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Urban Education Reform in Wicked Times: The Limits and Possibilities of Building Civic Capacity in Detroit

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Abstract: After decades of market-based education reforms, the landscape of urban school districts across the country have been transformed. Yet, this is neither a sign of the effectiveness of such reforms nor a widespread consensus over the contents and form of urban schooling. Education reform remains a wicked problem, particularly along racial lines, making it nearly impossible to build broad-based coalitions around the actual improvement of teaching and learning. Thus, this article seeks to address this matter as a political problem. I do so by examining a case study in Detroit, a one-year period (2015-2016) in which two education regimes emerge to fight for their version of public schooling in the final legislation for a new school district. Using Page's (2016) *strategic framework for building civic capacity*, I compare the regimes' leadership strategies and find different levels of engagement with building civic capacity. However, higher levels of engagement did not necessarily yield the desired policy outcome. I conclude by discussing the limits of building civic capacity when local control itself has been gutted by decades of market-based reform and how future strategic frameworks need to consider changes in the urban political economy as barriers to building civic capacity.

Keywords: civic capacity; urban education reform; market-based reform; wicked problems; Detroit Public Schools

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Reforma de la educación urbana en tiempos *wicked*: Los límites y las posibilidades de desarrollar la capacidad cívica en Detroit

Resumen: Después de décadas de reformas educativas basadas en el mercado, el panorama de los distritos escolares urbanos de todo el país se ha transformado. Sin embargo, esto no es una señal de la eficacia de tales reformas ni de un consenso generalizado sobre los contenidos y la forma de la educación urbana. La reforma educativa sigue siendo un problema *wicked*, particularmente en lo que respecta a las razas, lo que hace casi imposible construir coaliciones de base amplia en torno a la mejora real de la enseñanza y el aprendizaje. Así, este artículo busca abordar este asunto como un problema político. Lo hago examinando un estudio de caso en Detroit, un período de un año (2015-2016) en el que dos regímenes educativos emergen para luchar por su versión de educación pública en la legislación final para un nuevo distrito escolar. Usando el marco estratégico de Page (2016) para desarrollar la capacidad cívica, comparo las estrategias de liderazgo de los regímenes y encuentro diferentes niveles de compromiso con la construcción de la capacidad cívica. Sin embargo, los niveles más altos de compromiso no produjeron necesariamente el resultado político deseado. Concluyo discutiendo los límites de la construcción de capacidad cívica cuando el control local mismo ha sido destruido por décadas de reforma basada en el mercado y cómo los futuros marcos estratégicos deben considerar los cambios en la economía política urbana como barreras para la construcción de capacidad cívica.

Palabras-clave: capacidad cívica; reforma de la educación urbana; reforma basada en el mercado; problemas *wicked*; escuelas públicas de Detroit

Reforma da educação urbana em tempos *wicked*: Os limites e as possibilidades da construção da capacidade cívica em Detroit

Resumo: Após décadas de reformas educacionais baseadas no mercado, a paisagem dos distritos escolares urbanos em todo o país foi transformada. No entanto, isso não é um sinal da eficácia de tais reformas nem um consenso generalizado sobre o conteúdo e a forma de escolarização urbana. A reforma da educação continua sendo um problema *wicked*, particularmente em linhas raciais, tornando quase impossível construir coalizões amplas em torno da melhoria real do ensino e da aprendizagem. Assim, este artigo busca abordar esta questão como um problema político. Faço isso examinando um estudo de caso em Detroit, um período de um ano (2015-2016) em que dois regimes educacionais emergem para lutar por sua versão de escola pública na legislação final de um novo distrito escolar. Usando a estrutura estratégica de Page (2016) para a construção da capacidade cívica, comparo as estratégias de liderança dos regimes e encontro diferentes níveis de engajamento com a construção da capacidade cívica. No entanto, níveis mais altos de engajamento não produziram necessariamente o resultado político desejado. Concluo discutindo os limites da construção da capacidade cívica quando o próprio controle local foi destruído por décadas de reforma baseada no mercado e como as estruturas estratégicas futuras precisam considerar as mudanças na economia política urbana como barreiras à construção da capacidade cívica.

Palavras-chave: capacidade cívica; reforma da educação urbana; reforma baseada no mercado; problemas *wicked*; escolas públicas de Detroit

Urban Education Reform in Wicked Times: The Limits and Possibilities of Building Civic Capacity in Detroit

Urban education reform is difficult work. Despite wave after wave of policy initiatives since the 1960s and 1970s, in the 21st century America's city schools are still suffering. The vast differences in the quality of education, outcomes, and opportunities experienced by urban children (the majority of whom are Black and Brown) versus their suburban counterparts remain virtually unchanged. What *has* changed, however, is the landscape of many urban school districts across the country, with alternative public schooling options (i.e., charters and schools of choice) and new governing arrangements that have replaced the traditional school board model (Fabricant & Fine, 2012; Hursh, 2016; Morel, 2018; Schneider, 2016). Notably (and ironically) what began as a national campaign at the turn of the century to ensure that "every child" was proficient by 2014, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) became the most expansive federal legislation to single out urban school districts, unleashing market-based reforms that altered school management and governance rather than the actual teaching and learning of students (Anderson & Cohen, 2015; Ravitch, 2010). Thus, more than two decades into the new century, improvement remains elusive: studies have found little differences in performance between charter schools and neighboring traditional public schools (Cohodes & Parham, 2021; Han & Keefe, 2020).

Why does improvement remain so elusive? While this study acknowledges the multitude of factors and possible explanations, I maintain the view that improvement evades us largely because of the *politics* of public education. Reflecting on the history of U.S. public education, Labaree (1997) has argued, "Goal setting is a political, and not a technical, problem" (p. 40). In other words, our inability to improve urban education is not for lack of knowing how; rather, we have yet to understand how to develop broad political consensus across various interest groups and to enact deep curricular transformation. Education historians have demonstrated just how much public education issues are entrenched in American political history, what look like reform efforts were actually battles for control and power among groups along social, racial, and ethnic lines. In the early 20th century Progressive Era reformers looked to public schools as their vehicle for maintaining dominance and assimilating new immigrants into White Anglo-Saxon Protestant values (Mirel, 1999; Tyack, 1974). In the waning years of Reconstruction, to reinstate the Southern racial hierarchy and to maintain a labor class, the Southern planter elites co-opted the Black educational movement, turning the purpose of education from that of citizenship to vocationalism (Anderson, 1988). Even NCLB, ostensibly an effort to close the racial achievement gap became in effect an attempt to break down the perceived "monopoly" on education by traditional powers and to allow new actors to come in and setup shop—a political act that had little to do with the actual technical problems of teaching and learning (Kang, 2020). In the realm of social policies, the resonance of history is why building political support for urban education reform is exceedingly difficult, making education a particularly *wicked* problem.

