P.A 425 agreements) _____

Memoranda Of Understanding _____

Joint Planning Agreements _____

Joint master plans _____

Joint resource management plans _____

Joint design/planning /regional guidelines _____

Joint Planning Commissions _____

Joint zoning boards _____

Joint zoning ordinances _____

Joint Programs (e.g. open space preservation programs) _____

Regional land use policies (e.g. growth and service boundaries) _____

Planning commissions and staff meet _____

Joint committees / study groups / alliances _____

Informal meetings / talks / handshakes among elected officials _____

Joint data, asset mapping and information repositories _____

Joint Stakeholder meetings _____

Collaborative land use projects (when need arises) _____

Share planning staff _____

Other

24. How important are the following justifications of why local governments should cooperate with each other on land use planning and zoning issues?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
To ensure the compatibility of land uses and development patterns across jurisdictional lines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To ensure the consistency of land use policies and decisions across jurisdictions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To minimize fiscal, social and environmental inequalities among jurisdictions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To improve planning and zoning capacity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To provide efficiency (e.g. cost savings)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Because places where people live work and play are often distributed across jurisdictional lines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Because sustainable land use patterns (e.g. compact growth and open space preservation) are best achieved at a regional scale	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Because the land use challenges faced by most jurisdictions today cannot be solved exclusively at the local level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

25. What incentives should policy makers in Michigan provide to promote local government cooperation on land use issues?

26. Other comments or thoughts?

Thank you for completing this survey! Please return it to us in the enclosed envelope.

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