

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



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

Regional Development Policy and Planning in Ontario: A Summary and Selective Interpretation

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Table of Contents

Document Reference.....	i
Introduction.....	1
Integrated Development.....	1
Place-Based Development.....	4
Innovation, Learning, and Knowledge Transfers.....	7
Rural and Urban Relationships.....	9
Multi-level Governance.....	12
Summary.....	14
References.....	15

Document Reference

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Introduction

This resource document is designed to provide a summary and a selective interpretation of the regional development policy and planning record in Ontario over an extended period. It draws upon two primary sources. The first is the companion resource paper – *The Evolution of Regional Development Policy and Planning in Ontario, 1940-2013: A Resource Note* (Douglas, 2013). The second is a set of five primer working papers and definitions assembled by the research team for the project – *Canadian Regional Development: A Critical Review of Theory, Practice and Potentials* (2010-2014). These primers are identified in the Bibliography at the end of this resource note (e.g. Markey, 2010; Vodden, et al, 2013).

The summary interpretation here is explicitly summary in nature. It does not involve an in-depth review or critical assessment of individual policies and programmes through their statutory documents and the documentation of implementation, or recourse to any available formal programme and project evaluations. The interpretation here is based on this research/practitioner's familiarity with the policies and programmes, previous overview research (e.g. Douglas, 1994, 1997, 2006; Hodge and Robinson, 2001; Richardson, 1981), and his own practice in Ontario in this field for approximately three-quarters of the time period reviewed (i.e. 1940-2013).

The interpretation attempted here is not an evaluation or in any way a normative assessment of the efficacy of public policy and planning in the Ontario context.

The research project referred to above had as its central theme the concept of 'New Regionalism' (e.g. Lovering, 1999; MacLeod, 2001; Zimmerbauer and Passi, 2013). While there is considerable debate on the relevance and theoretical integrity of this emergent concept, the literature suggests five sub-concepts or conceptual perspectives as the fundamental underpinnings of 'New Regionalism'. These are the sub-concept of an 'integrated' approach to development policy and planning, the presence of 'innovation and knowledge transfers', a 'place-based' approach to development, development policy and practice that entails 'multi-level governance', and a perspective on the well worn urban and rural issue that shifts from the conventional dichotomies and conflict to one emphasizing 'interrelationships' and functional interdependencies. These sub-concepts are seen to underpin the overarching concept of 'New Regionalism' which, it is posited is increasingly evident in public policy and development practice (e.g. Hettne, Inotai and Sunkel, 2000). We will use short form definitions of these five sub-concepts to conduct this summary interpretation of the Ontario record in regional development policy and planning. For a more complete exposition the reader is referred to the five primers noted above.

Integrated Development

The definition of an integrated perspective or approach to regional development policy and planning is as follows:

The concept of integrated refers to an approach to development policy and planning that seeks to address the complexity of phenomena, whether the phenomena relate to contextual conditions (e.g. regional economy, local government system), to normative designs (e.g. community recreation outcomes, environmental remediation targets), or to issues of process and practice (e.g. planning procedures, public communications). Integrated perspectives in development policies, programmes and planning incorporate such dimensions of reality as systems and sub-systems, linkages, networks, uncertainty, feedback, interconnected levels, and holism, and are associated with interdisciplinary approaches to analysis and prescription.

For the research project's survey and analytical purposes some fifteen (15) overlapping indicators for integrated approaches to policy and development planning have been identified (Douglas, 2013). These include amongst others an interdisciplinary approach to policy, analysis and plan design, an emphasis on the inclusive and integrating effects of participation, the involvement of multiple levels of government, a holistic human perspective attempting to address the full psychological, emotive and social dimension of stakeholders, and a commitment to a rational comprehensive approach to the pre-plan analysis, alternatives assessment and a recommended direction.

