

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



**Développement régionale  
canadienne**  
Un examen critique du théorie, de  
pratique et des potentiels

# **Understanding Regionalism and Regional Development in Canada: Highlights from a National Research Initiative**

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# Outline

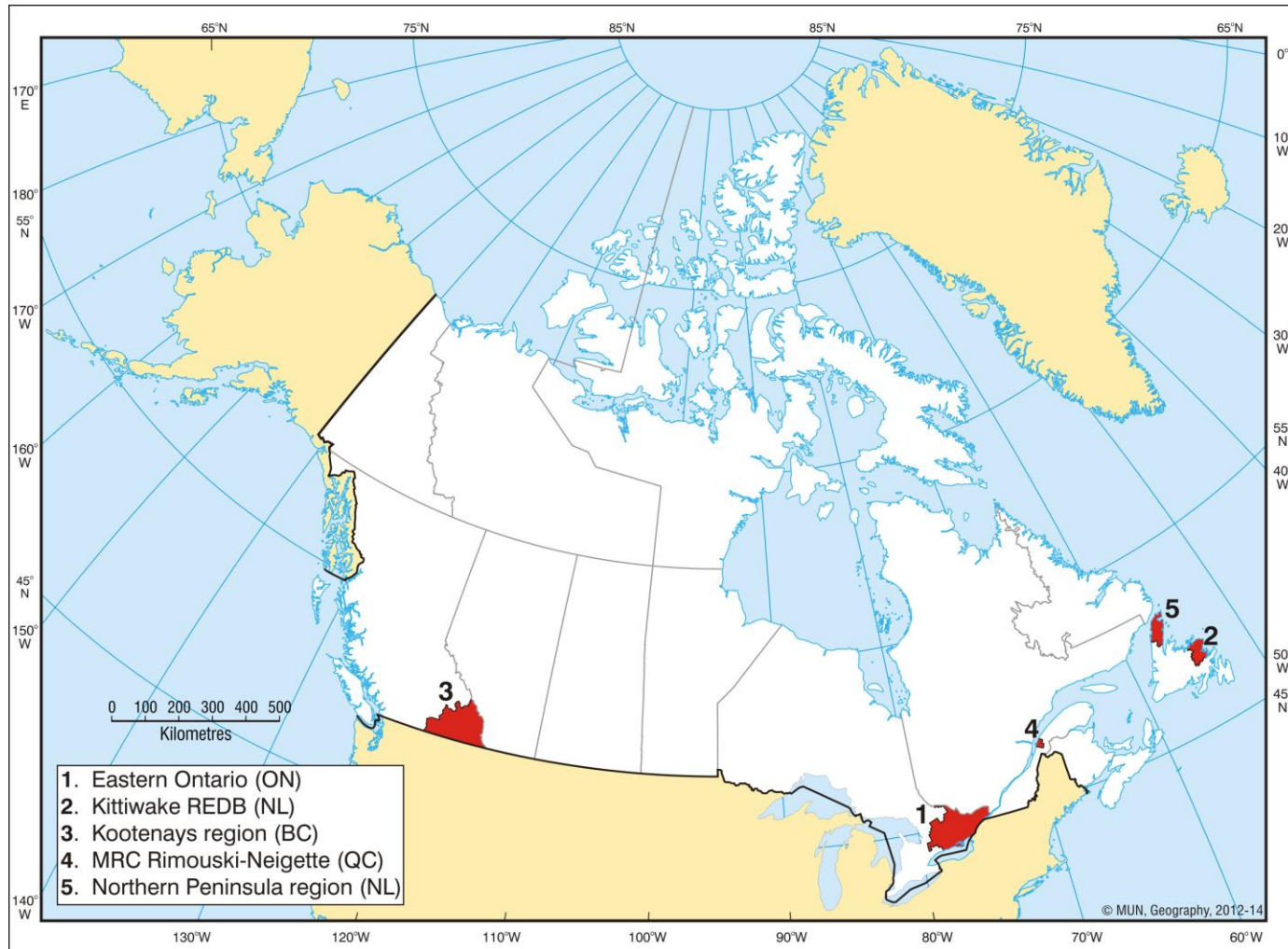
- Project goals and methods
- Emerging (early) findings from four provinces
- Implications for rural development policy and practice
- Your experiences?