According to Sharma (2020), wicked problems are "understood as social policy problems that are defined by high complexity, uncertainty, and contested social values" (p. 9). Page (2016) adds that "optimal solutions do not exist" in these problems and that the criteria for evaluations are "hotly contested" (p. 441), owing to the sharp differences among the actors in their values, their views of the nature of the problem, and whom they deem as experts in addressing the problem. Wicked problems are thus inherently averse to cross-agency cooperation or joint problem solving, much less building broad coalitions needed to move forward (Rittell & Webber, 1973). Indeed, due to the strategies and approaches of NCLB and market-based reforms, stakeholders are even further divided. Henig and Stone (2008) observed this state of affairs:

"political fragmentation seems destined to reign" when "various reform camps generate their own solutions, convince their own sets of funders, build their own constituencies, and win their own particular localized battles" (p. 192). In recent years we have seen the figurehead of the movement for privatizing education, Betsy DeVos, ascend to the nation's highest education post. Though the Trump Era has ended, education reform appears to be even more wicked; not only do sharp divisions remain around education but the issues are further entrenched in bitter partisan politics.

Thus, this study seeks to address the urgent need to understand the challenges of reforming urban education as a political problem and the particular wickedness of the issue. I do this by using research on *civic capacity* to examine a case study of Detroit. Civic capacity is the degree to which informal actors from the community come together to support formal governance and decision-making (Stone, 1989). This collective group who helps to support and sustain policy are called *regimes* (Stone, 1989). After decades of market-based reform and political fragmentation, such regimes—two very different education coalitions—arose after Governor Rick Snyder in 2015 announced plans to dissolve the Detroit Public Schools (DPS) and to create a new schooling district. The two regimes battled for their vision of a new school district and for certain elements to appear in the final legislation. A majority Black city since 1980, Blacks have attempted to gain control of their own schooling while Whites have largely retaliated against these attempts. Thus, Detroit is a critical context for examining the politics of building civic capacity in a city in which education reform has been historically a very wicked problem (Henig et al., 1999; Kang, 2020).

This study also joins more recent efforts to move studies of civic capacity from "rich descriptions of political and policy outcomes" toward research that is more solutionary in nature (Page, 2016, p. 440). To examine this particular policy event, I apply or test Page's (2016) *strategic framework for building civic capacity* that seeks to "diagnose situations and predict the types of outcomes likely to result from specific institutional conditions and leadership strategies" (p. 440). The case of two regimes allows for the comparison of leadership strategies and to consider the relationship between efforts to build civic capacity (or the lack thereof) and the final policy outcome. The framework helps to identify the possibility for building civic capacity but also grave limitations: greater efforts to build civic capacity in Detroit did not necessarily yield the desired policy outcome.

What follows is a brief review of the literature on civic capacity and the need to move research from descriptive to more prescriptive analyses. Then I describe Page's (2016) *strategic framework for building civic capacity* and how I use it as an analytical lens to examine the Detroit case. Next, I present the case study, followed by the findings and discussion. I argue that after decades of market-based reform having gutted local control and weakened local governance, there was little incentive for the regime that won the policy battle to build civic capacity. Thus, I conclude by discussing the limits and possibilities of building civic capacity in school districts like Detroit and what future strategic frameworks should include in our quest for building broad-based coalitions in very wicked situations.

Literature Review

For more than twenty years scholars have used civic capacity as a theoretical concept for examining the politics of urban education reform. We can trace its origins to political scientist Clarence Stone and his Atlanta study, which illustrates how city governance requires *urban regimes*—the support of informal actors and "civic cooperation" to support and sustain policy (Stone, 1989, p. 5). Stone (1989) argued that in financially constrained, postindustrial cities, urban regimes welcome the involvement and commitment of business elites who control the city's resources. However, when looking at education reform, Stone wondered why there was considerably less commitment to "social reconstruction" as opposed to other revitalization projects (Stone, 1998, p. ix). Thereafter,

Stone began using "civic capacity" to understand the issue and to measure the "different degrees to which cities are able to bring various sectors of the community together in efforts to improve educational opportunity for children in urban schools" (p. xi). The concept generated a litany of studies on determining levels of civic capacity (Henig et al., 1999; Orr, 1999; Stone, 1998; Stone et al., 2001; Walker & Gutmore, 2001). In addition to these, several cross-city studies (Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Denver, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, San Francisco, Washington D.C., etc.) found strikingly low levels of civic capacity almost everywhere, which began to explain the unique challenge of education reform in cities (Portz et al., 1999; Stone et al., 2001).

Examining civic capacity in urban school districts have also revealed the variety of political arrangements and alliances (i.e., regimes) and differing levels of effectiveness or outcomes (Bulkley, 2007; Burns, 2002, 2003; Burns & Thomas, 2006; Marschall & Shah, 2005; Pelz, 2015; Shipps, 2003, 2006). These studies have identified regime typologies: their ideological underpinnings and the ways in which they frame the purpose of reform. For example, Shipps's (2003) study of Chicago differentiates between regimes who are attempting to change pedagogy ("performance" and "empowerment regimes") versus those who are interested in governance change and changing power relations ("employment" and "market regimes"). Regime typologies highlight the extreme difficulty of reaching consensus in urban education reform when there is a field of competing regimes. For example, Bulkley's (2007) description of the contracting regime, a new type of market-based regime in the Philadelphia school district, explains how new public-private interactions are shaping the political and policy context and the conflicts between an emerging regime and older ones that seek to protect traditional public schooling. This body of work have identified key actors behind reform and governance change, the relationship between resources and power, and issues of conflict and consensus.

In one form or another, research on civic capacity has also sought to explain what accounts for low levels of civic capacity in nearly every major city. These studies ask what are the barriers to creating broad and inclusive coalitions and cross agency cooperation for urban education reform or what Stone (1989) calls "social reconstruction"? Of particular significance, the research showed that—while the social setting and other factors varied among cities—race (e.g., racial segregation, anti-Black racism) was a significant barrier to building civic capacity (Clarke et al., 2006; Henig et al., 1999; Orr, 1999). Henig et al. (1999) observed how local stakeholders were "affected by fears, suspicions, expectations, loyalties, tactics, and habits related to race" (p. 7) and described race as a "resilient cleavage" between Black and White stakeholders. These studies on civic capacity highlight how Black stakeholders frame the problem or issue in drastically different ways than White stakeholders because of the special status of public education within the Black community. For Black Americans, public education is not just about expanding opportunity, but it is the very arena in which they have historically fought against White subordination (Stone, 1998; Henig et al., 1999). During the twentieth century, the Black middle class also viewed the public school system as a key source of employment and other material benefits (Orr, 1999). By the 1960s and 1970s, Blacks gained political control of many U.S. cities as public schools became part and parcel with this new political economy (Orr, 1999). Thus, educational reform efforts from White, outside actors and top-down policies like state takeovers reinforce racial mistrust, which continues to be a persistent barrier to forming cross-sector coalitions (Henig et al., 1999).

