

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



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

A Primer on Collaborative Multi-Level Governance

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Introduction

Multi-level and collaborative governance are multifaceted concepts grounded in several academic disciplines, government orientations, and community-level experiences. This diverse foundation provides a rich and complex canvass for constructing and operationalizing ‘governance’. The fluid and organic definition of governance contributes to the diversified origins of the field of study. The theoretical ‘roots’ of governance studies can be linked to institutional economics, international relations, organizational studies, development studies, political science, public administration (Stoker, 1998).

Governance, whether in rural or urban areas, emerged principally from the criticism of large central governments’ inability to accommodate the preferences of diverse communities or regions (Hooghe & Marks, 2002; Newman *et al.*, 2004; Rosenau, 1997). The multiplicity of opinions represented throughout rural communities in large jurisdictions, such as a province or country, has proven difficult for central governments to address. At the local and regional level, residents, community-serving organizations, and the private sector have sought new forums of decision-making. Woods (2005) describes governance as emerging from periods of paternalist and statist control.

Governance has been used to describe a wide range of processes and activities. Clarity on what is meant by governance is often missing, confusion subsequently often present. Jessop (1995) describes the arrangement of academic governance literature as being eclectic and disjointed. At the center of this ‘disjointed’ effort is the lack of a clear definition of the central concept of governance. The outcome has been ambiguity regarding the definition, practice, and activities of governance. The eclectic academic approach has been compounded by the multiple uses of governance by government and the popular media. Rhodes (1996) provides a frequently quoted description: “governance signifies a change in the meaning of government, referring to a new process of governing; or a changed condition of ordered rule; or the new method by which society is governed” (p. 652-3).

Two further key characteristics of governance are the blurring of boundaries and internally imposed structure(s). Consistently within the literature on governance is the recognition that the boundary between the public and private sectors is blurred (Stoker, 1998). Arrangements of collaboration, partnership, or networking between the public and private sector serve to re-define previously static definition of roles. A second clear characteristic is the acknowledgment that the structure(s) of governance are internally created and sustained by stakeholders (Kooiman & Van Vliet, 1993; Stoker, 1998). Government, regardless of level, can not externally impose a structure or system of structures to generate new governance arrangements. Further, governance structures do not rest on recourse to the authority of government; rather, governance structures are accountable to stakeholders engaged in the process (Stoker, 1998).

Governance Propositions and Distinguishing Characteristics

Stoker (1998) proposed five propositions of governance, which have been utilized throughout much of the governance literature:

1. governance refers to a set of institutions and actors that are drawn from but also beyond government.
2. governance identifies the blurring of boundaries and responsibilities for tackling social and economic issues.
3. governance identifies the power dependence involved in the relations between institutions involved in collective action.
4. governance is about autonomous self-governing networks of actors.
5. governance recognizes the capacity to get things done which does not rest on the power of government to command or use its authority. It sees government as able to use new tools and techniques to steer and guide.

Further to Stoker's propositions Woods and Goodwin (2003) identified five changes to distinguish the transition from government to governance, particularly within rural contexts. First, there is a reduction of central government activities through processes and activities such as deregulation and privatization of crown corporations. Second, the central government transfers responsibilities to local citizens and community-serving organizations. Third, central governments seek avenues to harmonize rural policy delivery through partnerships and/or amalgamation of government departments and agencies. Fourth, there are amendments to local government to increase power, responsibilities, and finances. And finally, local rural institutions are re-organized to address regional issues. Woods (2005) notes "collectively, these changes have been argued to represent a transition from a system of 'rural government' to one of 'rural governance'" (p. 163).

Definitions of Multi-Level and Collaborative Governance

Although academia, government, and non-governmental agencies have proposed definitions of governance, consensus does not exist on a single accepted definition. Abdellatif (2003) notes, "governance as a theoretical construct is not only in an embryonic state, but its formulation also differs among researchers depending on their ideological convictions" (p. 3). An assortment of governance definitions from academia are listed below:

"New styles of governing that operate not only through the apparatuses of the sovereign state but also through a range of interconnecting institutions, agencies, partnerships, and initiatives in which the boundaries between the public, private, and voluntary sectors become blurred. The actors and organizations engaged in governance exhibit differing

degrees of stability and longevity, take a variety of forms and operate at a range of scales above, below, and coincident with that of the nation-state.” (Woods, 2005, p. 164)

“The processes and institutions, both formal and informal, that guide and restrain the collective activities of a group” (Keohane & Nye, 2000, p. 12)

“Governance is the interactions among institutions, processes, and traditions that determine how power is exercised, how decisions are taken on issues of public and often private concern, and how citizens or other stakeholders have their say” (Abrams et al., 2003, p. 11)

“The process whereby an organization or society steers itself” (Rosell, 1992, p. 23)

"governance reflects a sharing of power and broadening of the policy sphere to include networks of government, private sector, and civil society actors" (Vodden, 2009).