# Project Goals

- *Undertake a critical assessment of the application and relevance of new regionalism in the Canadian context;*
- Seek Canadian innovations in regional development; and
- Understand how these are evolving and if and how they are being shared across space in networks of regional development policy and practice.

# Methodology

- Multi-level (nested) case study approach

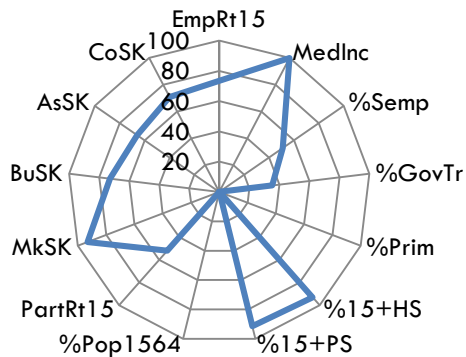


# Case Study Selection

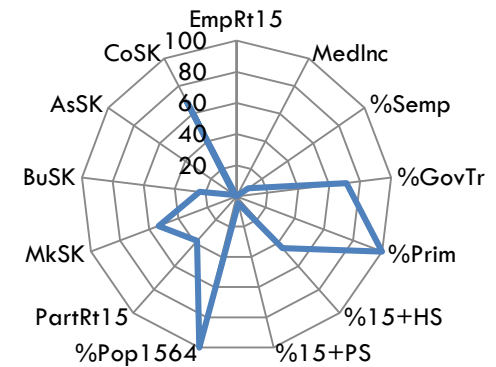
- Provincially recognized regions as entry point
- Mix of characteristics and levels of “capacity”
- Feasibility
  - Student/researcher interests and relationships, financial and logistical considerations

# Asset/Capacity Amoebas

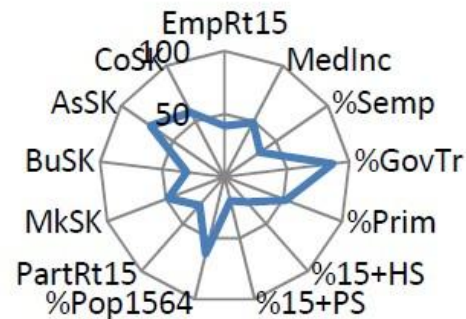
**Kootenays**



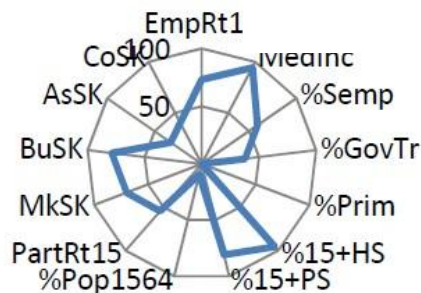
**Northern Peninsula**



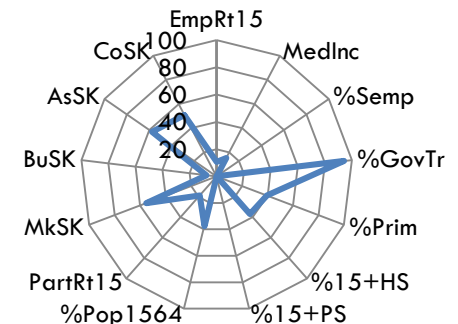
**Rimouski-Neigette**



**Eastern Ontario**





**Gander EZ**



# Methods cont'd

- Mixed methods, interdisciplinary
  - Document/literature review
  - Semi-structured interviews
  - (Participant) observation
  - Pattern searching and theme indicators
  - Multiple analytical “passes” with team dialogue and cross-checking
  - Social network analysis