While these fifteen indicators of policy and practice overlap, each has a distinct set of characteristics. An approach that is particularly conscious of the nature of connected ecological, social and economic systems, for example, may pay little attention to public participation, while this latter perspective might follow participatory process in a very singular sectoral (e.g. rural resources development) manner. Likewise, an approach to regional development planning that is highly influenced by interdisciplinary perspectives, blending social, environmental and other dimensions of development, might neglect the imperatives of integrating government and other policies from different levels. Even regional development policy and practice that purposefully pursues an integrated approach by working against the so-called "turf and territory" syndrome of bureaucracies and political fiefdoms, the "silos", may pay little attention to integrating the citizen stakeholders into the process, and may not attend to the means-end integration of the strategy's component inputs and outputs. While it may surprise many, the absence of a spatial or territorial dimension to regional development policy and planning, beyond the passive recognition of the region as a geographical entity, is too often a facet of partially integrated approaches that might otherwise appear to be very integrated.

Perhaps not too surprisingly the evidence, at this level of analysis, of an integrated approach to policy and development planning in Ontario suggests a fairly modest and uneven record. Interdisciplinary perspectives have been something of a rarity, as is the evidence for a more systems theoretic perspective or a holistic human approach. Even during what might be regarded as the hay day of regional planning in this part of Canada, in the 1960s and 1970s, regional planning was dominated by economic

perspectives. However, a fairly comprehensive approach was adopted, notably in the background analytical phases of the regional development plans of this time. Associated with the carefully designed programme and its analytical protocol, this phase was also characterized by a strong operational perspective where analytical means and budgetary allocations were formally tied into policy and project ends. The same period, was also characterized by a strong territorial or spatial dimension with methodically defined regions, accompanied by regional planning teams and local as well Provincial organizational development. This was all underpinned by a vigorous political commitment to regional planning under the *Design for Development* policy and its constituent programmes and projects. Varying degrees of multi-level process were also evident in this period.

The territorial dimension of an integrated approach has a relatively long lineage in Ontario, with a spatial framework emerging in the 1940s. The evolution of the Federal *ARDA* initiative through the late 1950s and 1960s brought some integration of physical planning (e.g. drainage, infrastructure, land use) with other dimensions of area development (e.g. farm consolidation, labour force training). The implicit and explicit adoption of the growth centre concept manifests an increasing awareness of the spatial dynamics in development. The area specific (e.g. designated areas) foci of several Federal economic development programmes built on this trend, albeit retaining a very singular focus primarily on economic development. The *Community Futures Programme* (1986) was initially something of an exception here, combining an explicit spatial reference with a commitment to an integrated approach to community as well as economic strategic development. However, the sectoral dimension (i.e. economic and business development) gradually supplanted the more integrated perspective in most applications. The territorial or spatial dimension has persisted with a continuing understanding of Northern Ontario as a distinctive entity for organizing spatial development policy. Much the same can be said for Eastern Ontario, and for the variously defined metropolitan growth region surrounding Toronto.

While underpinned by the dominating perspectives of biophysical and ecological systems, and the associated issues of conservation land use planning as a regulatory challenge, the *Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act* (1973) and the *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act* (2001) stand out as examples of a relatively high degree of integrated development policy and planning.

The *Places to Grow Act* (2005) and associated policies were underpinned by a fairly extensive body of research (e.g. demographic forecasts, infrastructure scenarios), widespread intergovernmental consultation at all levels, but with a minimum of formal public participation (e.g. one-day consultation panels in selected major cities). The policy and planning had some characteristics of a rational comprehensive approach (e.g. problem definition, analysis, development alternatives, policy choice). The politico-territorial perspective was also evident in the delineation of Northern Ontario as a distinct policy focus, and the intention to refine the plan with two major sub-regions.

The so-called Greater Golden Horseshoe area around Toronto, the legislated Greenbelt and the targets for increased urban densities and selective re-location of growth evidenced a strong spatial dimension to policy and planning, combined with a strong efficiency and effectiveness imperative in the regional design (e.g. public cost management and the urgency of gridlock remediation). In some contrast, the economic development perspective was the driver for policies and priorities applicable to Northern Ontario. So, the integrated sub-concept in 'New Regionalism' was and is unevenly and selectively present in this particular example.

