Uber vs City Hall:
‘New’ industry models within traditional systems of governance

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‘Uber vs. City Hall’: Background

• Since 2011 Uber launch, expansion to 400+ cities in 60+ countries

• Controversy over legal right to operate in unregulated space

• Municipal debate centres largely on Taxi vs. Uber and leveling the playing field
The Sharing Economy?

“This is a very dangerous direction to go, this unregulated economy, that’s what it should be called, not a sharing economy, it’s an unregulated, privatized economy that takes away accountability from the public.”

(City of Toronto Councillor, Interview).
“What is happening is not new, there have always been people in their private vehicles sitting in parking lots giving sweet little dollies a lift … What Uber did was … they pulled these little pieces of technology into a slick little app, found a bunch of people willing to do what other people have been doing for years … and said hey, look at this, and blew it up on a scale and scope that’s unprecedented.”

(City of Toronto Representative, Interview)
‘New’ Industries, Old Regulations

There’s the policy debate that we are having, and there’s the policy debate that perhaps we ought to be having. The policy debate that we seem to be having is two extreme positions…debate we ought to be having looks…at what are our broader policy objectives here, why do we have a licensing regime, why do we have some of the rules we have? And we have them for good reason: they may not be that effective at doing it, and it may be difficult to change, but we have them for good reasons.”

(Think Tank Advisor, Interview)
Uber vs City Hall: In Context

- Current debate focuses on ride sharing and disruption of taxi and ground transportation sector

- More broadly, debate is about digital technology and digital disruption
  - Posed as ‘Uber vs. City Hall’, but positioned also as ‘Innovation vs. City Hall’

- Regulation as a barrier to innovation?
  - Municipal response and impacts on growth prospects
INNOVATION, DISRUPTION & REGULATION:

UBER VS. CITY HALL
Disrupting Ground Transportation

• Forced significant change/innovation in taxi industry (digital access, customer service, monitoring)

• Shift in thinking/opportunity re: transit services, last mile, access, price, provision, unexplored opportunities

• Major re-thinking re: role of regulation in highly regulated sector
Challenging Government

• Is accommodating TNC’s a question of accept and collaborate or lose out?
  • Balancing needs / desire of municipal government with Uber’s tolerance of regulation
  • Provincial: support for smaller municipalities, insurance products, private members bill on sharing economy
  • Federal: Would Canada benefit from a national message on innovation and disruptive entrants? And if so, what should it be?
‘Uber vs. City Hall’: Questions

- Questions:
  - Is Uber vs. City Hall emblematic of shifts in governance and government priorities?
  - Should / can regulation be designed to both protect public interest and enable innovation?
  - How can regulation and policy be designed to seek out urban economic opportunity / avoid missed opportunity, particularly in context of competition, globalization and urban resilience?
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