# Themes and Development Arenas

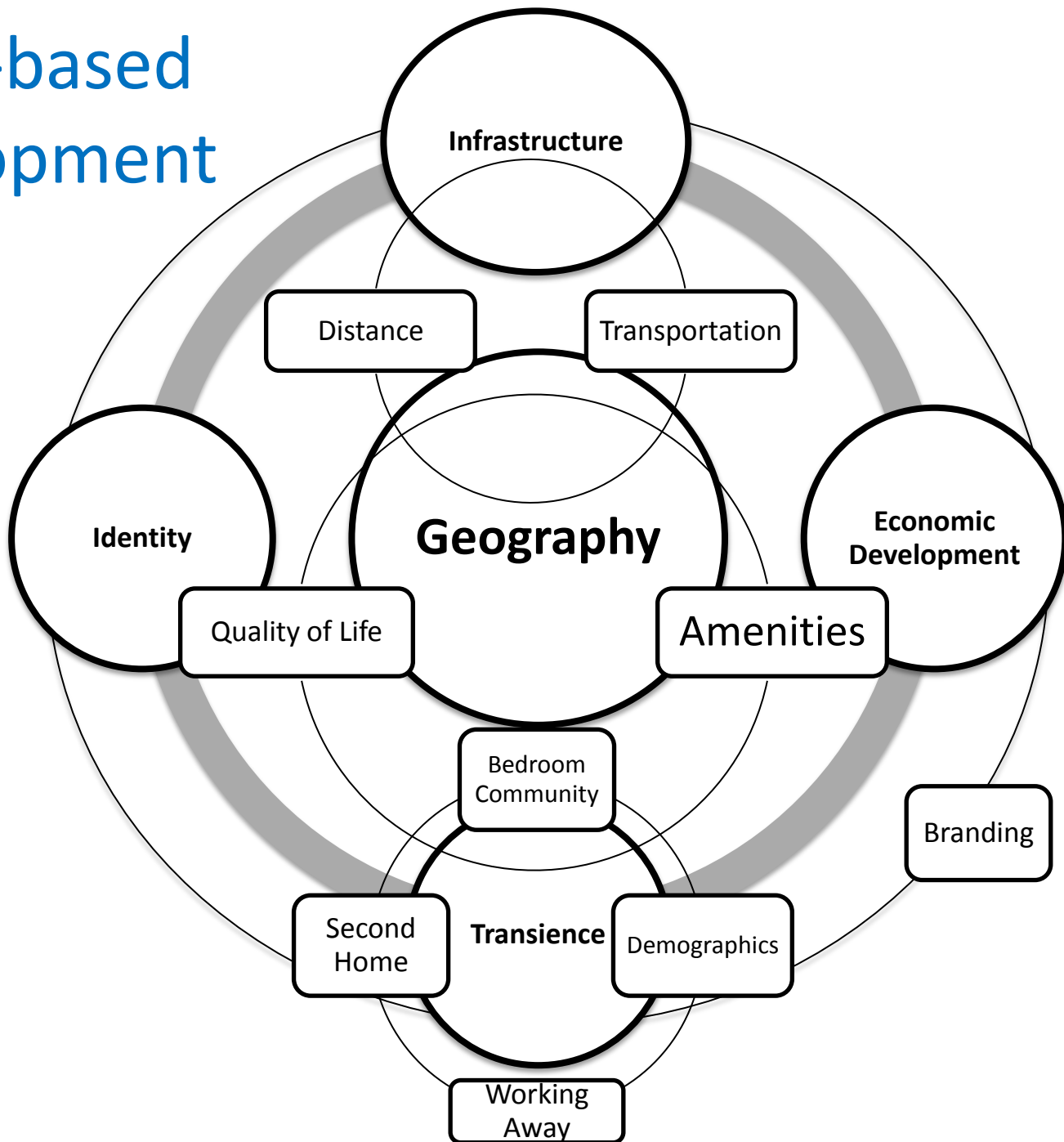
Arenas of Regional Development	Economic Development	Recreation	Water (watershed) management
<b><i>Themes of New Regionalism</i></b>			
1. Governance			
2. Rural-Urban			
3. Place-based			
4. Integration			
5. Learning and Innovation			

# Place-based Development

Characteristic/ indicator	BC	ON	NL
Social	Strong association: Identity, social infrastructure, participation <b>Scale: sub-region</b>	Association: med. overall Scale: community	Strong: Identity Med. overall <b>Scale: community</b>
Economic	Low/med association overall Scale: mixed	Strong: economic Infrastructure Med. overall <b>Scale: mixed</b>	Med. overall Scale: mixed
Environmental	Strong: sustainability initiatives Scale: sub-regl	Med. overall Scale: mixed	Strong: amenities  Scale: community and sub-regional

*Association with place-based characteristics – mixed and medium overall*

# Place-based Development



# Place-based Development - Social

## Identity

- BC: (Sub-*regional*) identity, physical geography key
- NL: Prominent topic, more community oriented but shifting, varied/"fuzzy"
- ON: Less prominent, large scale region, community/township, more language/heritage oriented, also waterways