More recent studies have used civic capacity to examine the politics of sweeping policies like No Child Left Behind, state takeover, and emergency management that fail to get the support and backing of the communities they seek to serve (Glazer & Egan, 2018; Guo-Brennan & Guo-Brennan, 2018; Kang, 2020; Reed, 2014; Welsh & Williams, 2018). These studies also illuminate the ways in which a changing urban political economy—since the 1970s and 1980s—has changed the "ecology of civic engagement" (Orr, 2007, p. 3). The diffusion of governmental power or

decentralization has made it challenging for building civic capacity because the centers of power in the city are no longer so obvious. For instance, NCLB changed the structure of political opportunity in nation's education system, shifting power from the local level toward state and federal levels and market-based alternatives (Shirley & Evans, 2007). Still, these studies continue to underscore what Stone et al. (2001) asserted 20 years ago: "Successful educational reform ultimately requires a broad and sustainable coalition of support, and the route to this goes directly through, and not around politics" (p. 1). Thus, scholars of civic capacity "see the solutions as well as the problems as lying within the political realm" (Stone et al., 2001, pp. 3–4). Yet, research on civic capacity that offers political solutions have been limited.

The vast majority of the work on civic capacity have yielded rich descriptions of the political dimensions of urban education reform, resulting in critical questions such as *who lost power?* (Shirley & Evans); *who should be involved in decision-making?* (Marschall & Shah, 2005); and *who should be transforming teaching and learning in urban schools?* (Kang, 2020). While these questions remain central, after decades of failed policy outcomes and with stakeholders more divided than ever, there is a real need for research on civic capacity to be more solution-oriented—to come up with strategies to overcome social, racial, and ideological barriers that have long made coalitional building elusive. Ansell, Reckhow, & Kelly's (2009) work on Oakland provide a tentative model: using social network analysis, the mapping of relationships between stakeholders and their priorities and attitudes towards reform allowed for them to "explore strategic opportunities to mitigate tensions" (p. 718). Combining civic capacity with community organizing literature, Ishimaru (2014) suggests "a conceptual model that elaborates *how* the assets of parents and communities might be cultivated and enacted in district-community collaborations" (p. 194). Ishimaru (2014) suggests that *district leadership* can build civic capacity by "changing relationships and interactions to create the political context needed to institute and sustain new practices" (p. 193). Page's (2016) examination of urban growth and transportation cases in Seattle—though not about education reform per se—also offers a tentative framework for building civic capacity, particularly for "wicked" conditions rife with disagreement over the problem and policy solutions.

Reviewing the literature on civic capacity, there is a need for research on civic capacity to move towards more diagnostic and prescriptive analyses. Henig and Stone (2008) assert, "Rather than trying to understand how the world works, the civic capacity perspective starts by looking for evidence of what works in the real world" (p. 210). Among all the studies reviewed, Page's (2016) study explicitly looked for what worked as well as called for more research that would "diagnose situations" and "predict the types of outcomes likely to result from specific institutional conditions and leadership strategies" (p. 440). Page (2016) also puts forth a *strategic framework for building civic capacity* that could be used among a variety of research designs in which scholars could "conduct more systematic comparisons of efforts to build civic capacity" (p. 466). Thus, Page's (2016) appeared to offer an apt framework to analyze and diagnose the attempts by informal actors (i.e., regimes) to shape final legislation for Detroit's schools, and to ascertain the conditions for future coalitional building in wicked times. Now I turn to explaining Page's (2016) *strategic framework for building civic capacity*.

A Strategic Framework for Building Civic Capacity

According to Page (2016), the challenge of building civic capacity in cities stems from the inherent "wickedness" of the problem. With their histories of conflict between grassroots and elite actors and their divergent perspectives and competing interests, cities in particular struggle with building civic capacity. Page (2016) defines a wicked problem as follows:

> [It] lacks a definitive formulation and has multiple, intertwined causes and manifestations. Optimal solutions do not exist, and the criteria for evaluating them are hotly contested. Actors differ in their views of the problem, their values, and their beliefs about the appropriate experts to assay and address the problem […]" (p. 441)

Some policy problems, like *education*, are "particularly intractable" and "challenge the ability of policymakers to agree on the contours of problems, much less devise effective solutions that satisfy citizens" (p. 441). Paradoxically, "[w]icked problems both require and are hostile to joint problem solving" (p. 441). Thus, Page (2016) suggests a strategic framework for building civic capacity that identifies key elements to *learning and bargaining processes* among stakeholders: "Only when stakeholders learn together about a wicked problem can they generate shared knowledge that supports joint action to address it" (p. 442). Central to the framework is the notion that leaders and their strategies can influence the negotiating and consensus-building process in ways that can make the problem less wicked and increase the prospects of building civic capacity.

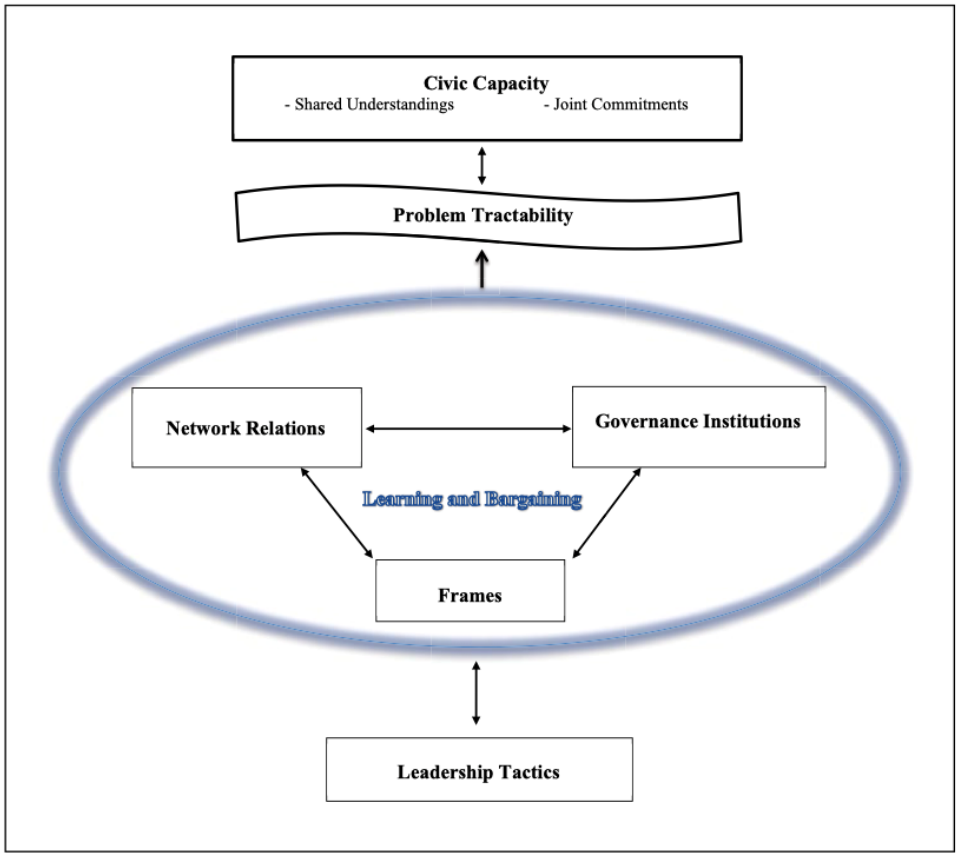
Specifically, leaders can affect three key areas of learning and bargaining processes: network relations, governance institutions, and frames. (See Figure 1.) Leaders can affect problem tractability depending on who they choose to include (or exclude) or how they manage network relations. Network relations—or policy networks—refer to the relationships and social ties among informal actors (e.g., individuals, organizations, agencies, etc.) that can support policy, exchange information, and provide resources. These arrangements can either foster or undermine trust and the potential for developing a shared vision. Leaders can also improve problem tractability by influencing governance institutions and their formal processes. When stakeholders perceive the legitimacy of formal institutions that "design and deliver public policies (e.g., laws, legislatures, special-purpose governments, advisory committee, interagency teams)" (p. 443) they are more likely to cooperate, increasing the chances of building civic capacity. When governance institutions are transparent, it also fosters trust, which is critical when wicked problems are entrenched in histories of mutual suspicion. Lastly, leaders can frame how key actors understand or view the problem. By choosing to frame the problem in a certain way, such as leveraging stakeholders' common values or interest, can reshape beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Page's (2016) strategic framework suggests that "[u]sing different frames to discuss the public problem can alter the process and outcomes of the debate" (p. 444), leading to shared understanding and joint commitments.

