Urban Governance and Civic Capital: Analysis of An Evolving Concept

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Abstract

This article argues that the concept of civic capital affords considerable insight into systems of urban economic development, usefully bridging gaps in both institution-centric and social capital approaches. While the concept has been applied in the literature on urban governance and economic development, its use has been fragmentary and has not seen broad engagement. This review of the state of the literature situates the concept of civic capital relative to existing literature in the field, highlight its relationship to other concepts, and reviews several qualitative approaches that apply the concept to case studies. It provides an overview of the concept and a description of the way it has developed alongside the rich literature on governance and social capital in urban development to illustrate its potential for further analytical study.

Keywords

Governance, social capital, civic capital, regional collaboration, urban economic development

1. Introduction

Disruptive changes in technology and evolving trade patterns over the past two decades have exerted a profound impact on the economic prospects for cities and regions. While some have experienced strong waves of growth, many have been subjected to acute disruption from their shifting industrial base and resulting changes in their sources of employment and income. While the local scale has enjoyed greater prominence, in recognition of the growing centrality of city-regions as sites for generating ideas, firms and industries that are key to future growth, the benefits have been unevenly distributed. There is growing awareness of the increasing disparity between leading innovation centres and those places left behind – "the places that don't matter" (Rodríguez-Pose 2018: Atkinson, Muro and Whiton 2019). This disparity in economic opportunity has focused greater attention on the underlying factors that contribute to different outcomes, particularly the role of networks, leadership, and governance. This article addresses the critical question at the heart of this issue: why some city-regions exhibit greater resilience than others in coping with disruptive changes and what qualities of place can improve their prospects (Katz and Nowak 2017; Hendrickson et al. 2018; OECD 2020).

Among the factors identified as possible explanations for the different outcomes are institutions and the quality of government (Farole et al. 2011; Rodríguez-Pose 2013; Rodríguez-Pose and Garcilazo 2015; Di Cataldo and Rodríguez-Pose 2017), urban governance (Pierre 2011; Kim et al. 2018), social capital (Iyer, et al. 2005; Crescenzi et al. 2013; Muringani et al. 2021), and place leadership (Beer et al. 2019; Sotarauta and Suvinen 2019). Although this research affords valuable insights, critical issues remain, particularly the competing definitions of institutions in the literature and the problem of operationalizing the concepts used to explain growth outcomes. A further issue is that key factors, such as institutional quality and social capital are not permanent, they can and do change over time. Thus, there is an urgent need to explain how this occurs, particularly since

“. . . the capacity for institutions to change and accordingly, transform the economic potential of a place has been generally neglected by research to date” (Rodríguez-Pose 2020, 375). Further, the discussion of institutions remains at a high level of generalization. Although some quantitative studies show a strong correlation with economic performance, the contribution of specific institutions at the city-region level are less well understood.

This article surveys the literature on one explanation – the role of civic capital – that addresses the question of how particular social and political qualities of place create supportive environments for urban economic development. We undertake this survey as an exercise in concept refinement and clarification to identify explanatory gaps in established frameworks, the limitations of existing attempts to fill those gaps, and the contribution that civic capital makes to advancing the theoretical -- and by extension – the empirical state-of-the art. Civic capital provides a more nuanced approach to some of the broader concepts found in the literature, particularly, quality of government, institutions, or place leadership, and overcomes some of the criticisms levelled against the use of social capital to explain similar phenomena. Civic capital is defined as a set of relations that emerges from interpersonal networks tied to a specific region or locality and that contributes to the development of a common sense of community based on a shared identity, set of goals and expectations (Nelles 2013). It provides a useful way to theorize collective action dilemmas and their resolution through the development of collaborative processes. It is grounded in the analysis of ‘governance’ arrangements at the urban level — but provides an actor-centric perspective focused on the role of agency by civic actors and associations in promoting new patterns of economic development at the city-region level (Grillitsch and Sotarauta 2020; Henton et al. 1997). Forging linkages among relevant institutions and actors is key to the development of effective strategies for urban economic development and a prerequisite for regional growth and development.

The article begins with a review of the literature on urban governance, and its implications for economic development focused on the importance of these qualities for generating vibrant *milieu*x within which innovative economies flourish. This literature emphasized the character of linkages and a diversity of forms of governance as a factor in understanding the source of effective economic development strategies. Yet, recognizing the importance of collaboration is one part of the challenge; better coordination requires an appreciation of the conditions that contribute to its *emergence and development* and the role of agency in sustaining those conditions. It then considers the scholarship that explores the factors that foster effective coordination among civic actors, focusing specifically on the concept of social capital, which has been used to explain why some regions are more successful in overcoming obstacles to establishing cooperation than others (Putnam 1993). Focusing more closely on the civic dimensions of social capital to sharpen its conceptual precision, an emerging body of research articulates a new perspective that integrates both the urban governance and social capital traditions. Civic capital emphasizes the role that networks of civic associations play within successful city-regions and the contribution of entrepreneurial leaders in building civic associations.

The final section reviews a range of recent studies that either directly use the concept of civic capital, or employ closely related concepts, to explain the differential outcomes in the performance of diverse regions and urban locales. These studies probe the dynamics that support regional collaboration and underpin attempts to forge new governance arrangements. They indicate how underlying conditions that support local economic development can be altered through the intervention of key civic actors. Regions characterized by higher degrees of civic capital exhibit the presence of an interlocked network of collaborative institutions, which provide more effective governance mechanisms. The article concludes with a more focused concept of civic capital grounded in an evolving forms of collaborative governance that support economic development.