Place-Based Development

The working definition of this sub-concept being used here is as follows:

Place-based development policies, programmes and plans are characterized by perspectives that start with the salient and sometimes unique characteristics of the place in question (e.g. community, sub-region), paying explicit attention to localized assets (e.g. strong leadership, unique culture, water resources), inter-community relationships, identity, capacities and endogenous development potentials. Place is not only seen as the focus of development policy, investment, leverage and competitive potentials but is conceptualized as a unique, differentiated and operational asset, in and of itself. This perspective, highlighting differentiated spatial contexts challenges and counterbalances the conventional sectoral (e.g. agriculture, manufacturing, infrastructure) approach to development and the centralized, undifferentiated or macroeconomic approach positing an eventual "trickle down" benefit to individual places.

In summary, place-based development is seen as "a holistic and targeted intervention that seeks to utilize, enhance or reveal the unique natural, physical, or human capacity endowments present within a particular location for development purposes" (Markey, 2010). It is regarded as a pivotal facet of the emergent concept of *New Regionalism*.

Among its several salient characteristics is the critique of conventional economic comparative advantage, seeing it as a narrow and incomplete means of identifying and assessing a community's or region's potentials. The new approach focuses on *competitiveness*, which while including conventional natural resources, locational, costs of production and other comparative advantages, pays equal attention to the community's or region's agency which has turned and can turn local assets (e.g. leadership, identity, culture) to good effect. This more complete, and it is argued more relevant depiction of a community's potentials, underpins the argument for a differentiated, more nuanced and less homogeneous approach to development policy and planning.

The perspective also pivots on the revealed world of *post-Fordist* systems of production and *post-productivism*. In short, these acknowledge the changes in global economic

processes toward flexible production, toward decentralization and spatial dissemination, toward niche products and services, and spatial networks of supply chains over extensive areas. This changing world of production and distribution is also characterized by perspectives that value rural and regional spaces and communities for much more than their narrowly defined primary production potentials (e.g. forestry, agriculture, mining), increasingly valuing their environmental services potentials, lifestyle offerings, health potentials, their heritage and spiritual and other assets. Moving off the staples or so-called “resource bank” perspective this view sees rural communities and landscapes as complexes of resources and potentials well beyond the confines of conventional commodities.

By definition this way of characterizing a new approach to development emphasizes the spatial or *territorial* dimension of development. Moving off the indiscriminate macroeconomic, “all sizes fits all” prescription of many previous development policies, refining the relatively homogenous treatment of rural communities in previous regional development perspectives, and rejecting the uni-dimensional limits of sectoral policies (e.g. agriculture, manufacturing industry, tourism), this perspective explicitly commits to a territorial imperative. This is promoted to operationally recognize the place-particular differentiation, the critical contextuality that is the reality of rural and regional environments, and to provide a platform as a practical mechanism for the integration of perspectives (e.g. environmental, economic, social).

Finally, but by no means completely, the place-based perspective attends to the revealed emergence of various systems of *governance* in rural and regional contexts. Emanating from the interplay of a receding State with the ascendancy of neo-liberal ideological perspectives and the growing assertiveness of civil society groups attending to priority objectives, these differentiated shared power collaborations are increasingly a fact of life in rural and regional settings. And they are increasingly seen as a required process for creating agency and exercising power in and between communities. Sometimes multi-level in nature, sometimes with formal government as a major partner, sometimes project oriented, and at all times with different degrees of formalization, these highly differentiated arrangements and relationships are seen to be part of the requisites for a place-based approach to development.

Not unlike our overview assessment of the Ontario record through the lens of an integrated approach to development, the record in this part of Canada as it relates to a place-based approach to regional development is extremely mixed. The overarching impression, however, is that it has largely been absent.