Page's (2016) strategic framework also suggests a set of propositions for the ways in which leaders could leverage these areas to increase the potential of building civic capacity. For the purpose of this study, they have been summed up as follows:

- **Network Relations**—The more informal relationships are inclusive of both elite and grassroots actors, the more likely learning and bargaining processes will result in shared understandings and joint commitments.
- **Governance Institutions**—The more the formal institutions' processes are transparent and perceived as legitimate by stakeholders, the more likely learning and bargaining processes will result in trust and cooperation, which can lessen the wickedness of the problem.
- **Frames—**The more the issue is framed around broad values or common interests, the more likely joint learning and bargaining will occur.

Figure 1

Page's (2016) Strategic Framework for Building Civic Capacity



These propositions offer potential strategies for leaders to build civic capacity and the "practical benefits" of "building robust networks and legitimate, transparent governance institutions, and frames of debate surrounding public problems" (Page, 2016, p. 464). Given the relationship between power and resources and the power dynamics of the urban regime, it is important to note that Page also suggests that grassroots actors are more likely to be successful when they gain elite support. Page (2016) asserts that the propositions "can be tested or applied to attempts to build civic capacity to address wicked problems in other urban settings" (p. 446). He proposes more systematic comparisons of efforts to build civic capacity, such as cross-city analyses in the same policy field or a single city addressing different wicked problems. Whatever research design, the purpose of using the framework is to move towards more prescriptive studies on civic capacity, to produce research that provides strategic advice for leaders to build civic capacity in the most wicked situations.

Methodology

I use Page's (2016) strategic framework as an analytical lens through which to examine efforts (or the lack thereof) to build civic capacity for education reform in Detroit with the aim of generating strategies for the present and future. This involves developing a case study that describes a brief period (2015-2016) in which two emerging regimes battled for control of Detroit's public

schools. I not only focus on the sequence of events but also the composition of each regime, its leaders and their network relations, their perceptions of the issue, and ultimately their strategies and tactics. The case also explains the wickedness of the problem and the relationship between regime leaders' strategies and the final policy outcome, which offers a robust case study to apply or test Page's (2016) strategic framework for building civic capacity. Specifically, the emergence of *two* distinct regimes enables a "systematic comparison of efforts to build civic capacity" around a wicked problem "in the same city" (Page, 2016, p. 466). Additionally, education reform is especially wicked in Detroit; historically, it is the very policy arena in which the greatest sociopolitical and racial battles have been waged since the turn of the twentieth century, and the city has been the focal point of market-based reforms that remain highly contentious (Henig et al., 1999; Kang, 2020; Mirel, 1999).

The outline of the case study is drawn from Kang (2020), which details the history of the dismantling of the Detroit Public Schools from 1980-2016. For more specifics about what happened between 2015-2016, I found additional sources—with most of these sources from news media coverage (e.g., *The Detroit Free Press, The Detroit News*). I searched for these articles on the internet and *The Detroit Free Press* archives.

Upon establishing the case study, I then use the strategic framework to compare the leadership tactics of the two regimes. I specifically examine each regime's efforts to engage with Page's (2016) propositions, the key elements of the learning and bargaining process: network relations, governance institutions, and frames. I consider the relationship between addressing these elements of the learning and bargaining process and the degree to which the problem was made less wicked, as well as the potential for building civic capacity in the future. Finally, I consider how different degrees of efforts to build civic capacity relate to the final policy outcome.

Case Study: A Battle for Control of Detroit's Public Schools, 2015-2016

When Governor Rick Snyder announced his plan to dissolve DPS in April 2015, education reform in Detroit had already been a *very* wicked problem for nearly half of a century. As early as the 1960s, broad coalitional support for DPS had begun to break down. The Uprising of 1967 epitomized the growing dissent: Black discontent had reached a breaking point from decades of institutional racism. Meanwhile, Whites retaliated by further segregating themselves and leaving for the suburbs. With these demographic shifts, DPS attempted to revolutionize the education of Black children through community control and busing—and with this lost the support of what remained of the White working-class (Mirel, 1999). By 1980, Detroit's school system was in crisis; the media largely blamed the decline on the school board and corruption, even though White flight was a major cause for the district's financial troubles (Mirel, 1999; Sugrue, 2005). Fast forward to 1994: when Proposal A enabled per-pupil dollars to follow the student, charter schools and schools of choice quickly proliferated throughout Michigan, and nowhere more dramatically than in Detroit. This was also followed by a period of various forms of state takeover. More than half of Detroit's children attended charters (50,000) or schools of choice (27,000) by 2016 (Ferretti & Livengood, 2016).[1] Although the parents of these students had obviously opted for these new schooling options, market-based reform had been met with fierce protest and resistance from citizens (Kang, 2020). School closures—a consequence of an alternative system of schooling competing for students—were also extremely difficult on students, and parents struggled to find quality schools (Kang & Slay, 2019). Community activists decried the lack of local control and accused White politicians of targeting the Blackest city in the state, while policymakers maintained that market-based reform and

[1] At the time, Detroit's school district had about 100 traditional public schools, 100 charter schools, and 15 former DPS schools turned over to the Education Achievement Authority (Zaniewski, 2015).

non-local actors would address DPS's financial crisis. As with other urban school districts across the country, education reform in Detroit had become a bitter battleground between local actors and state authorities, and the prospect of building a broad, inclusive, and equitable education coalition to support new governing and organizational structures seemed impossible.

When DPS's debt rose to a crushing total of $483 million in early 2015, Governor Snyder announced plans to dismantle DPS and create a new schooling district (Ferretti, 2015). During this time, two distinct regimes emerged to battle for control of the final details of the plan, which allows for an examination of building civic capacity in a particularly wicked context. *What were the leadership and coalitional strategies of each regime and what results did they yield?* The following case study begins with a brief description of what precipitated the governor's decision to dismantle DPS, followed by how each regime formed and how they sought to shape the final legislation, and lastly how the legislative battle played out.