2. Governance and Urban Economic Development

Civic capital provides a lens through which to analyze why the governance structures of some city-regions lead to more effective economic performance. To support this contention, we situate the concept in the broader literature on governance theory, which recognizes that policy outcomes are not merely the byproduct of government actions but *depend on the interaction effects among a wide range of social and economic actors*, including sub-national and local governments, the private sector, voluntary, business and not–for–profit organizations. Many scholars have described/typologized the collaborative urban processes and resultant multi-sectoral, multi-level governance structures. However, these literatures are stronger in mapping the variable forms of these structures, than in explaining how they come about, why they look the way they do. Thus, we have a lot more description of processes than explanations of structures – their institutional variation and their relative effectiveness (in enabling economic performance). In this respect, some observers argue that, despite the volume of work produced, the field of urban governance is not yet mature and that more research is needed that acknowledges and untangles the increasing complexity that cities face in developing responses to emerging challenges (da Cruz et al., 2019).

Scholarship on governance argues that the exercise of political authority has evolved away from the state-centered, bureaucratic, and hierarchical systems associated with the national level of government towards a more distributed pattern where authority is dispersed over the core elements of the economy, society, and polity (Stoker 1998, 17; Paquet 1999). Political institutions do not hold exclusive sway over the delivery of public services; their primary role is to set "collective priorities and goals, while the pursuit of these goals is conducted in concert with a broad variety of social actors, such as organized interests, civil society and private business" (Pierre 2011, 18; Peters and Pierre 2004; Pierre 2019). Rather than viewing the concepts of government and governance as antinomies, they are seen as part of a continuum. This draws attention to the specific role played by government in these relationships and the patterns of interaction between government and a range of private actors in the pursuit of collective social goals or objectives (Pierre 2011, 20; Wolfe 2013).

Various strands of scholarship explore the interaction among actors in both the public and private sectors, based on regular patterns of exchange that underpin urban and regional governance (Swyngedouw 2005). Theories from public administration, urban studies, economic geography, and political science form a family of perspectives that explain the emergence, forms, effectiveness, and consequences of urban and regional governance. These almost universally view the strengthening of network relationships as crucial to more effective public service delivery and economic development outcomes (although not uncritically). From this perspective, greater interaction between private, public, and social sector actors can generate policy to support firms' knowledge production and is an important conduit for knowledge exchange among key actors. This section summarizes core intersecting literatures – regime theory, urban governance and network theory, associational governance, institutional collective action, and new localism – highlighting how each informed the development of civic capital.

Urban regime theory emerged from the recognition that local governments suffer from institutional and capacity constraints that require them to seek the cooperation of private actors and the mobilization of private resources to deliver service and economic growth (Stone 1989, Stone 1993, Pierre 2014). Understanding who cooperates and how governments can creatively solve deficits in institutional leverage has become more important as the core function of local government has moved beyond service delivery to providing the conditions to support local economic growth and competitiveness through strategic action. While urban regime theory has stimulated many critical discussions of the process, advantages, and perils of seeking to improve civic capacity through collaboration, it also has some limitations as a framework for explaining the role of governance in economic development. Principal among them are issues of scale and scope. Urban regime theory was devised to explain the actions of local governments working within local jurisdictional boundaries. It is less well-suited to explaining how governments collaborate with one another, and other actors, within the more complex multijurisdictional economic regions (Ziafati Bafarasat 2018) – larger scales – that characterize innovation ecosystems. Urban regime theory was also developed to explore the dominance of specific public-private relationships over time and tends to focus on more enduring partnerships. This is useful for identifying and explaining the alignment of interests and the strategies to leverage those that augment the capacity to act, either politically or economically. However, this perspective offers fewer insights into the more diverse, flexible, and often more ad hoc, relationships that local governments engage with a variety of actors, in their efforts to support economic development. Urban governance, and network governance, theory evolved to describe these broader arrangements.

Urban governance theory sees governance as a process of societal coordination and steering towards collective objectives. Like regime theory, it sees local governments as fundamentally constrained but, rather than lacking their own institutional capacities, they are also limited by their embeddedness in the "complex contingencies" of vertical institutions and horizontal relational contexts (Pierre 2014, 874). In these circumstances, cities need to coordinate with external actors – at different scales of government, across jurisdictional lines, and across segments of the economy – to achieve their goals. Like regime theory, the dependent variable is collective action, but the focus is on local governments' capacity to create, *and join*, coalitions with compositions that may vary significantly across policy issues. Governance, in this case, is a more flexible *modus operandi* that depends significantly on actors' abilities to participate in and leverage networks.

In this context, understanding how and what forms governance can take is particularly important. The institutional collective action (ICA) framework is one of the most comprehensive, which explores how and when authorities use different forms of governing—from networks to formal governance organizations — to solve collective action problems in fragmented or shared policy arenas (Kim et al. 2020). This literature tends to see governments as key actors in partnerships and intergovernmental relationships, and so has a specifically multijurisdictional and cross-boundary focus. This coupled with the wide range of governance forms that ICA acknowledges led to its use by scholars seeking to explain the emergence of metropolitan and regional innovation alliances. As with the urban and networked governance approach, it allows for the coexistence of multiple, varied, and sometimes competing governance arrangements and introduces the idea that previous collaborative relationships between partners, even in unrelated policy areas, might facilitate future initiatives. While not explicitly integrated as part of the ICA framework, it invokes the language of networks noting that regions rely on relational communities created from long-term reciprocal linkages between actors, which create mechanisms to overcome collective action dilemmas. More recent contributions have explored the impact of this "embeddedness" on ICA, linking it to network configurations and strengths and social capital (discussed in more detail in the following section) (Song et al. 2020).