A place-based approach is somewhat evident in project specific programming such as the earlier and the more recent (from OMAFRA) downtown revitalization policies, but none of this was set within a formalized regional development framework. Likewise, as with other parts of Canada, there has always been a thread of special supports for single-industry (e.g. mining, pulp and paper) communities. Similarly, there has been

transitional support from governments for communities hard hit by structural economic change, such as those emanating from global offshore investment relocations. So, particular problems or challenges have been the spur for most place-based development policy initiatives in the Ontario context. Few have been regional in scope, though again there have been some exceptions, such as the *Regional Development Incentives Act* of 1970 with its “special areas”.

Places have rarely been identified as a unique complex of assets, beyond the conventional locational (e.g. distance from airport) and physical resources (e.g. water, soils), with their own local potentials for growth and development as the foci of place-specific policy. The closest Provincial policy might have moved toward this may have been in the short-lived *Community Economic Development Act* (1993) which provided for *community-specific* organizational development. The *Federal Local Employment Development Assistance* programme (1980) was purposefully local, was designed to be responsive to place-particular issues, and had a diversity of provisions (e.g. organizational, labour force training), and did provide for a local non-profit development corporation. However, it was solely economic in its focus and took a narrow perspective on the question of community assets. The high profile *Community Futures Programme* (1986) was area-based, promoting multi-community collaboration and development programming that was specific to local needs and priorities. However, the criteria for funding qualification were essentially economic and determined by the Federal government, with little attention to differentiated local assets beyond the make-up of the CFDC Board itself.

The innovative *Design for Development* policy (1966) and the ensuing programmes and projects did differentiate between sub-regions within the Toronto metropolitan region. It set out different development priorities and directions for various communities. However, these were generic to a sub-region (e.g. the lakeshore urban corridor) and were not community specific, other than designating growth centres and similar strategic roles. The approach to regional planning was largely based on the physical resources (e.g. infrastructure, water), institutional investments (e.g. hospitals, universities), market location, and related comparative advantages of the major centres. Little attention was paid to active leadership, the record of community-based and related achievements, associated development capacity, and the development agenda of the community itself. The latter was largely gleaned from regional advisory bodies and some elected representatives.

While there has not been a similar intensity of regional analysis and planning activity associated with the recent *Places to Grow Act* (2005), a similar dearth of place-based perspectives is evident. Again, generic development policies apply to sub-regions within a particular policy overlay, such as those in the Greenbelt. There has been little or no bottom-up process of community-based development planning, and no policy provision for a place-based and assets-based process here.

The record of the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry, in its various guises, has been one that articulated a difference in regional and local economic conditions for this part of the province of Ontario. Its attention to local resources dependency, remoteness, inadequate physical infrastructure, the special cases of First Nations communities, and other salient characteristics of the Northern Ontario contexts did approximate something of a place-based perspective on the development dilemma. When combined with a general appreciation of local labour force conditions (e.g. unemployment, out-migration, training needs) its appreciation of asset deficiencies and selected advantages as being place particular conditions of the north, this might be seen as a partially place-based perspective. Selected high profile initiatives in support of re-development (e.g. Elliot Lake) stand out here. However, the regional policy sensitivity to place did not usually translate into a routine practice of place-based regional development planning incorporating social, cultural, economic and other facets of development.

Innovation, Learning and Knowledge Transfers

The working definition for this sub-concept underpinning the general concept of 'New Regionalism' is as follows:

The OECD (2005) defines an innovation as the implementation of a new or significantly improved product, process, marketing or organizational method. Innovation in regional development, for example, may include new ways of organizing and/or sharing information within or across organizations, new strategies for addressing local challenges and opportunities, or new forms of investment. When we speak of innovation here we are talking about things that are new to the province or the region in question (vs. nationally or globally).

