Canadian Regional Development
A Critical Review of Theory, Practice, and Potentials

Développement régional canadien
Un examen critique des théories, des pratiques et des potentiels

Rural Development through Regionalism?

Kelly Vodden, PhD, Grenfell Campus Memorial University and Research Team

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Canadian Regional Development: A Critical Review of Theory, Practice, and Potentials

- To undertake a critical assessment of the application and relevance of new regionalism in the Canadian context;

- To seek Canadian innovations in regional development; and

- To understand how these are evolving and if and how they are being shared across space in networks of regional development policy and practice.

Sharing Knowledge and Building Capacity for Regional Development in Canada

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

- SSHRC Connections Grant 2016-17
- Update and share results

- National and regional workshops
- Webinars and online workshops
- Web and social media resources/info. sharing
- Edited volume

The Team

Research Team

Kelly Vodden (MUN; PI – NL lead)

David Douglas (U. of Guelph – ON & integrated lead)

Sean Markey (SFU – BC & place-based lead)

Bill Reimer (Concordia – QC & rural-urban)

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Ryan Gibson and David Douglas – U. of Guelph

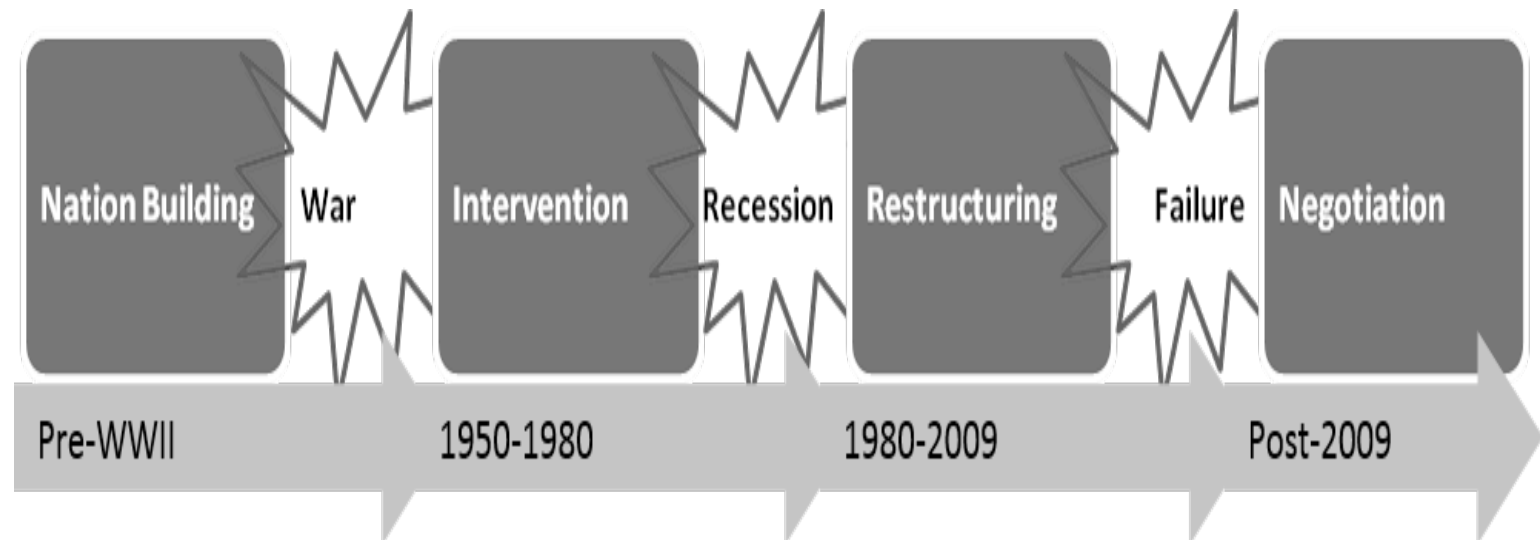Heather Hall, U. Waterloo

Andreas Klinke – EPI, MUN

Al Lauzon – CRRF

Sean Markey – SFU

Kathleen Parewick – Municipalities NL

Bill Reimer – RDI, Brandon U./RPLC

Regional Policy History

| Nation Building | War | Intervention | Recession | Restructuring | Failure | Negotiation |