## Transience

- Three versions: seasonal, commuting – ST, LT
- Indicative of reduced commitment to place?
- Implications for development

# Place-based Development - Economic

## **Branding**

- Strong link with place-based amenities
- ON - more sector focused; BC – closely linked with identity; NL - various scales, less regional

## **Infrastructure**

- Mix of quality, initiatives, jurisdictions, capacity, priorities
- Shapes functional regions

# Place-based Development - Environmental

- More emphasis in planning within BC, community and regional district level, energy and climate change
  - government, industry, NGO, CBT
- Energy initiatives focus in Ont.
  - Provincial and post-secondary lead
- Less focus in NL
- Overall least present, requires further investigation

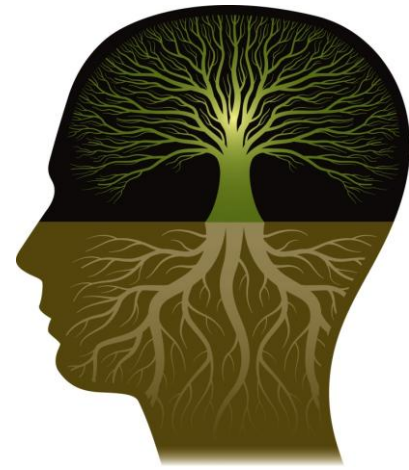
# Integrated Development

- Strongest association with: collaboration and cooperation, multidisciplinary – environmental
- NL – efficiency and effectiveness - goals and objectives, politico-territorial perspective - dominant problems
- BC - politico-territorial perspective – rationale for region
- ON and BC - alternative economic perspectives - environmental benefits
- NL and ON – comprehensive studies, and analysis (ON)
- *Overall limited association with most characteristics of systems thinking or integrated approach*

# Innovation

- Examples in each region BUT ...
- *Barriers to innovation* often cited:
  - knowledge infrastructure
  - resistance to change
  - access to capital
  - HR
  - getting “the right players” together at the table – do-ers + facilitators