The preceding approaches focus on the capacities and strategies of public actors and their engagement with, or leadership of, governance networks but, in truth, the value of networked governance is recognized from broader vantages as well. Network governance theory defines governance as consisting of self-organizing, inter-organizational networks (Rhodes 1996, 660). From an economic perspective, the capacity for networking is seen as essential for institutional learning, tapping into the shared intelligence of both the individual firm and organization, as well as a collectivity of firms within a given geographic space (Gertler and Wolfe 2002). This form of resource allocation is characterized by transactions that "occur neither through discrete exchanges nor by administrative fiat, but through networks of individuals engaged in reciprocal, preferential, mutually supportive actions" (Powell 1990, 303). In this sense, Torfing defines governance networks as, "a horizontal articulation of interdependent, but operationally autonomous, actors from the public and/or private sector who interact with one another through ongoing negotiations that take place within a regulative, normative, cognitive, and imaginary framework; . . ." (Torfing 2012, 102).

Interaction between diverse groups of actors in governance networks takes the form of sharing information, knowledge, and perspectives, as well as coordinating their activities to achieve more effective solutions to problems. Power relations within governance networks are horizontal, rather than hierarchical, because no single party has the capacity to implement solutions on their own (Torfing 2012, 102–03). As such, while there is a role for the state, it not necessarily as a leader or in its role in its capacity to exercise hierarchical authority. The networked governance literature explores these networks with respect to the state though also seeks to "break away from the constraints of the traditional dual choice between market-centred and state-centred approaches". It emphasizes the development of "governance capability across, and between, a broad range of institutional fields of economic life" in the form of institutionalized local governance structures based on "networks of organization and representation" (Amin 1996, 309).

Several different approaches have grappled with this challenge, including Katz and Nowak's recent work on *The New Localism* (2017). The new localism grounds the ability "to get things done" in the collective efforts of local governments, private actors, and the broader civil society. At the heart of the new localism lie organizational or physical spaces, which provide the locus for "[s]mall, repeated, experimental interactions" (Storper 2002, 142), that facilitate the easy exchange of ideas and the formulation of strategies to support local economic development. In this approach, "[g]overnance is driven by collaboration . . . stewarded by diverse networks, rather than elected decisionmakers alone, and characterized by iterative problem solving rather than by rigid and prescriptive rulemaking" (Katz and Nowak 2017, 3).

Together, these literatures lay the groundwork for the conceptual origins of civic capital. Despite the valuable insights afforded by these approaches, they remain largely static descriptive approaches that do not move the analysis to a dynamic understanding of why certain types of governance arrangements emerge and prove more effective in certain geographic locales. Still, civic capital owes a debt to these traditions. It builds on the idea that collaboration and network building are necessary for both city-region governments and firms to overcome institutional barriers, engage in policy entrepreneurship, and stimulate innovation through reciprocal learning and knowledge exchange. It views governance relationships as overlapping, iterative, and self-organizing. Civic capital is not confined within local boundaries but instead explains how actors see costs and benefits differently as a function of their embeddedness in relational communities. And it draws on literature on networks, trust, and reciprocity to bring life to how communities form collective identities and visions to support collaborative governance. The next section summarizes the role that another form of capital – social capital – plays in the elaboration of the concept of civic capital.

3. From Social to Civic Capital

Since the early 1990s, the extensive literature on social capital has been used both to explain divergent trajectories of economic development and as a basis for policy prescriptions. The richness and variety of the literature is a testament to the power of a concept that has expanded widely from its sociological origins to serve political scientists, economic geographers, economists, and development theorists. However, its rapid diffusion has generated a certain amount confusion and often inconsistent definitions. Its roots are traced to the work of James Coleman, who applied social capital to the study of educational attainment in American ghettos where it is viewed as a useful resource available to an actor through their social relationships (Coleman 1988). Social capital is rooted in a variety of entities that “consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors - whether persons of corporate actors - within the structure” (Coleman 1988, 98; Portes 1998; Woolcock 2010).

Social capital arises from social relationships that provide benefits to actors through their participation in those networks. But sociologists emphasize the intangible nature of social capital, it derives from the pattern or structure of an individual’s relationships. In this sense, the source of social capital lies outside the individual, in those with whom they engage in social interaction (Portes 1998). As a result, the development of social capital is largely an unanticipated consequence of efforts undertaken in pursuit of other goals. The complex web of those interactions and the pattern of relationships built up over time cumulatively result in a community’s stock of social capital (Maskell 2000, 118).