Settling the DPS Crisis Once and For All

Despite a succession of emergency managers (five in total since 2009), DPS's deficit continued to balloon. Governor Snyder himself had expanded the emergency management law in 2011 but it did little to improve the situation as thousands of students left DPS, steadily draining the district's revenue. Although Snyder failed to address DPS's financial crisis, he did succeed in delivering Detroit from the largest municipal bankruptcy in U.S. history. Thus, when the governor was reelected in 2014, he resolved to eliminate the school district's debt once and for all (Kang, 2020). At the heart of Snyder's plan was to isolate the debt by splitting the district in two. The "old" DPS would exist solely to pay off debt through property taxes and a "new" DPS would operate schooling. The creation of a new school district would require withdrawing from the School Aid Fund an estimated $53 to $72 million per year for the next 10 years. Additionally, Snyder proposed to end emergency management and to gradually return to a locally-elected school board who would report to a financial review board. The governor also envisioned the creation of a local education commission that would regulate both charter schools and traditional public schools while managing a common enrollment system (Livengood & Lewis, 2015; Staff, 2015). Until now, charter schools and public schools had been operating independently with different systems and standards, but the governor sought a single, cohesive system. This would prove to be the most contentious part of Snyder's proposal. Legislation for a new school district would stall as two distinct education regimes—one for the commission and the other against—sought to steer the debate in Lansing.

The regime supporting the commission was made up of mostly local leaders, while the opposing regime consisted of non-local leaders. The two regimes were distinctive in who their leaders were, the framing of the problem, and strategies for gaining support. They also differed in their histories of network development and their reasons for coalescing together.

"The Coalition for the Future of Detroit Schoolchildren" Regime

Soon after Snyder announced his plan, a regime calling themselves "The Coalition for the Future of Detroit Schoolchildren" (henceforth the Coalition) told reporters that they were thrilled that the governor had included the commission and common enrollment system in his plan (Higgins, 2015; Livengood & Lewis, 2015; Zaniewski, 2015). In fact, the Coalition had long been advocating for something like the commission. Since 2010, leaders from several local non-profits, Excellent Schools Detroit, the Skillman Foundation, and the Detroit Parent Network had begun to coalesce around the need for regulating the district's schools (Kang, 2020). After decades of market-based reform, these foundations sought to help Detroit parents navigate the city's dizzyingly fragmented landscape of charter schools and traditional public schools. For instance, Excellent Schools Detroit began publishing school report cards, hoping to place every Detroit child in an

"excellent" school by 2020 (Clifford, 2017; Kurth, 2014). In 2014, when the founder of the Detroit Parent Network, Tonya Allen, became president of the Skillman Foundation, leaders began to advocate for a portfolio management model, a governing structure that regulates and evaluates schools like in a "stock portfolio" (Zaniewski, 2014). The connections among foundation leaders had been forged when the Governor Snyder appointed them as board members of the Education Achievement Authority (EAA), a statewide turnaround district established in 2011 (Kang, 2020). As a part of the portfolio management model, the Coalition advocated that the mayor—Mike Duggan—become "portfolio manager." Before he became mayor in 2014, Duggan had sat on the EAA board along with the other foundation leaders. Thus, the Coalition as a regime formed around the aim of bringing cohesion and regulation to Detroit's fragmented system of charters and traditional public schools, in hopes of establishing a cutting-edge model that would be an example for urban schools throughout the country.

In 2015, the regime began expanding its network by allying with local businesses, organizations, and community leaders. The American Federation of Teachers-Michigan, the Detroit NAACP, and Detroit Hispanic Development Corp were some of the organizations represented among the co-chairs of the Coalition (Gray et al., 2016; Higgins, 2015). After the governor's announcement, the Coalition spent several months consulting with experts, teachers, parents, and students who helped to craft their version of a rescue plan for DPS; it not only included the education commission but also a call for the end of emergency management and a return to a publicly-elected school board. The Coalition personally delivered their rescue play to the governor and Mayor Duggan (Editorial, 2015; Livengood & Lewis, 2015). In addition to network relations among foundation leaders, the Coalition as a regime also had strong connections to formal government authorities.

The School Choice Regime

Compared to the Coalition, the other regime—what I call the School Choice regime—was a much older regime that had been seeking to influence and shape the direction of education reform in Michigan for more than thirty years (Kang, 2020). Beginning in the 1980s, then governor of Michigan, John Engler, was at the helm of this emerging regime of mainly Republican allies—Betsy DeVos among them—who engineered a series of policies that brought school choice to the state. Michigan was among the first states to pass a charter school law in 1994. The School Choice regime believed that a market model of public education would raise the quality of education through competition. In effect, such policies dramatically weakened local control in Detroit, broke the power of the teachers' union, and introduced new, non-local actors to manage and handle public schooling in the city (Kang, 2020). Between the 1990s and early 2000s, the establishment of several pro-school choice organizations would become critical actors in the regime: The Michigan Association of Public School Academies (MAPSA), the Michigan Council of Charter School Authorizers (MCCSA), The New Heritage Academies (NHA), and the Great Lakes Education Project (GLEP). These actors frequently lobbied for school choice reform and by the 2010s had significant clout within the Republican-dominated state legislature. In fact, a month after Snyder announced his plan, representatives from these organizations appeared at the House Appropriations Committee to support the House's version of the DPS rescue plan. Their plan was strikingly different, focusing on reforms that the School Choice regime had long been advocating for: fewer regulations for charter schools, hiring uncertified teachers, 401(k) plans instead of pensions, penalties against striking teachers, etc. (Kang, 2020). Most notably, however, was the House's plan did *not* include a commission or any other elements of local control.

Whether to include a local commission would become the crux of an ensuing legislative battle. The School Choice regime was adamantly opposed to the commission. They held firm in

their narrative that DPS's financial crisis stemmed from corruption among its own political leaders—not the cumulative effect of White flight, residential segregation, and urban disinvestment beginning as early as the 1940s (Kang, 2020; Sugrue, 2005). For instance, in an opinion editorial for the *Detroit Free Press*, the chairman of GLEP, Jim Barret, wrote "The history is clear the demise of DPS is the result of a culture of corruption that put adult interests ahead of kids," while citing anecdotes like board members being chauffeured in limousines (Barrett, 2016, p. 9A). Indeed, board members in limos had captured news headlines in the 1980s (Mirel, 1999)—but the reality is that DPS had been under state control since 1999. Nevertheless, the School Choice regime continued to espouse this narrative of corruption even though it was their market-based policies that worsened the situation. They also firmly believed that school choice policies removed power from corrupt local officials and empowered parents and guardians. The chairman of GLEP asserted, "Once Michigan gave students and families the power to choose the school that best meets their needs, more than half chose somewhere besides DPS" (Barret, 2016, p. 9A). Thus, in the School Choice regime's view, any semblance of local control would be a reversal of the developments they had made in the last several decades.

How the Legislative Battle Plays Out

At first, in the days following the Governor's announcement, Republican legislators immediately opposed Snyder's plan because startup funds required withdrawing from the School Aid Fund, which they argued would unfairly impact other school districts (Zaniewski, 2015). Members of the Coalition, in fact, took some issue with the eliminating the debt part of the plan as well. LaMar Lemmons, Jr., a former school board member and member of the Coalition thought it was a "terrible plan" because "It shifts the burden […] on the backs of the Detroit taxpayers when it's the state that was totally responsible for the creation of the debt" (Zaniewski, 2015). There was also some dispute about returning the new school district to the school board (Livengood & Lewis, 2015). Displeased with this part of the plan, a Republican legislator explained, "We've dealt with this going on 20 years now and I don't think there's anything that's going to help Detroit that doesn't include a private operation" (Zaniewski, 2015). The Coalition, on the other hand, argued that—after more than a decade of state takeover with no results—Detroiters wanted their school board back. Tonya Allen, the president of the Skillman Foundation, pointed to how wealthier suburban parents elect their school board: "Detroiters want the same" (Higgins, 2015).