Pre-WWII   1950-1980   1980-2009   Post-2009

Nation building: Immigration, infrastructure

Intervention: economic and social initiatives, infrastructure expansion, and welfare state policies
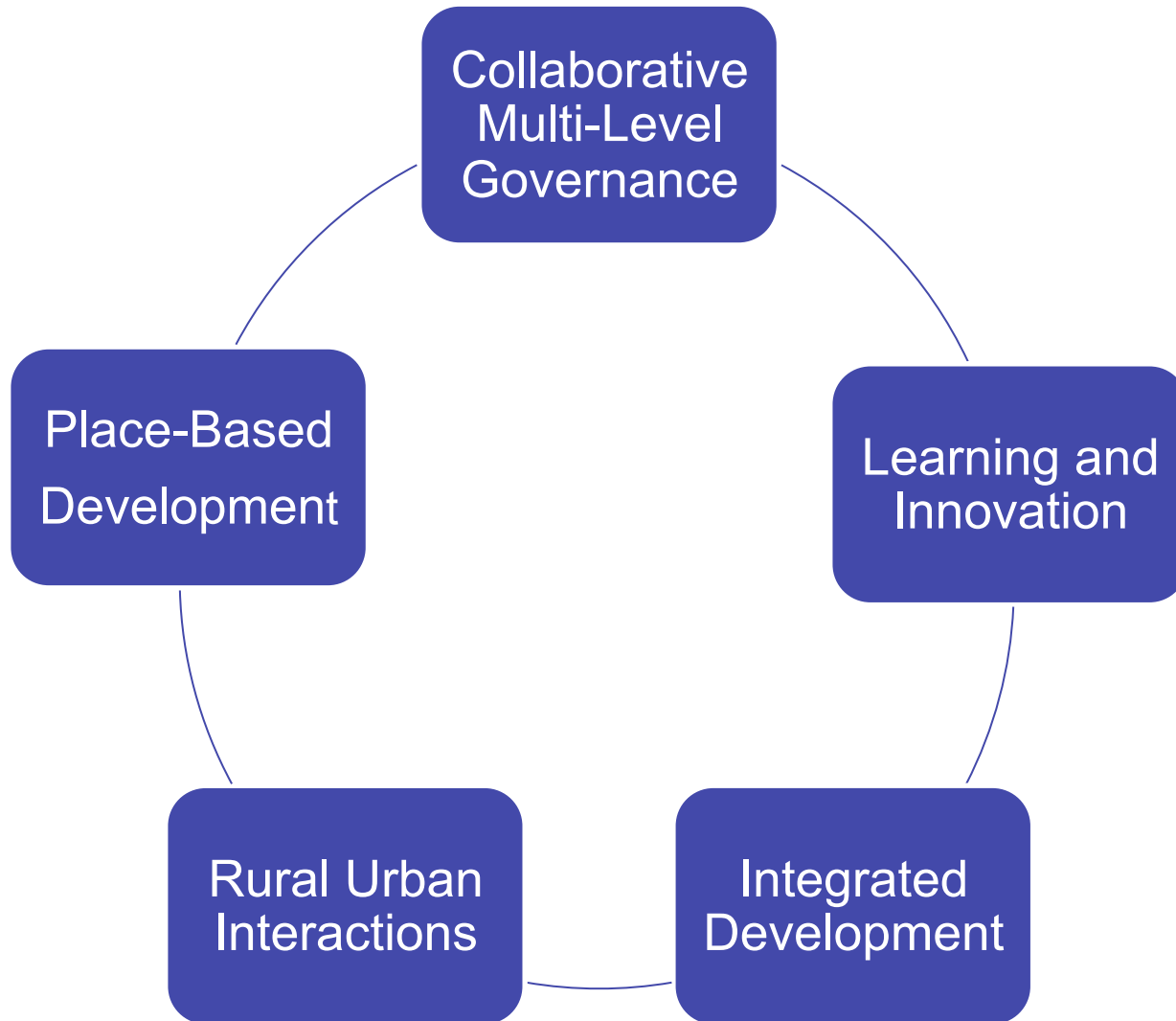
Restructuring: service reduction, downloading, capacity building (RD orgs)