The array of indicators associated with this emerging dimension of New Regionalism is diverse and evolving. Among these are those associated with the environment or *milieu* associated with innovation, creativity and invention, the presence of *networks* connecting individuals, firms, research groups and other organizations, including clusters of agents and activities, some supportive *public policy* presence that fosters and creates and institutionalizes the ground conditions conducive to innovation, and an array of mechanisms associated with the dissemination of knowledge, intelligence and new perspectives that allow for *transfer* and translation, diffusion, adoption and adaptation.

Associated with the concept of the "learning region" the concept of innovation in regional development attaches itself to the presence of dense *social capital*, a culture of reciprocity and "soft economies" of learning and collaboration, trust, a dynamic balancing of competition and collaboration, "untraded dependencies" that allow flows of tacit knowledge to lubricate complex relational networks that in turn allow

experiment, trial and error, prototypes, feedback and invention. The presence of supportive funding, risk takers, and key resource linkages cumulatively fuels the virtuous cycle. Advances in telecommunications facilitate global connections and the two-way transfers of knowledge.

Regional development policy and practice that proactively addresses this dimension of New Regionalism would see knowledge, its generation and its transfer and translation as a key ingredient in the development process. Universities, research institutes, new technology enterprises, diverse collaborative networks, clustered businesses and other organizations, investments in research and knowledge mobilization, and the use of multi-level systems of *governance* as new ways of engagement and collective decision making, would be evident in this new approach.

Because it is a relatively new perspective and approach to regional development, some distance from the conventional dominance of physical infrastructure (e.g. roads, railways), industrial labour force investments (e.g. re-training), mass tourism strategies, and other foci of the development orthodoxy, it is not surprising to find only fragmentary evidence of this approach in the Ontario context, at least until relative recently.

Some innovation was certainly evident in policy initiatives relating to municipal organization (e.g. Regional Municipalities), in regional land use planning and conservation (e.g. the *Niagara Escarpment Act*, 1973, *Oak Ridges Moraine Act*, 2001), in the organization of the Provincial government itself (e.g. *Design for Development*, 1966), and in several other facets of the Ontario story. Likewise, there is ample evidence of the transfer of development concepts (e.g. growth pole/centre theory), development designs (e.g. new towns, greenbelts), and whole bodies of concepts and analysis, notably from Regional Science in the 1960s. And the import of a variety of concepts and practice modalities relating to the use of financial and other incentives to spur development was especially evident in the Federal government's policies and practices for much of this period. The Ontario Development Corporation (ODC) was a case in point for the Provincial government. And the investment in data bases, some regional information management, extensive mapping, a considerable programme of support for university-based research, a multiplicity of regional plans, and other initiatives in the 1960-80 period attests to a substantial appreciation of the role of information and knowledge in the development process.

Even though regional planning remains in an extended hiatus in this part of Canada, the last decade has seen the emergence of growing interest in innovation and its role in development, primarily in economic growth. The term is now affixed to the websites of governmental agencies and the Province's Ministry of Economic Development and Innovation plays a leading role in supporting pilot projects, partner funding of research, fostering new "green" technologies, facilitating new products and services developments for global markets, and many other initiatives. The Province has actively

supported the emergence of *Regional Innovation Networks* (RINs) to foster university/business and other collaboration, invest in scientific research, create centres of excellence, and bring new products and services to commercialization (e.g. OntarioBioProducts.com). The Eastern Lake Ontario Regional Innovation Network (ELORIN) is one of these extensive, multi-party networks. With an active focus on the knowledge economy, the role of science in new products and services development (e.g. composite materials, food science, alternative energy sources), and the potentials of spatially proximate clusters (e.g. universities, businesses, area economic development agencies) these innovation and knowledge mobilization partnerships are visibly active as new players in the regional economies across Ontario. However, these territorially based innovation networks have yet to be integrated into any formally designed, approved and implemented regional development plans.

So, while there is a record of innovative policy and other initiatives, some of them evident in the earlier days of regional planning in this province, it is a mixed record, and there is little to suggest that public policy was materially conscious of the potentials of knowledge, knowledge mobilization and transfer, until the very recent past. And while this realization is now evident, especially as it relates to business development, economic competitiveness, and Ontario's needs and potentials in the global economy, it is not an integral component of any formal regional development initiatives, as yet.