Thus, embroiled in controversy from the start, the governor's proposal languished for months. Then, in October, Snyder reintroduced his plan, emphasizing that it was "compose[d] of elements from his research, recommendations from the Coalition for the Future of Detroit Schoolchildren, and wishes expressed by Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan" (Riley, 2015b). However, the governor still did not have concrete details about how the debt would be paid down. In November, the *Detroit Free Press* reported that the governor would avoid a bailout" (Lupher & Thiel, 2015). A month after, however, *The Detroit News* seemed to suggest that the governor had reversed his decision; a plan that was soon to go up before the Senate called for the state to wipe out $515 million of debt and an additional $200 million for start-up costs (Livengood, 2015). By the end of the year, still nothing moved forward in the legislature (Higgins & Tanner, 2015).

At last, when DPS was projected to run out of cash at the beginning of the new year 2016, the debate over the bailout seemed to be a moot point. The legislature had to act—and now debates during committee hearings were focused on *whether to include the education commission*. Above all else, the School Choice regime was adamantly against the commission. At one hearing, the president of MAPSA, Dan Quisenberry, testified that the commission would "add layers of bureaucracy and diminish school choice" (Zaniewski, 2016). In February, Betsy DeVos wrote an opinion editorial in *The Detroit News* explaining why she strongly opposed the inclusion of the commission, arguing that

it was a form of local control that had repeatedly failed in the past and was designed to maintain "the status quo for deeply entrenched adult interest groups" (DeVos, 2016). She urged legislators who were still on the fence to reject the commission, which she denounced was an "anti-choice, anti-parent, and anti-student agenda" (DeVos, 2016).

That month, the House bills appeared to reflect the wishes of the School Choice regime. Although it maintained the governor's idea to split the district in two and have the state assume DPS's debt, the amount was significantly reduced to $72 million and startup funds would be drawn from the general fund rather than the School Aid Fund. It included details on converting the pension system to a 401(k)-type system and restrictions on collective bargaining (Gray & Zaniewski, 2016). Most notably, the House bills outlined a gradual eight-year return to local control and *no education commission*. State representatives from Detroit, who were significantly outnumbered, decried how the House reached agreement without the input teachers and other local actors. Representative Brian Banks explained,

> We're having conversations about education reforms, and there are no educators at the table. You can't create reform for Detroit school kids and not involve all the Detroit stakeholders. And to get into labor changes, that a very dangerous area." (Gray & Zaniewski, 2016, p. 8A)

On May 6th at 4:30am, reportedly "after 15 hours of backroom negotiations" (Gray et al., 2016, p. 10A), the House narrowly passed its rescue plan by a 55-53 vote (Lewis, 2016). According to Gross (2016a), many of the GOP legislators who voted in favor of the bills received campaign donations from the DeVos family. However, Quisenberry praised legislators for rejecting the commission and for listening to Detroit parents—even though no Detroit legislator supported the bill (Gray et al., 2016, p. 10A). Members of the Coalition, such as co-chair (and president of the Detroit NAACP), Reverend Wendell Anthony, quipped that the House "just gave Detroit the finger" (Gray et al., 2016, p. 10A).

As the House bills headed to the Senate, the Coalition sought to rally support for a Senate version that would include the commission. And, the Coalition was well positioned to do so. Senate Majority Leader, Arlan Meekhof, a Republican, told reporters that there was bi-partisan support for the commission in the Senate because they wanted the "leaders and opinion leaders in Detroit to buy into the solution" (Gray et al., 2016, p. 10A). Meekhof was likely referring to Mayor Duggan who was working alongside the Coalition; at one point, he and the Coalition and nearly 300 Detroiters went to Lansing to rally for the commission (Riley, 2015a). The mayor had personally invited 30 charter school operators to the Manoogian Mansion to persuade and convince them to support the commission (Ferretti & Livengood, 2016). Again, at the end of May, the mayor gathered leaders and officials from about 20 charter schools and organizations gathered for a press conference in support of the commission. The CEO of New Paradigm for Education, a non-profit charter organization, told the press,

> Today is not about Detroit Public Schools versus charter schools. We must have a system of quality and accountability that eliminates the political and structural barriers which have prevented children from excelling at high levels of academic excellence. (Ferretti & Livengood, 2016)

The president of the American Promise Schools, another education management organization, added that the mayor and the Coalition was advocating for a system that would level the playing field for traditional public schools and charters (Ferretti & Livengood, 2016). Tapping into the mayor's influence, the Coalition had persuaded a large sector of charter schools in Detroit that a commission would begin a true turnaround for public schooling in the city. In a final attempt to

persuade legislators, the American Federation of Teachers also launched a weeklong broadcast and digital ad campaign in favor of the commission (Lewis, 2016).

On June 9th, the Senate voted on the final DPS rescue plan. By a 19-18 vote, the outcome favored splitting the district in two, a $617 million bailout with $150 million in startup funds, a return to the publicly-elected school board, and—to the astonishment of many—*no commission* (Gross, 2016b). On June 21st, Governor Snyder signed the legislation into law (Eggert, 2016). A number of investigative reports followed this shocking result. Apparently, according to Pulitzer prize-winning journalist Stephen Henderson, GLEP—the political action committee founded by DeVos—promised maximum campaign contributions to Republican legislators who would vote against the commission; "The giving began in earnest on June 13, just five days after Republican members of the state Senate reversed themselves on the question of whether Michigan charter schools need more oversight" (Henderson, 2016). Someone involved in the back-room negotiations said, "It's crystal clear that had the DeVoses not been opposed to this, it [DPS] would have had a different future"(Mauger, 2016). The battle was over. The School Choice regime had won. In fact, campaign finance disclosures showed that the regime had in the last decade given about $10 million in contributions that "touched just about everyone in the Legislature" in an effort to secure control over the future of education in Detroit (Mauger, 2016).

Findings and Discussion

The purpose of this study is to apply Page's (2016) framework to determine strategies for leaders to build civic capacity in the most wicked conditions. Indeed, from the start the plan to dismantle DPS was controversial and the situation exceedingly wicked. The case study provides examples of two regimes' efforts (or the lack thereof) to engage in the elements of the learning and bargaining process among stakeholders, as outlined in Page's (2016) *strategic framework for building civic capacity*. According to Page (2016): "Only when stakeholders learn together about wicked problems can they generate shared knowledge that supports joint action to address it" (p. 442). Using the framework to compare the regime leaders' strategies, I find that the Coalition engaged with every element of the learning and bargaining process (network relations, governance institutions, and frames). By contrast, the School Choice regime utilized a completely different set of strategies. Although the Coalition's tactics resulted in more civic capacity and less wickedness, I also found that higher levels of potential to build civic capacity did not necessarily yield the desired policy outcome. What follows is a brief discussion and comparison of how leadership strategies compared around key areas of the learning and bargaining process. The discussion shows both the possibilities and limits of building civic capacity in Detroit. The Coalition, indeed, showed great promise in addressing a very wicked problem and building unlikely alliances. However, the School Choice regime—after decades of market-based reform having deteriorated local power—had little incentive to expand their network or reframe the problem in a different way. The School Choice regime's approach to shaping the details of the final legislation not only reveals the limits of building civic capacity in places like Detroit, but ultimately the limitation of the framework itself.