Negotiation: on your own with bilateral arrangements (tenuous)

- Heavily conditioned by characteristics of each province and region
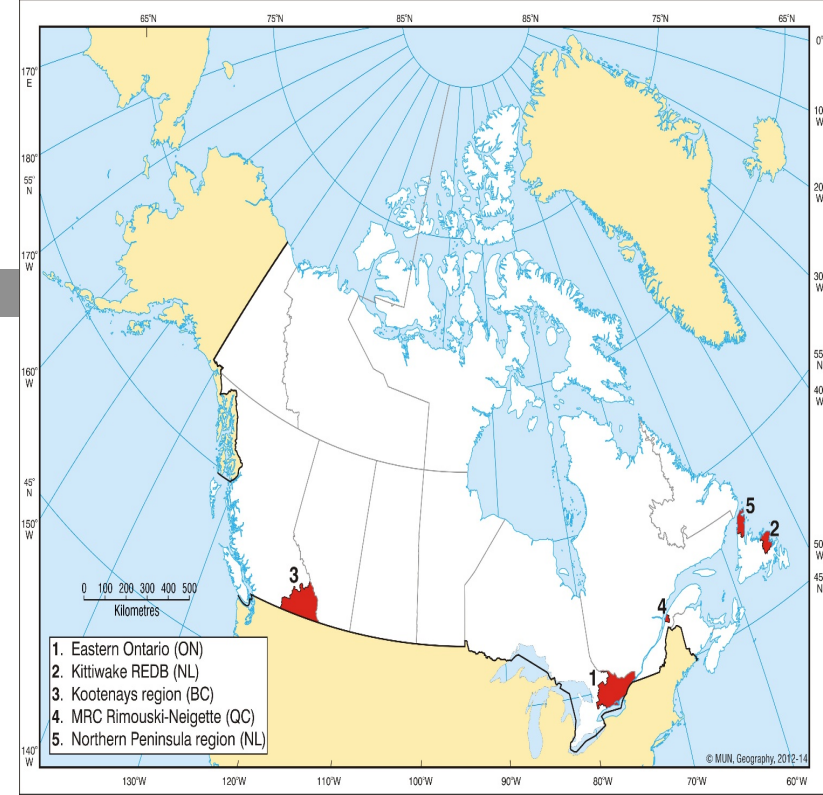
Markey et al. (submitted)

Key Elements of New Regionalism

Research Methodology

Mixed methods, interdisciplinary, case study-based

- 4 + 1 case study regions

- 5 core themes and indicators

- Document/literature review; 190 semi-structured interviews (fall 2011-spring 2014); (participant) observation

- Coding and pattern searching

- Multiple analytical "passes" with team dialogue and theme + case study region team cross-checking

1. Eastern Ontario (ON)
2. Kittiwake REDB (NL)
3. Kootenays region (BC)
4. MRC Rimouski-Neigette (QC)
5. Northern Peninsula region (NL)

© MUN, Geography, 2012-14

'New Regionalism' in Rural Canada

Findings – General

- With some variations across Canadian regions, sometimes within regions, and across the five identified key themes, **in general, there is a significant gap between policy and practice and the theory and rhetoric** of new regionalism and new regionalist ideas.