The heightened popularity of the concept since the early 1990s is widely attributed to Robert Putnam’s path-breaking study, *Making Democracy Work*. His work on the role of civic engagement in generating prosperity and political stability defined social capital as the “features of social organization, such as trust, norms and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated action” (Putnam 1993, 167). Following in the sociological vein, it refers to “connections among individuals — social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (Putnam 2000, 19). To operationalize his version of social capital, Putnam used four measures -- vibrancy of associational life, newspaper readership, preference voting and referendum turnout – to demonstrate the empirical relation between measures of the civic character of social and political life and the performance of regional governments in Italy (1993, 91-99), But this conclusion leads to his most important question: “*How did the civic regions get that way?”* (1993, 116). The answer lies back in the 19th century: deeply embedded civic traditions dating from this period turn out to be the most effective predictor of current levels of socio-economic development (1993, 152-57). In effect, path dependence, originating in critical historical junctures produces “durable differences in performance between two societies” and “institutional history moves slowly” (1993, 179, 184).

This insight leaves current researchers and policy analysts with a dilemma. While it affords a better explanation of the relevance of certain forms of civic governance -- based on the presence of trust, norms, and networks -- for patterns of economic development, it attributes their presence to processes that lie deep in the history of the region. Critics argue that this explanation of social capital rests on a circular form of reasoning, functioning as both a causal explanatory variable and an outcome or effect measure -- the presence of social capital in the form of high levels of civic participation is conflated as both cause and effect. In Portes view, the presence of civic capital results in positive economic outcomes, but that same presence is a product of strong patterns of civic engagement, “Cities that are well governed and moving ahead economically do so because they have high social capital; poorer cities lack in this civic virtue” (1998, 19; Woolcock 2010, 452; Woolcock 1998, 156).

Despite these recognized limitations, the concept has been widely applied to analyze patterns of regional economic development. Scholarship, which predates Putnam’s contribution to the field, has long been concerned with the factors that contribute to the success of some regions and the underperformance of others. The presence of effective partnerships among firms, the existence of consortia and research or business networks at the regional level are all viewed as indicators of the presence of social capital. Partners involved in these relationships demonstrate a willingness to exchange information on something more stable and enduring than a ‘barter’ basis. The networks that sustain social capital comprise a dense social community in which the business relationships of the regional economy are embedded; its presence or absence is linked to the vitality of civil society in that region. Thus, social capital is viewed as a collective asset built up through recurring patterns of interaction within specific communities, providing a benefit acquired painstakingly through a prolonged process of interaction (Morgan 1997; Cohen and Fields 1999; Maskell 2000; Landabaso, 2007).

Support for this perspective is found in numerous studies analyzing the impact of social capital on divergent patterns of regional economic development, and its interaction with different types of policy intervention. Studies have examined the degree of association between levels of social capital and the innovation performance of Italian provinces. After accounting for spatial effects, social capital is the main predictor of innovation performance along with the degree of agglomeration (Crescenzi et al. 2013). Another study documents that the quality of government combined with the presence of social capital act as important drivers of regional diversification in Europe (Cortinovis et al. 2017). A recent study examines the relative effects of bonding and bridging social capital in promoting economic growth and concludes that bridging social capital has the greatest effect on economic growth in regions (Muringani et al. 2021). While these studies all confirm the significant contribution social capital makes to regional economic growth and innovative performance, the social capital present in a region is taken as a given; the studies offer limited insight into how it originates or whether it can be shaped by policy intervention.[i]

The quantitative studies, by themselves, do not overcome the critical problem intrinsic to Putnam's work – the need to understand whether specific types of civic associations exert stronger effects in supporting and promoting economic growth and development and whether those types of associations can be formed through the collective agency of engaged actors at the city-region level. Nor do they address the urban governance issue of precisely which forms of civic association are most valuable in building social capital and enhancing the capacity for strong economic development. The dilemma of the ascribed link between high current levels of social capital and the long historical, path dependent way those stores of social capital were accumulated remains unexplained from a policy perspective. If, as appears to be the case, the strength of current civic institutions is primarily the product of centuries of historical development, then ". . . they can hardly be changed through policy intervention. They are path dependent and generally assumed to be a permanent feature of a territory" (Rodríguez-Pose 2020, 374).

3.1 Civic Capital

Recognizing these limitations suggests the need for greater specificity in explaining the precise dynamic by which the associational aspects of civic life emerge and contribute to economic development. A useful distinction is that made between the business realm and the civic realm of social relations. Business relations include technological learning within the firm and inter-firm trade and knowledge exchanges. Civic relations include those that exist between people in a community who interact with each other through their involvement with schools, various cultural and leisure activities, and civic associations. The civic dimension is particularly sensitive to geographic distance because many of the activities that enhance the strength of civic relations are based on the specific catchment area of a civic association or membership in a cultural organization. These relations frequently entail face to face meetings that are limited by distance and are primarily found at the city-region level, rather than the provincial or territorial level (Lorenzen 2007). The distinction between business and civic relations points the way towards a refining of the concept as a tool for understanding the dynamics of regional governance and innovation — the need to distinguish between its sociological or business dimensions and its civic dimensions. Closely related is the question of scale: is it equally applicable across a wide range of geographic and political scales – from the local to the national? Social capital as it has been identified and used in much of the literature may exert significantly different effects at each spatial scale (Iyer, Kitson, and Toh 2005, 1019).