The Coalition's Leadership Strategies

Beginning with strategies around *network relations*, indeed the leaders of the Coalition saw the importance of including grassroots actors. According to Page's (2015) framework, including grassroots actors in the learning and bargaining process can result in shared understandings and commitments in otherwise wicked situations. The idea for a commission itself (and other components such as immediately reinstating the school board) was a result of months of surveying grassroots actors such as teachers, parents, students, and community leaders. As the Coalition

expanded its network—officially naming itself the *Coalition for the Future of Detroit Schoolchildren*—they brought on co-chairs who represented organizations that have historically engaged with grassroots actors and movements (e.g., the American Federation of Teachers, Detroit Hispanic Development Corp, NAACP, etc.). The mayor, who had a vested interest in Detroit's recovery and represented the interests of the city's business stakeholders, played a key role in raising support among charter school operators while also joining nearly 300 Detroit citizens at the state capitol to rally for the commission. As a result of the Coalition's strategy, grassroots actors who had eyed charter schools with deep suspicion came around to supporting a district plan that incorporated charter schools. And for a brief moment in time, it was not so odd for there to be grassroots actors *and* charter school operators advocating for the same thing in Detroit.

The Coalition's leaders also chose a strategy that legitimized *governance institutions*. Page (2015) asserts that the more stakeholders perceive formal processes as legitimate, the more likely learning and bargaining processes will result in trust and cooperation, which is critical when wicked problems are entrenched in histories of mutual suspicion. The Coalition's tactics included leaning into their preexisting relationship with the governor and mayor as formal channels for influencing the legislative process, and they collectively sought to persuade the public through dialogue and public engagement (e.g., press conferences). Stakeholders likely perceived the governor and mayor—both elected on the promises of revitalizing Detroit—as appropriate channels and who (in this case) wholly relied on the legislative process to determine the policy outcome. In short, had the Coalition won the battle for including the commission, stakeholders would have likely perceived the policy outcome as a legitimate result of formal governing processes—and, in turn, create the conditions for building civic capacity and support among actors on the ground.

Finally, the Coalition's *framing* of the problem around broad values or common interests in the learning and bargaining process profoundly made the situation less wicked. All Black women and native Detroiters, the Coalition's leaders personally anguished over the lack of quality educational services for the city's children. They shared the same sentiments of many of the city's parents, community members, and activists and understood education reform as a central part of Black American's long battle for equality and justice. Yet, the Coalition's leaders did not eschew market-based reforms but rather viewed the expansion of charter schools as a foregone conclusion. With more than half of Detroit's children attending charter schools, charters were here to stay; rather fight against the tide, the women were resolved to take control, bring accountability, integrate charters with DPS, and create a system with *real* quality and choices. To be sure, their position to support charters was controversial among many grassroots actors who had witnessed the deleterious effects of market-based reforms on Black students, families, and neighborhoods. These grassroots actors perceived their fight as saving DPS from privatization and fighting neoliberal education reform. However, the Coalition's framing of the problem that Detroit's children and parents urgently needed and deserved a regulated schooling system held accountable by a local agency and public appointments resonated with grassroots actors. For political leaders like Duggan and Snyder who were invested in Detroit's economic recovery, the solution—the commission as type of portfolio management model—was appealing because it could help to "modernize" the city's school system.

In all, by attending to all three realms of the learning and bargaining process (network relations, governance institutions, and frames), the Coalition did make the situation less wicked as evidenced by new alliances (i.e., grassroots actors, charter school operators, the mayor, and even the governor) that were previously—up until the Coalition's efforts—unlikely.

The School Choice Regime's Strategies

By stark contrast, the School Choice regime's strategy did not address any of the three elements in the learning and bargaining process. In terms of *network relations*, the School Choice

regime did *not* make any attempts to include grassroots actors. Instead, it relied on appealing to its own well-established network of pro-school choice and charter school organizations and their ties with Republican legislators. The School Choice regime also utilized a lobbying strategy to influence the legislative process, promising campaign donations to legislators who would vote in their favor as well as other backroom deals. Tonya Allen, the President of the Skillman Foundation, fumed to reporters about the lack of transparency:

> They can't go into a room…and come out with a secret plan and then tell people "this is what's going on." They have to open this process up with transparency. Let people in communities in Detroit have some say […] (Higgins & Zaniewski, 2016, p. 15A)

Thus, the School Choice regime's quid pro quo tactics around *governance institutions* delegitimized the formal institution's processes. Although their tactic was successful in that it yielded the desired policy outcome (i.e., no commission), it reinforced distrust between Detroit stakeholders and school choice advocacy groups. Moreover, the problem remains wicked; it is unlikely that school choice initiatives will receive any local, wide-spread cooperation in Detroit or any bi-partisan support in the state legislature.

Lastly, the leaders of the School Choice regime also made little effort to frame the problem and solution around broad values or common interests. Rather, they adhered to the age-old, dubious narrative that claimed DPS's financial crisis was due to the corruption of its political leaders. It was through this myth that they were able to successfully argue against the commission: a return to local control would result in the school district to the moral bankruptcy of city leaders. (This narrative also shaped initial resistance to using the School Aid Fund to help with startup costs.) While the framing of the problem appealed to the logic of Republican or suburban legislators, it was completely offensive and racist to Detroiters. Reverend Wendell Anthony, a co-chair of the Coalition and president of the Detroit NAACP wondered, "Why is there so much resentment, disrespect and total disregard for the people in this city of Detroit? Is this about race? Is this about class?" (Gray et al., 2016, p. 10A). Additionally, crafting solutions that included restrictions on collective bargaining also tapped into a narrative about Detroit's teachers as being a part of the problem. One 18-year veteran teacher told reporters, "It seems like the wounds continue to get bigger" (Livengood & Lewis, 2015). Thus, the School Choice regime made no attempt to frame the issue; on the contrary, it further alienated Detroit stakeholders.

In total, when comparing the leadership tactics of the two regimes, the Coalition addressed every key area of the learning and bargaining process while the School Choice regime did not. (See Table 1.) Indeed, the Coalition's tactics did, for a time, lessen the wickedness of the situation, resulting in some remarkable alliances (i.e., grassroots actors and charter school operators). Had the final legislation included the commission, one could imagine the possibility of building civic capacity across a wide range of interest groups, while sharing bi-partisan support as well. However, as this case study shows, it was the regime who paid little attention to the learning and bargaining process that won the policy battle. And, so, educational reform in Detroit remains a wicked problem in which stakeholders are intensely divided both politically and ideologically. Therefore, the findings in this study raise important issues about the limits of building civic capacity in "wicked" places like Detroit as well as the limits of Page's (2016) framework itself.