Rural and Urban Relationships

An operational definition for this sub-concept is as follows:

This perspective rebalances the conventional and contested dichotomy of urban versus rural, and seeks to dimension the complex and dynamic reality of multiple two-way interrelationships and interdependencies between defined urban centres and rural communities and regions. The differentiated and changing patterns of spatial and functional interconnectedness (e.g. in commuting flows, recreation patterns, infrastructure networks) precipitate and are themselves influenced by changing arrangements in intergovernmental collaboration, issue specific institutional arrangements, and emergent systems of governance.

The ongoing articulation of this sub-concept categorizes the dynamic interdependencies of rural and urban communities into four arenas of interaction and interdependencies. There are the *trade and exchange* relationships such as commuting, natural resources transfer and processing, financial and other services, and retail trade. There are a host of *shared institutional* arrangements such as health, welfare and education policies from other levels of government, or membership and regulations from social, cultural and other organizations (e.g. Lions Clubs), even though some policies and regulations might have been originally made for either an urban or a rural context. Then there is the *natural environment* within which both urban and rural communities exist for shared

air, water, aggregates, food, fibre, waste management, recreation and many other life requirements. Finally, there is *identity* through which people describe and typify themselves, who they are, where they come from, and where their family and friends and life world exists.

While they overlap with these four categories one could add a fifth, as an increasingly visible and politically important one, in the form of *physical infrastructure*. The common, linked or overlapping highways, bridges, transit systems, airports, storm water networks, sewage collection and treatment facilities, wells and pumping stations, police and fire prevention facilities, paramedic infrastructure, electric, gas and other power systems, freight rail yards, fibre optic networks, recreation trails and facilities, conservation dams, weirs and other investments, food terminals and other major distribution complexes, and many other items of physical infrastructure that cross over and materially link urban and rural communities. It is visible, tactile, named, often cost-shared and co-managed, symbolic and metaphorical, and not infrequently contentious. This is the case not only for the immediate urban-rural fringe context, but oftentimes for extensive rural regions and their constituent urban centres.

Recently the modes of interaction between rural and urban communities have been interpreted through the lens of social capital, seeing relationships, communications and interaction as a whole as being pursued through normative frameworks. These are the rational, legal and rules-based processes one associates with bureaucracies and bureaucrats, and their *bureaucratic* norms, or the social norms of the commercial world evidenced in short term transaction rules mediated through contractual relationships, which in turn are shaped by supply and demand conditions in the *market*. Behaviours and ways of relating will differ depending on the mode in use. And access to use is not evenly distributed in society. There is exclusion just as there is inclusion. In contrast to both of these ways of interacting are the *associative* norms which inform behaviours in voluntary organizations, membership in recreation, arts, or community service groups, and many other interest-based groups. Different again are the ways of interacting and behaving in what are called *communal-based* norms which one finds in families, ethnic groups, gangs and other closely bonded arrangements.

Rural and urban interrelationships are negotiated through the complex of norms and associated expectations, role typecasting, behaviours, protocols, sanctions and other characteristics associated with these. Those who can access more than one of these, and operate across them may have greater access to power, resources and decision-making, than others. But urban and rural interrelationships are conceptualized as operating through these different types of social relational modalities.

Urban and rural relationships have pervaded almost every aspect of regional development planning policy and practice in Ontario over the last several decades. However, more often than not these have been dominated by the perspective where the relationship is seen as problematic, contentious, and sometimes adversarial.