To address these concerns, several scholars distinguish between the concept of social capital and that of civic capital to analyze the contribution of civic actors to the process of local and regional development. This builds on the distinctions between networks and community, and between business and civic relations. It incorporates insights derived from the work on civic entrepreneurs to provide a more nuanced conception appropriate to analyzing the role of civic associations and civic actors (Henton, Melville, and Walesh 1997). The catalyst for building a shared vision for a community or locality is a specific type of local actor, the civic entrepreneur, who identifies opportunities for individuals to collaborate on projects to promote the community's longer-term economic prospects. Civic entrepreneurs engage in a form of collaborative leadership that focuses on bringing people together and building networks in a world of distributed power structures. They reinforce a sense of shared identity and community vision by "creating opportunities for people to work together on specific projects to advance their economic community" (Henton, et al. 1997, 31).

Ebbekink and Langendijk reinforce these insights concerning the role of civic entrepreneurs as part of a place-based governance approach to local economic development. They view civic entrepreneurs as key individuals from both the public and private sectors who are expert facilitators and excel at networking. They play a variety of roles in cluster development, finding a balance between short-term and long-term objectives for cluster development, connecting diverse interests within the cluster, and helping formalize and build effective cluster governance organizations, which constitutes a critical factor in building civic capital (2013, 747–49; Ebbekink 2017).

Building on these insights, civic capital is comprised of formal or informal networks among individual community members, between communities, or between community and the local or regional government. It provides a constructive explanatory variable for analyzing effective forms of governance at the urban scale — including the degree of political willingness to cooperate in city-regions able to forge stronger governance partnerships.

According to Nelles "civic capital manifests itself as a set of relations that emerges from interorganizational networks tied to a specific region or locality and contributes to the development of a common sense of community based on a shared identity, set of goals or expectations" (2013, 1359–60).

Civic capital was initially identified as a quality produced by a community, which is motivated by a common vision for its future and enjoys a deep pool of trust among a diverse group of stakeholders that fosters inclusive and collaborative decision-making. It draws upon a dense network of organizations and initiatives that form connections among different programs in the community, engages public support for actions that aim to transform the community, and provides support to nurture the emergence of new leaders and ensure the continuity of the community's efforts (Potapchuk and Crocker 1999, 175–76). Civic capital impacts the institutional level by building and solidifying linkages across a range of community organizations in both the public sector and civil society. It is created through fora, such as collaborative organizations, where community members engage with each other to develop new relationships, build networks, and establish common understanding. In this perspective, collaborative governance processes lie at the heart of the community building activities that contribute to the growth of civic capital.

Thus defined, civic capital affords insight into the processes and dynamics that contribute to more successful regional governance. It focuses attention on the role of local civic leaders who intensify and formalize collaborative networks within and between communities, thus tying into the literature on collaborative governance. In localities characterized by higher degrees of civic capital, the collaborative efforts to sustain regional cooperation generate more effective governance. Successful urban economies benefit from the presence of collaborative institutions that communicate the respective needs of different local actors to each other, establish local and regional priorities for economic development, and build effective bridges across different segments of the community that might not otherwise be linked.

Collaborative regional institutions build civic capital and contribute to effective governance arrangements by forging broad and inclusive local development coalitions, place-based coalitions of a diverse cross-section of social and economic groups committed to the economic development of a city-region (Keating 2001). Dispersing power to a broader range of actors opens opportunities for more effective dialogue at the city-region level. This dialogue is central to the process by which civic parties reinterpret themselves and their relationship to other actors within the local economy. The presence of dense networks of collaborative institutions and civic associations supporting the development of city-region economy contributes to the degree of 'institutional thickness' in the local and regional economy (Amin and Thrift 1994). Institutional thickness implies the development of shared goals and visions regarding regional governance – the development of a shared identity based on ties to the region. Above all the articulation of a shared vision for the economic community and the local economy, often forged through local social knowledge management exercises, helps build a consensus among key civic actors and associations around that vision (Henton, Melville and Parr 2006; Gertler and Wolfe 2004; Wolfe 2013).

Civic-minded leaders come together to forge new organizations or revitalize existing ones dedicated to working collaboratively with local economic development agencies. The contacts and exchanges among these collaborative institutions develops the shared rules, conventions and knowledge that enhance the civic capital of a region. These civic organizations display several common features: they shift priorities from traditional business climate issues to a broader concern with factors that enhance regional competitiveness; they are funded through a variety of different mechanisms, including local philanthropic contributions; and they result in older organizations restructuring their approach to regional cooperation to tackle regional economic development issues (Katz and Nowak 2017;

Futureworks 2004). The emphasis on the role of local leaders in building civic capital and creating collaborative regional institutions affirms the importance of political agency in charting new developmental pathways for regions and cities. This allows for individual agency through the engagement of key actors, civic entrepreneurs, as well as accounting for a societal dimension. “Leadership adds the element of agency that is largely missing from alternative approaches, acknowledging the role for individual or organizational actors in catalyzing metropolitan engagement, and therefore potentially contributing to collaborative governance” (Nelles 2013, 1361).