- Points to challenges in policy and practice but also with new regionalist ideas/theory

Findings - Collaborative, Multi-Level Governance

- Regional orgs have promoted a variety of multi-sector governance arrangements (often senior gov't-facilitated)

- Only occasionally involves policy or program co-construction

- Often reliant on sometimes single purpose, fragile organizations that lack significant capacity, barriers

- In some regions considerable inter-local government collaboration – a foundation for regional governance?

Vodden and Hall (2013), Gibson (2014), Vodden (2015), Vodden et al. (2014, 2016), Hall et al. (2016), Gibson et al. (in prep)
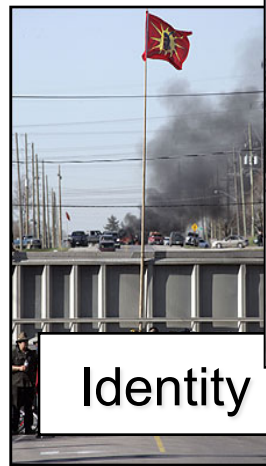
Findings – Learning & Innovation

- Informal knowledge flows through diverse personal and other networks, evidence of 'quiet' pragmatic innovation

- More formal networks transfer knowledge and skills across professional interest groups (e.g. EDOs)

- BUT processes of, and organizations associated with innovation concentrated in major urban settings, technology focused

- Minimum interregional or inter-provincial transfer of knowledge or deliberate learning and reflection

Reimer & Brett (2013); Hall et al (2013, 2016); Carter & Vodden (submitted)

Findings – Rural-Urban Relationships

- Weak local-federal institutional relationships

- Trade and exchanges important within the private sector; institutional interdependencies within public sector

- Tensions regarding appropriate policy and programming within rural and urban regions (city regionalism)

- Little focus on environment and identity based interdependence
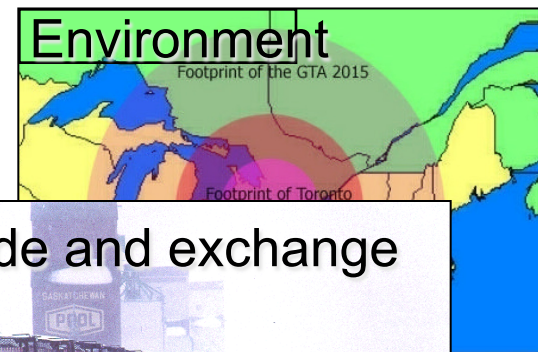
Reimer et al.

(in prep)

Environment

Institutions

Trade and exchange

Identity

Findings – Place-Based Development

- Evidence of a strong local sense of place and identity(ies) but generally not associated with official regions

- Some place-based identities extend to groups of communities, recognized landscapes, cultures, histories

- Most identify array of assets that afford development opportunities (including identity) but strategic application is limited

- Issues of compatibility with old and new regionalist ideas of place and place-based development

- Role for regional development organizations

Markey et al. (2015), Vodden et al. (2015), Breen et al. (2015), Daniels et al. (2015)

Findings – Integrated Development

- Development policies and practices that might be regarded as highly integrated are rare

- Dissonance between professional and other practitioner appreciation of complexity and interconnected nature of development issues and policies and practices

- Little response in development practice to balancing questions of economic growth and social equity or adoption of a holistic perspective in development design and implementation

Some Overall Conclusions

- Recognition that regions and regional development matter

- New regionalist practice emergent at best in small town and rural Canada

- Significant barriers to new approaches - time and legacies key factors

- Need for increased attention to rural and rural-urban dynamics and a more holistic, place-based view of development

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This multi-year research initiative is investigating how Canadian regional development has evolved in recent decades and the degree to which New Regionalism has been incorporated into policy and practice. Five key themes are examined: (i) place-based development, (ii) governance, (iii) knowledge and innovation, (iv) rural-urban relationships, and (v) integrated development. The project is funded through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Leslie Harris Centre of Regional Policy and Development.

Website: http://cdnregdev.ruralresilience.ca/

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