Something of a zero-sum relationship was assumed or propounded from time to time. Issues relating to the loss of agricultural land, municipal annexations, utility corridors, spoilage of areas of natural and scientific interest, ugly, inefficient and creeping “urban sprawl”, and many related issues dominated the public, academic and policy discourse for extended periods of time. Indeed, the modicum of regional planning that has been undertaken over the 1940-2013 period has seen the Toronto-centred region as a dominant theme throughout, as it still remains to this day. While the complexity of interrelationships was appreciated in the design of “Zone 2” in the *Toronto-Centred Region Concept* (TCR) of 1970, and the *Greenbelt Act* of 2005, the overriding policy and planning conception of the issues at hand gave pre-eminence to issues of urban containment, headwaters management, agricultural land conservation, and public infrastructure economies. Grappling with the urban-rural issues major local reforms were introduced, in the form of new Regional Municipalities, to strengthen the municipalities adjacent to the burgeoning Toronto. The same was done in a number of other major centres (e.g. Ottawa, Hamilton).

A heightened appreciation of the economic role of urban places was evident in the adoption of the growth centre concept (from growth pole theory) and the designation of regional and other strategic urban centres (e.g. Peterborough, Thunder Bay) as the engines of economic growth for their surrounding rural regions, and as the source of regional services (e.g. higher education, health care). This was particularly evident in the dynamic period of regional development policy and planning which characterized the *Design for Development* period (1966-80).

The urban reality was not present in either of the *ARDA* programmes (1961, 1966) from the Federal government. In most of the other Federal development policies and programmes throughout this period, dominated as they were by sectoral and economic considerations, the urban-rural relationship was either not articulated as a key issue in operations or management, or it was explicitly determined that the focus was urban industrial (i.e. manufacturing) or remote resource-based (e.g. mining, forestry, pulp and paper). Even the renowned *Community Futures Programme* (1986) subsumed the complexities of urban-rural relationships in terms of labour catchment areas.

Selected urban fringe contexts did induce a more complex and nuanced appreciation of rural and urban interrelationships. This was the case in the *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act* (2001). Born of a conflict ridden period involving land development companies, local municipalities, prominent politicians, the Provincial government, Conservation Authorities, citizen action groups, the media, the courts, and many others, the process for the 190,000 hectares of land straddling several urban centres across Southern Ontario force fed a growing realization of the complex two-way relationships between rural and urban.

It is debatable as to whether selected agricultural and rural development programmes became increasingly informed of the interdependencies between urban and rural

communities. It might be suggested that the *Rural Economic Development* (RED) programme of 2001, with its diverse provisions from health facilities, water infrastructure and commercial revitalization to skills training and other facets of rural and small town life, reflected a more complete appreciation of the two-way complementarities between urban and rural.

Multi-Level Governance

The summary definition based on the project's formulation of this sub-concept is as follows:

Multi-level governance is a process built on the foundations of collaboration and multiple partnerships among community/region-based organizations, statutory/government agencies, and the private sector facilitating empowerment within regions through sharing of power and collective decision-making.

We will not re-visit the now fertile but highly differentiated field of governance in the academic and professional literatures. Suffice to note here that there is no universal convergence in terms of definitions, theoretical understandings or applications. However, the intersection of the declining role and presence of the *State*, for whatever reasons, and the emergence of a more active, assertive *civil society*, is generally held to be a defining phenomenon here. This has led to new ways of crafting decision-making, new ways of pooling resources, new constructions of *shared power* relationships, fuzzy boundaries between organizations and institutional arrangements, and issue-oriented and highly instrumental collaborations all designed to expedite the path to *agency* among a collection of partner stakeholders who could not get there on their own. Government may be a partner; but it is not governing. It may steer, or it may be among the several rowers moving the project along.

Multi-level governance is seen as a *process* that has *horizontal* dimensions, such as interactions among local governments and community groups, as well as *vertical* dimensions, involving formalized relationships between municipalities and the Provincial government or between regional voluntary organizations and national or international bodies. Authority becomes dispersed and *polycentric* in these reformulations. Multi-level governance involves the development of instrumental relationships across various territorial scales, across levels of government and private sector organizations, and across what have been seen and received as set hierarchical structures. Networks and relatively fluid organizational arrangements are not uncommon, providing a maximum of manoeuvrability and responsiveness.