In this respect, civic capital shares some elements with the concept of place leadership (Beer et al. 2019; Sotarauta, Beer and Gibney 2017; Beer and Clower 2014). Place leadership is rooted in broader social psychology and management conceptions of leadership and concerned with its contribution to regional economic development; in contrast, civic capital is rooted in the urban governance and social capital literatures. Both approaches recognize that the formation of economic development opportunities depends upon institutional agency by entrepreneurial actors across a range of sectors in a city-region (Sotarauta and Suvinen 2018). Sotarauta et al. distinguish between three types of place leadership: interpretive leadership, network leadership and formal (institutional) leadership (2022). Place leaders in the European context bear a certain affinity to civic entrepreneurs (Henton et al. 1997). They are equally concerned with the contribution that institutional collaboration makes to developing shared visions and promoting regional economic growth. However, there remain some notable differences. Place leadership focuses more on the contribution of individual, rather than collective, agency, and the critical importance of networking among institutional entrepreneurs, government agencies and regional development officials. Civic capital focuses more on the origins and development of civic organizations and how the individual agency of civic entrepreneurs becomes institutionalized into collaborative organizations that address the governance issues identified above. Place leadership has gained greater traction among European researchers, while civic capital is more current in North America; this article is intended to bridge the gap between the two. Ultimately, both are concerned with how the creation of new forms of organizations and the articulation of new visions for the economic future of a city-region enhances the level of civic capital in the local economic community.

In sum, the concept of civic capital rests on three key characteristics that distinguish it from the broader concepts of urban governance or social capital. First, civic capital emerges from the conscious efforts of engaged agents, civic entrepreneurs, who build local collaborative institutions. It can be created and maintained through these efforts, but it is not immutable – it can also degrade over time. Second, civic capital is geographically based – it applies to the urban and city-region level, not the broader level of community, society, or the nation. Finally, the principal contribution of civic capital is to blend leadership dynamics with the logic of collaborative governance institutions that cohere in urban and city-region contexts to enhance their economic performance.

4. Applications of the Concept of Civic Capital

Researchers and policymakers have long grappled with the institutional dynamics that help city-regions reorient their development trajectory. Quantitative empirical studies demonstrating statistical correlations between the presence of social capital and economic performance capture the current state of this relation but do not explain the underlying dynamics at work. A key to understanding successful efforts lies in the theoretically specific and locally grounded concept of civic capital. In line with Rodríguez-Pose's recent suggestion, comparative research approaches involving detailed case studies can provide a better insight into the role that collaborative institutions and civic capital play in supporting urban and regional growth and innovative performance (2020, 379).

The following section draws upon a range of case studies, both comparative and individual, that apply the concept of civic capital over the past 15 years. We highlight key insights from these case studies to reveal their shared strengths in explaining governance patterns in comparison to the other approaches reviewed above. Civic capital links themes common to the following contributions on community vision, civic engagement, the diversity of network linkages, and the power of the identities they generate in the hands of entrepreneurial civic leaders and collaborative regional organizations. Although no canonical sources link these contributions, the studies surveyed adopt the term civic capital, or closely related concepts, to analyze similar ideas, problems, and patterns. The studies surveyed below are grouped into two broad categories. First are those focusing on cluster dynamics through single case studies, limited case comparisons or broader overviews of a range of cluster studies. The second category explains the developmental trajectories of individual city-regions, compares alternative pathways found in limited case comparisons of city-regions, or provides broader overviews of a larger number of cases.

Many of the studies focus on factors contributing to the success of industrial clusters or factors that allow them to reorient their trajectory of development along the cluster life cycle. One of the most canonical clusters – Silicon Valley -- is the subject of competing and conflicting interpretations of the relative contribution made by social capital to its economic success. Conventional interpretations maintain that the social capital present in Silicon Valley grows out of the collaborative networks of interacting firms, driven essentially by a mutual self-interest in maintaining their innovative edge (Cohen and Fields 1999). A contrasting interpretation of Silicon Valley's success, however, attributes it to the role of entrepreneurial civic leaders in forging a collaborative regional organization, Joint Venture: Silicon Valley Network (JV:SV), that built the networks and linkages to sustain relational infrastructure. Formed in the early 1990s in response to a crisis perceived as a major threat to the Valley's success through the first wave of the technology boom, JV:SC played a foundational role through the decade and into the 2000s, reorienting the Valley towards a new growth path and building up stores of civic capital.

> JV:SV established regionalism as an accepted way of taking action: it brought together sectors and constituencies that traditionally did not interact, thereby changing how some important decisions were made and implemented in Silicon Valley. JV:SV's regionalism explicitly crossed two important boundaries: sectoral, between the private and public sectors; and jurisdictional, between cities and counties. . . . JV:SV's convening enabled participants to learn tremendously from each other (Saxenian and Dabby 2004, v; cf. also JV: SV 1995, 1998).

Other studies have identified the role that dynamic groups of entrepreneurs play in organizing the relational infrastructure for individual clusters and building civic capital in the process. Once clusters take root, an array of supports contributes to their development through the efforts of local entrepreneurs to build civic associations that reflect the collective interests of cluster members and facilitate the sharing of knowledge and learning among the emerging companies in the cluster. The emergence of these local associations marks a critical stage in the development of individual clusters (Feldman, Francis, and Bercovitz 2005). The term 'dealmakers' is also used with respect to the leadership role of key individuals who serve as information brokers to connect networks of disparate actors across an entrepreneurial ecosystem by sharing information, expertise, and financial resources. Empirical study concludes that the presence of dealmakers is a strong predictor of vibrant regional economies (Feldman and Zoller 2012). The model of entrepreneurially driven cluster organizations is applied in a recent study of the dramatic change in the trajectory of development for Toronto's information and communications technology cluster. It ascribes the transformation of the cluster to the role of civic entrepreneurs in building strong civic organizations that enhanced local civic capital (Denney, Southin and Wolfe 2020).