# Knowledge and knowledge flows

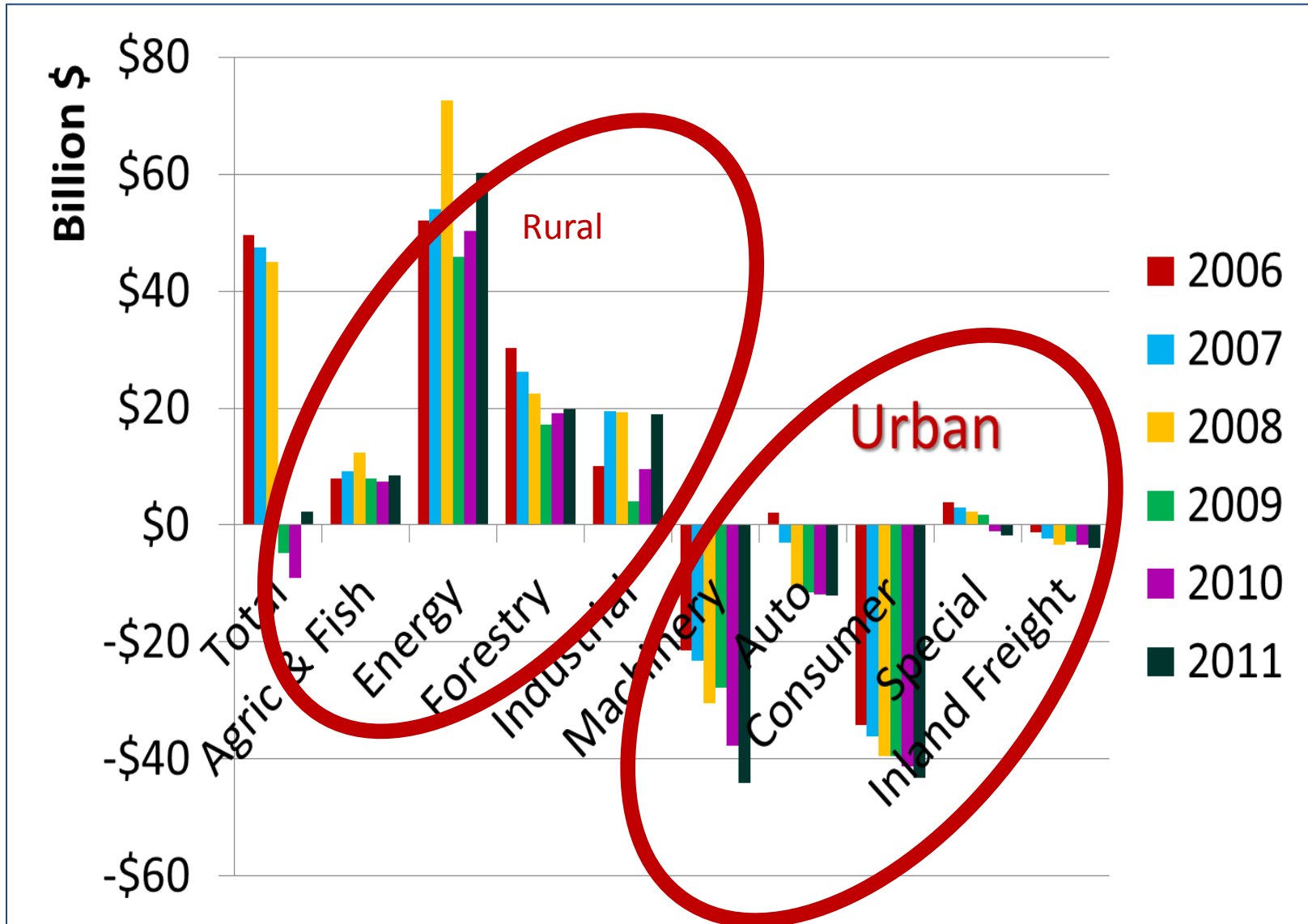


- Reliance on personal and informal NL vs. formal speak BC (less support for claims)
- Reflection: internal, few formal mechanisms
- Some sharing lessons, looking outside for ideas but also secrecy and over-reliance on internal networks

# Governance

- Multiple governance initiatives in each region
- Greater provincial than federal involvement
- Closer to consultation (and downloading)
  - Local actors engaged, increased responsibilities but power remains external in most instances
- Local human and financial resources constraints
- Lack of coherent governance strategy
  - Mostly reactive or project focused