Not surprisingly legitimacy, accountability and indeed the integrity of these opportunistic and unorthodox relationships and modes of organizing are part of the contested milieu within which multi-level governance operates.

The regional development planning that did take place in Ontario in the 1940-2013 period was characterized by a modest amount of Provincial-Federal interaction and collaboration. The Provincial-municipal dimension of intergovernmental collaboration was, not surprisingly, much more evident. Some elements of governance and to a lesser extent multi-level governance were in evidence in the regional advisory bodies and councils set up by the Provincial government during these episodes of regional planning. But the dominant mode of interaction, communications and occasional joint organizational initiatives was intergovernmental, and not governance. A concrete example of intensive intergovernmental interaction, at three levels of government, was the *North Pickering (Seaton)* new town project and the associated proposed new international airport planning and development episode, starting in the early 1970s.

Intensive and highly formalized Provincial-Federal interaction and organizational arrangements were in evidence during the period of *Subsidiary Agreements (SA)* from 1974 on, under the signed *General Development Agreements (GDA)*. However, local government and to an even greater extent local communities and civil society organizations were virtually absent from these undertakings.

While formalized within pre-set Federal government protocols and programme specifications, there were a number of Federal government economic development initiatives that were pursued directly in partnership with municipalities and occasionally with community groups within these. Examples include the *Local Employment Assistance Programme (LEAP)*, 1971, and the *Local Employment Development Assistance (LEDA)*, 1983, programme. The *Community Futures Programme* (1986) was notable in providing for a Corporation board with a purposeful diversity of members to represent gender, cultural, income and other dimensions of the various communities involved. Participatory democracy and social equity considerations were even more explicit in the *Community Development Corporations (CDC)* proposed by the Provincial Community Economic Development Act (1993). While these two last mentioned initiatives approximated what might be interpreted as an emergent form of multi-level governance, the prevailing pattern in Ontario has been intergovernmental, and not one of governance, yet alone multi-level governance.

As already noted the high profile *Oak Ridges Moraine* chapter in this part of Canada was one that blended all three levels of government, with the Federal government in a minor role, and a great variety of civil society organizations and interests. While a number of activist organizations were set up in the fray, and while there was a variety of ex officio and other roles utilized across the communications and collaborative terrain in this episode, there was not an overarching, multi-interest and shared power body that oversaw or directed the process. So, there were several elements of multi-level governance evident here, but not an organizational reflection of this.

While the presence of governance or governance-like processes and organizations is meagre in the general development landscape, it is even less evident in the episodic engagements in regional development planning in Ontario in this period.

Summary

Regional development policy in Ontario has not been evident on an ongoing basis over the last three-quarters of a century. There have been a small number of extended periods where the regional dimension to development has been in vogue. These periods have seen a mix of policies addressing area economic development issues and occasionally infrastructure, environmental and other matters, while at other times the regional dimension has been dominated by metropolitan growth management agendas. Across these interventions, framed as regional in nature, have been a series of labour market and other economic development policies and programmes that have come and gone, some of which might be seen as area-based and some as regional in scope and design.

The major dimensions or sub-concepts associated with the current discourse around New Regionalism are rarely in evidence across this extended time period in this part of Canada. There are occasions and cases where elements of an integrated approach to development policy and practice are evident, just as there are some instances where policy would seem to have approximated a place-based approach to development. Rarely are the more recent appreciations of the two-way functional interrelationships between rural and urban to be found. In contrast, multi-level approaches to development are more in evidence, albeit mostly associated with formal governmental relationships and rarely those we now associate with governance. Our current conceptualizations of innovation and knowledge mobilization suggest that, while a selected number of transfers were clearly there in the Ontario context, this dimension is also something of a rarity in the record here.

So if New Regionalism can be posited as credibly “new”, which is appropriately challenged in some of the discourse, the Ontario case would appear to be a case in point where indeed it would be a new and largely untried approach to regional development policy, design, practice and research.

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