However, civic capital does not assume the same form in all cases, nor do civic organizations play identical roles in supporting cluster growth and resilience. Leveraging longitudinal and cross-regional variation among three Canadian ICT clusters in Toronto, Ottawa, and Waterloo, a recent paper attributes their current dynamism to civic capital in the form of regionally based interpersonal networks and a common sense of community. However, the study concludes that civic capital assumes different forms in different contexts and fosters high-technology competition civic organizations through various means: by facilitating cross-sectoral cooperation, by constructing specialized, strategic goods such as infrastructure, or by diffusing general knowledge within decentralized mentoring networks. In identifying the specific mechanisms by which civic capital shapes high-technology competition, this study argues that the type of civic capital matters for local cluster dynamics. (Creutzberg, Ornston and Wolfe 2021).

Finally, a comparative survey of 26 Canadian industrial cluster cases analyzed the specific contribution of civic capital to the success of individual clusters (Wolfe and Nelles 2008). The case studies were part of a national study of industrial clusters in a cross-section of sectors and regions across the country. The case study results highlight the contribution made by a range of civic actors and organizations as a critical factor in the formation and growth of local clusters. Although the nature and density of the civic associations varied across the clusters studied, the presence of networking institutions and collaborative organizations linking individual entrepreneurs, more established companies, public research institutions, financial intermediaries and economic development organizations was a common feature of well-functioning clusters. These civic organizations align the needs of local firms with support from local regional institutions and economic development agencies. The vitality of local networks draws on the presence of civic capital to enable cluster firms to adapt to the technological and market disturbances that invariably impact them (Wolfe and Nelles 2008).

The second category of case studies interprets the developmental pathways followed by individual city-regions, comparisons of a limited number of city-regions or broader surveys of national institutional variations. An important study of the role of local civic leaders and civic organizations in the historical development of a city-region is the case of San Diego (Walshok and Shragge 2014). The city's dramatic transformation over the past six decades is explained in terms of "*civic culture* and *political economy* — how citizens identify their needs and wants, how they marshal the necessary resources and how they generate the social capital and political will to make the pieces fall into place, over and over again" (2014, 9). Central to the analysis is the way in which the civic culture supported different forms of organizations, based on collaboration between members of the business community, education, and government to sustain and promote its economic growth. At each stage of the reinvention of its economy, civic leaders collaborated in mobilizing local resources to take advantage of emerging economic opportunities. Engaged entrepreneurial leaders from the civic, research and business communities (civic entrepreneurs) forged integrative civic platforms that established inclusive, cross-functional, and interdisciplinary institutions across boundaries between different communities. A key factor determining the economic prospect for a local community is "the extent to which [it] has organizations that enable knowledge sharing, socializing, trust building across multiple social and knowledge boundaries . . . "(Walshok and Shragge 2014, 194) — in other words, the elements associated with stores of civic capital.

The comparative case study method has been used to analyze the developmental trajectory of Los Angeles County and the San Francisco Bay area over the past three decades, The differentiated performance of the two regions is explained in terms of a set of factors consistent with the definition of civic capital. The researchers combine detailed analysis of quantitative statistical indicators on the relative performance of the two city-regions with a close examination of more qualitative variables to narrow the explanation to the factor that best accounts for their divergence. The study correlates the presence of strong corporate and civic networks that sustain cross sectoral connections with other indicators, labeled the 'relational infrastructure' of a region: "the more successful region has a more connected elite than the less successful one, and it has more centrally connected leadership organizations" (2015, 180). Evidence of stronger and more integrated business and civic networks in San Francisco than Los Angeles is clear and convincing: "there are stronger and more encompassing invisible colleges of actors in the Bay Area than in Greater Los Angeles. . .. Initial modest differences around 1980 led to circular and cumulative causation processes in network structures, such that small initial differences have been magnified over time." (Storper, et al. 2015, 192). The solidification of regional networks that sustain civic capital was a self-reinforcing process – the region that established an initial lead in building stores of relational infrastructure, or civic capital, extended that lead over time.

However, not all forms of civic interaction contribute to more effective governance mechanisms and the building of civic capital. The comparative case study of Youngstown, Ohio and Allentown, Pennsylvania reveals the way that differences in the structure of local civic networks can dramatically influence levels of civic capital in a community and their resulting contribution to economic revitalization. Civic relations that tie actors together who are not otherwise connected produce more beneficial results for their communities than civic ties that reinforce established ties among actors who are already well connected. A key factor in Allentown's relative success was the time devoted by top economic leaders to participating in civic networks that bridged key constituencies in the local community. To make civil society vibrant and effective, ". . . particular organizations must bring together actors who are not otherwise well connected in order to serve as a focus for civic engagement" (Safford 2009, 150). These findings reinforce the insight that broader, cross sectoral collaborative organizations are more effective in building stocks of civic capital.

Not just in San Diego, the San Francisco Bay area, and Allentown but other case studies of similar efforts in Cleveland, Austin, Pittsburg, and a variety of US city-regions provide further evidence of how this process plays out at the local level (Gibson and Rogers 1994; Katz and Nowak 2017)Henton, Melville and Parr (2006) document the role played by new forms of regional collaboratives in revitalizing the economy in a wide range of urban and regional settings across the US. In sum, both the single and comparative case studies demonstrate the way in which civic actors and organizations at the urban and city-region level cross existing sectoral boundaries to build collaborative organizations that enhance the economic and innovative capabilities of the region by fostering civic capital.