Table 1

Leadership Tactics in the Learning and Bargaining Process: The Coalition versus the School Choice Regime

	Coalition	School Choice Regime
Network Relations	✓ Included grassroots actors (i.e., teachers, parents, students, community leaders) in developing policy solutions	× Excluded grassroots actors; relied on preexisting policy network (i.e., pro-school choice and charter school organizations) in developing solutions
Governance Institutions	✓ Legitimized the formal institution's process through public engagement and publicly-elected figures	× Delegitimized the formal institution's process through quid pro quo tactics and backroom deals
Frames	✓ Framed the issue around broad values and common interests among grassroots actors and charter school operators	× Framed the issue around narrow values and interests of the pro-school choice policy network

Here I briefly suggest that the limits of building civic capacity in Detroit have to do with the loss of local control as a result of decades of market-based reforms. In many ways, without local control or local government entities, reformers from the outside have little incentive to build civic capacity. This is in stark contrast to before the 1990s; if education reformers and policymakers wanted to do anything they had to go through the school board and the teachers' union. By design, market-based initiatives were intended to erode local governance precisely to shift power and decision-making to outside actors. NCLB, for instance, shifted decision-making power towards state and federal levels and market alternatives in cities across the US (Morel, 2018; Shirley & Evans, 2007). In Detroit specifically, beginning in 1999, its school board was suspended as the state took over DPS in one form or another (e.g., mayoral control, emergency management) for the next 15 years (Kang, 2020). From the start, given the ways in which market-based reforms have altered the political economy of urban school districts, in that there are no centers of local power to contend with, the School Choice regime was disincentivized from building civic capacity.

And while the Coalition was remarkably successful in building consensus and cross-sector cooperation within the local context, they were blindsided by the far reaches of the School Choice regime among Michigan's Republican party. What the Detroit case study demonstrates is that building widespread local support is no longer enough—and that a framework for building civic capacity must necessarily address shifts in power from city to state in the last several decades. Thus, strategies for building civic capacity must address historical and political shifts since the 1970s and 1980s: after the collapse of older ward politics, there has been "a new, more complicated ecology of civic engagement marked by the diffusion and sharing of political power" (Shirley & Evans, 2007, p. 110). To organize and win, Orr (2007) asserts, is more complicated now that there is a new political economy.

In the case of Michigan—and likely other purple or red states—there is also an additional layer of complexity to building civic capacity in the new political economy. The imbalance of state

and local power is exacerbated when state officials are loyal to the Republican Party and city actors are loyal to the Democratic Party. As Republicans effectively brought school choice to the state in the 1990s, they were also solidifying their grip on the state legislature. Between 1992-2022, there were 14 years in which it was a Republican trifecta: the party controlled the house, senate, and governorship, all the while the Detroit caucus continued to shrink. For all intents and purposes, this has resulted in a situation in which White suburbanites have been making remote decisions for one of the largest Black cities in the US. This dynamic obviously reinforces race as a "resilient cleavage" that makes building civic capacity so intractable (Henig et al., 1999). Moreover, how does a regime like the Coalition enact "learning and bargaining" among Republican legislators who rely on well-established, monied networks for their reelection?

There is no easy answer. Nevertheless, this study, which aimed to move research on civic capacity towards a more prescriptive analysis does point to some additional areas of learning and bargaining in which leaders might attend to, as well as what strategic frameworks beyond Page (2016) might consider. I conclude by briefly describing what these areas might be.

Conclusion

After decades of market-based reform and accompanying political fragmentation, is it possible to build a broad and inclusive coalition to support city-grown initiatives for public schooling? This case study of Detroit hints at both the possibilities and limits of building civic capacity. On the one hand, the Coalition's leadership strategies were remarkably effective and successful in bringing together disparate reform camps (i.e., grassroots actors and charter school operators) through, in large part, the effective framing of the issue around common interests and values. On the other hand, even with the cross-partisan support of both a Republican governor and Democratic mayor, the Coalition could not overcome the challenges of organizing within a new urban political economy and the diffusion of power. Thus, emerging regimes like the Coalition—who are fighting to reinstate local control, create cohesion and regulation among traditional public schools and charter schools, and enact their own vision of transformative teaching and learning—will require learning and bargaining strategies beyond that of Page's (2016) framework for building civic capacity. I conclude by offering a few potential approaches for future researchers, education reformers, and activists to consider and develop:

- ***"Going national" with network relations.*** Extending Page's (2016) framework, which stresses the inclusion of both elite and grassroots actors, I assert that regimes must cast a wider net that goes beyond the local and to lean into organizing efforts more broadly and across cities. This would effectively help to counter the imbalances of the red state/blue city dynamic by building and developing political pressure from above. For instance, one could imagine a long-term approach to galvanizing a national movement for urban education reform that focuses on social justice and transforming teaching and learning through and within schools and communities. In other words, forging network relations could be seen as developing a countermovement or an alternative to the School Choice movement that has touched nearly every corner of the country.
- ***"Reclaiming the narrative" with frames.*** Along the same lines, the frames in Page's (2016) framework can be seen as a strategy beyond just situating issues around broad values or common interests but rather a reclaiming of the narrative. For more than 30 years, advocates of school choice rallied around a cohesive message about the failure of public schooling, its cause, and how choice will fix the

problem. The message—its dubiousness notwithstanding—has successfully enlisted stakeholders in a campaign against the established order. Thus, messaging is crucial, especially around reclaiming the narrative about sources of failure, which makes clear how systemic and institutionalized racism is perpetuated. Such a framing of the problems and issues must be historically contextualized, with achieving racial equity at the very center of policy aims.

- ***A disposition of "progressive pragmatism."*** Lastly, building civic capacity in the new urban political economy requires a certain disposition—what Stone and Henig (2008) have called a "progressive pragmatism" or a "more pragmatic starting point" (as opposed to a dogmatic one) that recognizes that "professionalism, markets, and community all play potentially important roles and that key issues relate to how they interrelate rather than which one of them is the master key" (p. 211). In other words, in the special case of urban education reform in which school districts are often cash-strapped and city leaders are focused on city revitalization projects, progressive leaders and grassroots actors should be open to markets and forming alliances with the business sector, where additional capital—both financial and social—might be tapped into.

Beyond these strategic considerations, this study ultimately reveals the limitations of Page's (2016) framework for building civic capacity and thus future frameworks must account for the ways in which changes in the urban political economy have affected the ecology of civic engagement at the turn of the 21st century. These changes require new tactics that maneuver within and through city and state politics as well as leveraging political movements more nationally.

The need for research on civic capacity that is more diagnostic and solutionary in nature is urgent. What the Detroit case study shows is that political conditions—broad political consensus across various interest groups—are required before executing the more technical elements of transformative teaching and learning for our urban children. (For definitions of a transformative education for urban children, see Paris & Alim, 2017; Emdin, 2017, 2021; Ladson-Billings, 2009, 2021a, 2021b). Tonya Allen, a key leader in the Coalition, understood this; she believed that a new DPS with a commission would attend to a stronger curriculum for Detroit children, one that did not ignore the social and cultural needs of students (Higgins & Zaniewski, 2016). This paper reminds us that the path to curricular transformation is inextricably political.

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