

Present is past?

Institutional structures and rural policy development in Québec

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Introduction

In this paper, I examine the degree to which rural policy in Québec is shaped by pre-existing institutional structures.

I argue that a process of institutional decentralization following the Quiet Revolution has significant bearing upon rural policy in the province.

Theoretical framework

This case study employs a “historical institutionalist” (HI) framework.

Policymaking consists of stable periods of implementation or “path dependencies.” These are followed by significant ruptures or “formative moments,” and these moments result in the emergence of a new path (Peters et al., 2005: 1275).

Methodology

This qualitative analysis examined primary and secondary literature from the Québec national library’s heritage collection.

Institutions, along with their structures and regulations, were broadly examined between the 1960s and present day.

Results

Formative moments in the 1970s led to the dissolution of centralized institutional structures in Québec.

Decentralized structures then emerged and ossified to establish new institutional path dependencies.

The institutional norms and policies inherent in these new paths were critical to the formulation and subsequent implementation of rural policy in Québec.

Institutional change in the past, therefore, has significant bearing on policies and practices in the present.

Further research

- To what extent did provincial emphasis on *social welfare* shape formal rural policies in Québec? For example, regional health centres may be critical to rural policy development.
- What were the *specific* causes leading to institutional *change*?
- How compatible is rural policy in Québec with the new regionalist literature?

Acknowledgments

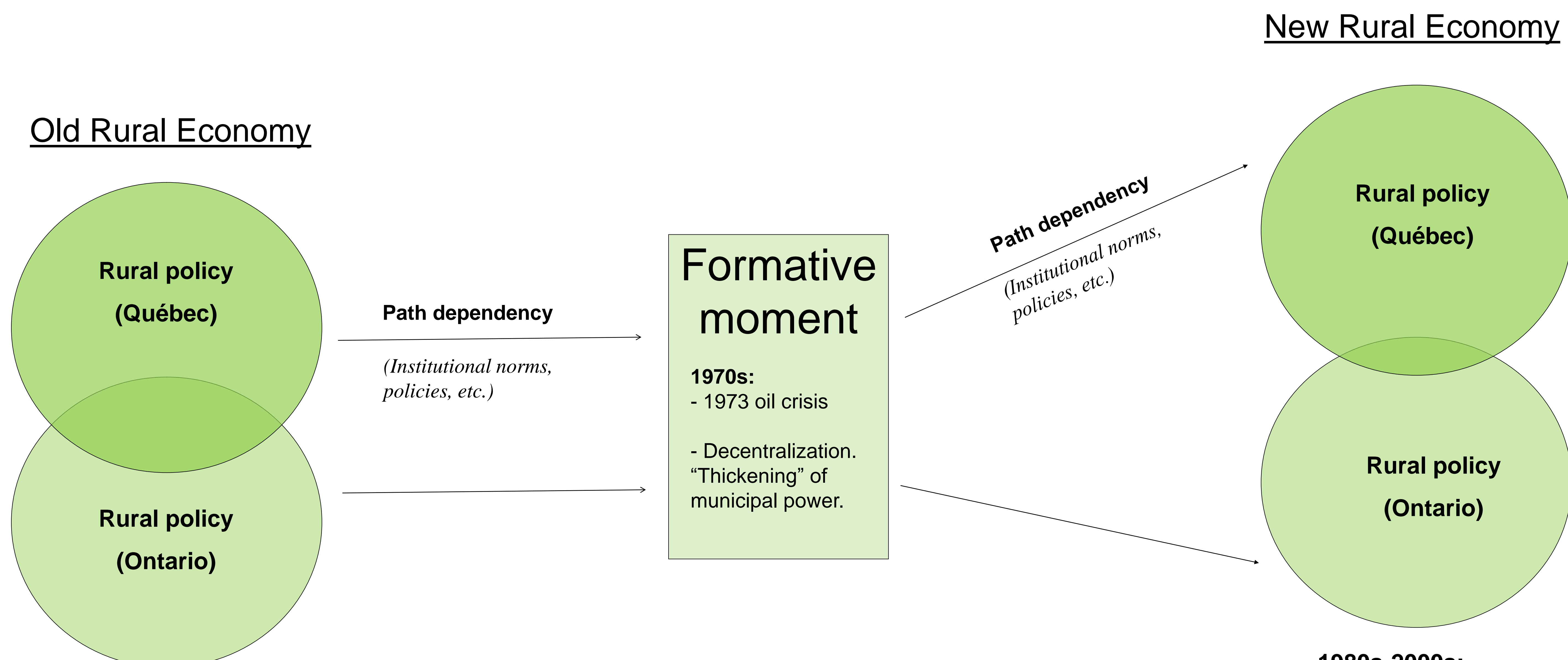
Special thanks to the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation for this opportunity. Thank you also to Concordia University sociology professor Bill Reimer and the research assistance team. And thank you to Kelly Vodden and the national research team.

For further information

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I would be happy to provide you with more information on this and related projects.

Theoretical Framework



1950s-1960s:

- Quiet Revolution:
- Nation building (centralized, top-down)
- Institution building (education, health)
- Large-scale industry

Old Rural Economy	New Rural Economy
Homogeneous culture	Diverse culture
Simple and repetitive	Complex
Resource commodities	Services and amenities
Low mobility	High mobility
Local relations important	External relations important
Low knowledge demands	High knowledge demands

Source: Reimer, Bill. 2005. "Rural and Urban: Differences and Common Ground." In *Urban Canada: Sociological Perspectives*. Harry H. Hiller ed. Don Mills: Oxford UP. 71-94.

1980s-2000s:

- Formal rural policies adopted in Québec (2001; 2007)
- Decentralized (bottom-up)