# Rural-Urban Interdependencies: Canadian Balance of Trade 2006-2011

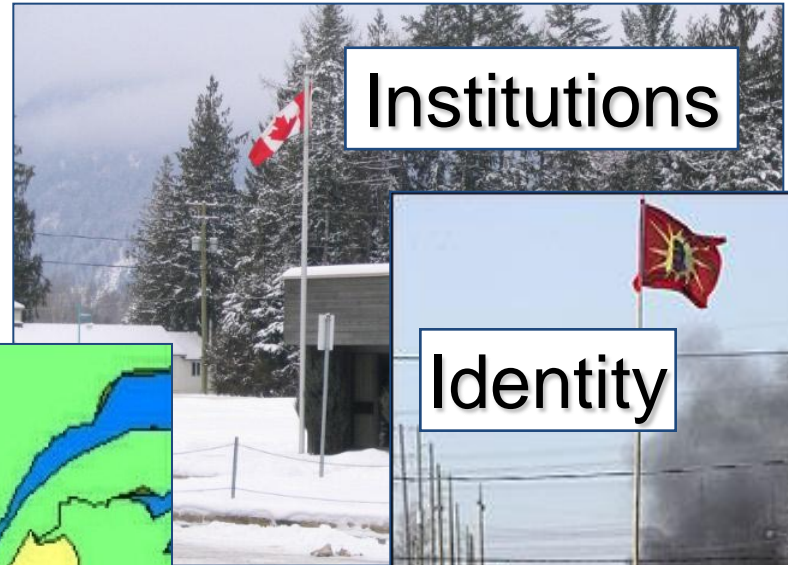


# Rural - Urban Interdependencies

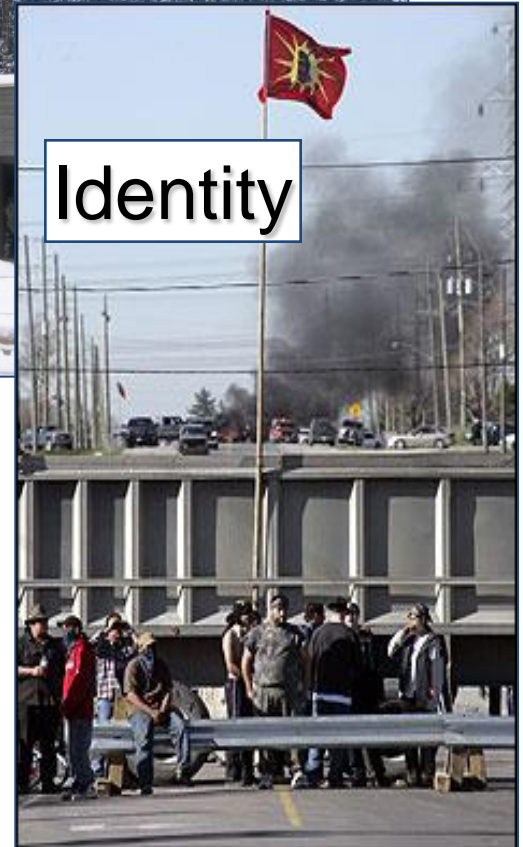
Trade and exchange



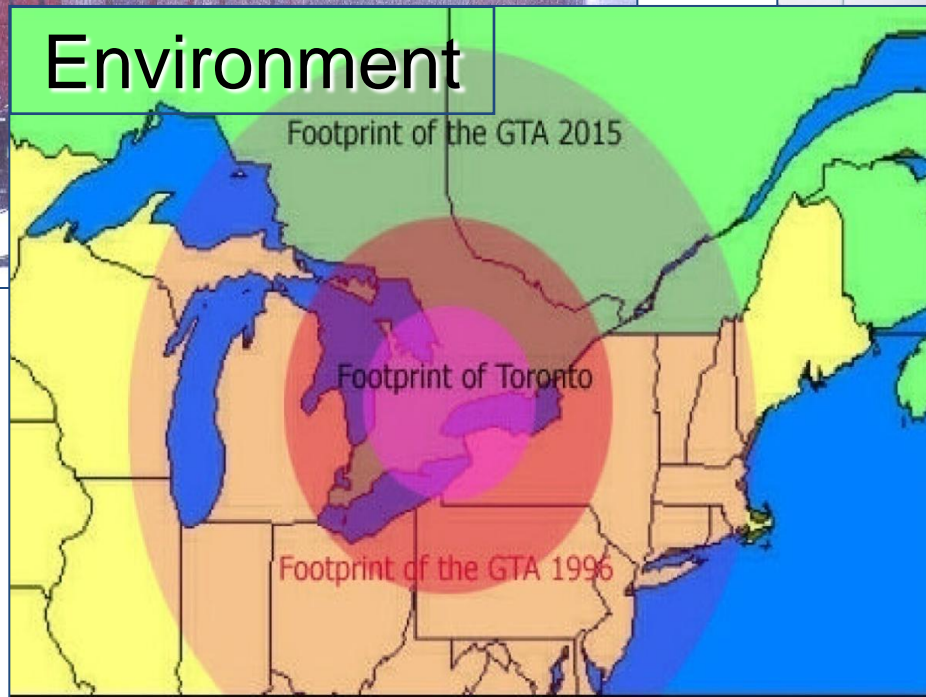
Institutions



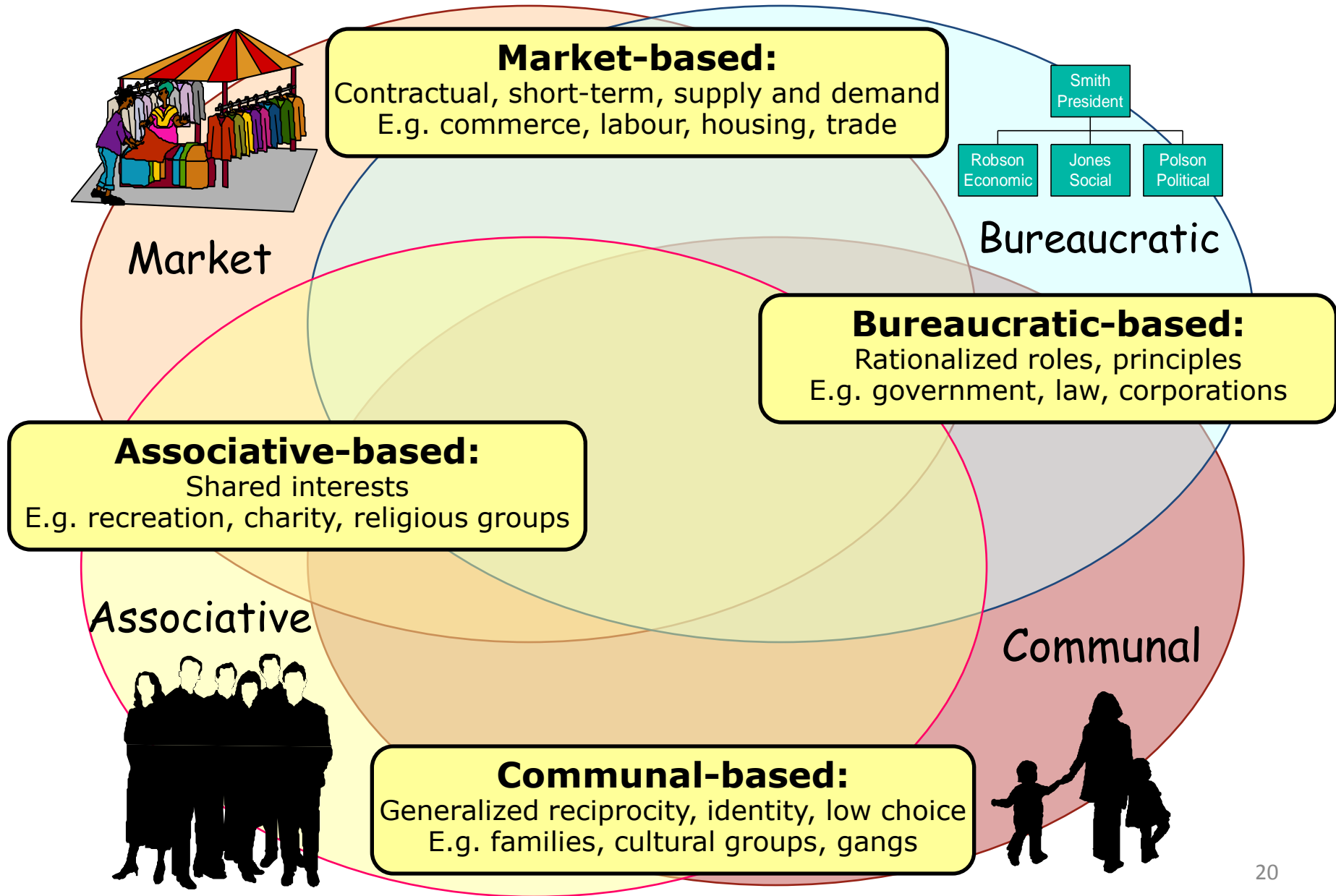
Identity



Environment



# 4 Normative Systems



# Rural-Urban Relationships

- Interdependence vs. core-periphery ?
- BC:
  - More formal, bureaucratic and market-based relationships
- NL:
  - More informal, associative relationships overall, but extensive market and bureaucratic-based rural-urban relationships

# Next Steps

- Dominant topics within each theme
- Data gaps, inconsistencies, cross-checking
- Results by development arena
- Trends/timelines
- Similarities and differences across regions - connection to regional and policy contexts
- Revisiting characteristics/indicators
- Linkages across themes
- Overall findings – and continued sharing, dialogue

# So what does it all mean?

- Place matters and, increasingly, so do regions
- BUT - rhetoric vs. reality of new regionalism
  - Not relevant in Canadian context?
  - Distinct brand(s) of Canadian new regionalism?
  - Lessons we have not yet fully taken advantage of?
  - Need to adapt for rural and Canadian regions?

# So what does it all mean?

- Lots of work to do!
- Areas of opportunity:
  - Attention to place-based assets and opportunities
  - “Network weaving” for innovation
  - Deliberate approaches to (investment in) scanning, learning and support for these activities
  - Starting with horizontal collaboration in governance and creating more integrated forms of development
  - Focus on rural-urban interdependencies vs. competition





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 of new regionalism 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.wordpress.com>

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