One of the few comparative studies of civic capital in both Europe and North America examined the factors that contributed to intermunicipal cooperation across a range of policy areas in two German and two Canadian cities. The study interviewed civic officials, and representatives of intermediary organizations in the four city-regions. The presence of a strong degree of civic capital supports the creation and maintenance of effective local partnerships at the intermunicipal level across the broader city-region, directly and indirectly. The more widespread the level of civic engagement at the metropolitan scale, the greater legitimacy it affords the idea of collaboration within the metropolitan region. Underscoring the critical importance of agency in building and maintaining civic capital, strong civic leaders played a vital role in championing a region-wide metropolitan agenda through a variety of organizational structures: “[c]ivic capital is a significant determinant of metropolitan governance capacity to the extent that it influences the likelihood that local actors will engage meaningfully in cooperative relationships at the city-region scale” (Nelles 2013, 1362; 2012).

Two comparative national studies of city-regions have also explored the contribution of civic capital to surmounting governance issues at the urban scale – one Canadian and one American. The researchers in the Canadian study formulate a governance typology to explain the degree of collaboration found in the 11 cases encompassing three broad types: institutionalized collaboratives, sector networks and project partnerships. There is evidence of considerable experimentation underway in Canadian cities in these new forms of collaborative governance, but the strategies adopted, and degree of collaboration, varies across the cases. A key insight is that "[i]n the cities where more durable agendas were emerging and acquiring institutional foundations, the collaborations featured considerable leadership from community-based actors" focused on building broad cross-cutting coalitions that could encompass a social inclusion agenda with the goals of community economic development (Bramwell and Bradford 2014, 330). The authors find a close affinity between the more integrated forms of collaborative governance they observe and Michael Keating's concept of a 'development coalition' (2001), which includes coalitions of local actors collaborating to promote the social and economic development of a city-region. The model can take diverse institutional forms but involves a strong degree of local civic leadership, varying governance arrangements and different approaches to a local development strategy. These emerging forms of collaborative governance are depicted as new forms of investment in '*civic insfrastuctures of innovation and inclusion'* (Bramwell and Bradford 2014, 335), which we interpret as comprising critical elements of civic capital.

The last comparative study examined ties effective regional governance to the presence of 'regional capital', defined as "the stores upon which a region may draw to create and sustain effective regional governance" (2000, 83). The presence of regional capital and effective regional governance is underpinned by the presence of a degree of political alignment, strong corporate and civic involvement, and leadership that sustains or supports the pursuit of clear regional goals. To investigate the connection between the presence of regional capital and regional economic outcomes, the study analyzed eight metropolitan regions in the U.S. – four regarded as relatively effective economic performers and four viewed as economic laggards. Regional capital is analyzed through eight categories that are important for generating regional outcomes: historical capital, structural capital, legal capital, socio-economic capital, developmental capital, civic capital, corporate capital, and political capital (Foster 2000, 90-96). Regions with higher degrees of regional capital outperform those with lesser degrees, by drawing on their stores of historical, socio-economic, and developmental capital to achieve better economic performance. However, the effect of regional capital on economic performance is not permanent; it is possible for some regions to overcome a deficit of regional capital, while others may squander it. On balance, the performance of more accomplished regions derives, in part, from their ability to draw upon greater stocks of regional capital, which includes the underlying elements that we view as essential for the presence of civic capital (Foster 2000, 113).

The preceding discussion surveys a range of studies employing diverse research methodologies where either the term civic capital, or ones that bear a close affinity to it, have been used to frame and interpret the factors contributing to local and regional economic development. These studies illustrate the variety of empirical approaches used to investigate the concept and its value in deepening our understanding of the contribution of collaborative governance to explaining differences in city-region trajectories.

5. Conclusion

The preceding discussion represents neither a comprehensive, nor a definitive, survey of the concept of civic capital; rather, it situates the concept in the context of current theorizing on forms of urban governance and surveys the strengths and limitations of social capital as it has been applied at the urban and regional scale. It traces how the concept of civic capital has developed from the broader literature on urban governance and social capital, drawing on work in economic development on the role of civic entrepreneurs and collaborative regional institutions. The point to our analytical stocktaking of this diffuse literature is to show the way forward, first by critiquing several explanatory approaches and by presenting a robust alternative. It argues for the utility of civic capital as more clearly specified than the broader term social capital at the urban level.

The goal is to situate the concept of civic capital relative to the broader literature on urban governance and social capital, highlighting the gaps it seeks to fill, and surveying the ways in which recent scholarship has engaged with, and developed, the concept. It also seeks to build bridges with related concepts that have developed in parallel, such as place leadership, to demonstrate how others have seized on similar critiques of existing approaches and to recognize them as contributing to civic capital's conceptual evolution. In so doing, we aim to set civic capital on a stronger intellectual footing. The illustrative examples provide support for the further development of the concept in theoretical terms and its application as an explanatory variable in empirical case studies and we encourage other researchers to join us in this enterprise.

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[i] There is also an empirical literature on the economic effects of a related concept, territorial capital, but it includes a range of indicators, such as infrastructure spending, that lie well beyond the scope of this review (Camagni and Capello 2013; Fratesi and Perucca 2017).