Definitions of governance from international organizations and non-governmental agencies include:

“Governance is about power, relationships, and accountability: who has influence, who decides, and how decision-makers are held accountable” (Institute on Governance, 2002, p. 3)

“The process of governing by public policy networks that include both public and private sector actors” (D’Aoust, 2000)

“The use of political authority and exercise of control in a society in relation to the management of its resources for social and economic development” (OECD, 1993)

Throughout all definitions of governance, regardless of proponent, four commonalities can be found. First, governance is a process. The process may be either formal or informal. Formal processes may involve legal agreements among partners whereby informal processes may involve a commitment by stakeholders to work together. Second, partnerships are essential in governance. The number and types of partnerships are dictated by the purpose of the governance arrangement; however, partners should include local residents, community/regional-serving organizations, the public sector, and the private sector. Third, governance requires collective decision-making by stakeholders. It is suggested the process of decision-making should strive for consensus, realizing however, it may not always be attainable. Finally, governance represents a new method of engagement distinct from government. The process is characterized by a local/regional level emphasis with the engagement of stakeholders in an autonomous and legitimate organization and/or process.

Building on the general understandings of governance, two prominent forms of governance are reviewed: collaborative and multi-level. Each governance model is discussed from the perspective of key characteristics. A multitude of additional forms of governance are documented in the literature, including good governance (Leftwich, 1994; Weiss, 2000), partnerships (Ansell, 2000; Bache, 2000), policy networks (Bogason & Toonen, 1998; Lowndes & Skelcher, 1998), and contemporary governance (Magnette, 2003). Each model of governance proposes a slightly different emphasis, which makes the models more or less appropriate depending on the local context.

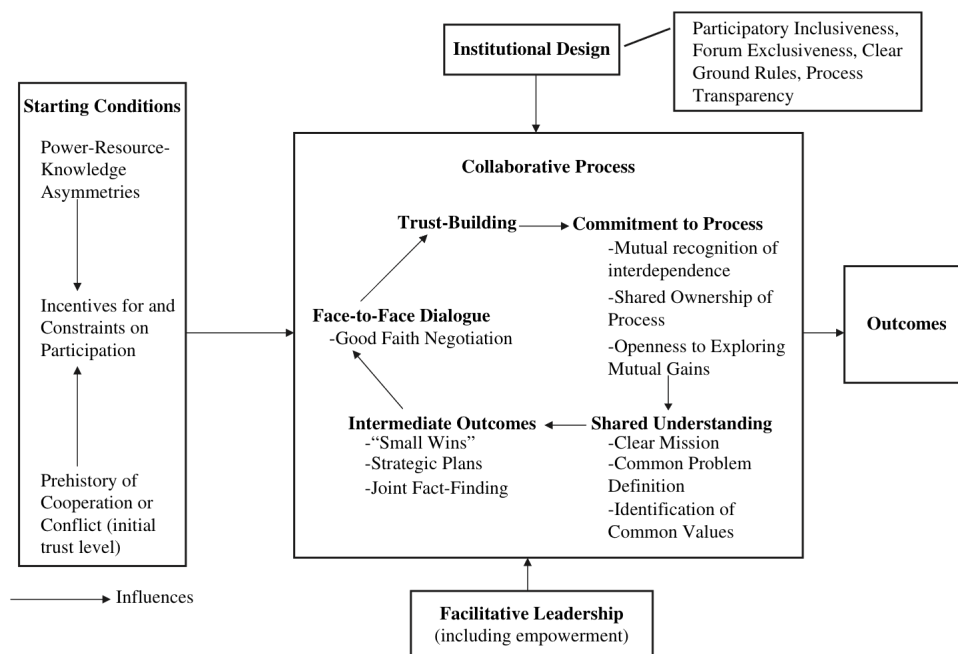
Collaborative Governance

In 2007, Ansell and Gash proposed a collaborative governance theoretical framework, emerging as a response to failures of implementation of policies and programs at the community level (Fung & Wright, 2001). Ansell and Gash (2007) define collaborative governance as an “arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage programs or assets” (p. 2). Ansell and Gash (2007) highlight six important criteria for collaborative governance:

- the collaborative governance forum is initiated by public agencies or institutions,
- participants in the governance forum include non-government actors,
- participants engage directly in the decision making process, not just consulted,
- the governance forum is formally organized and meets collectively,
- the governance forum aims to make decisions by consensus, and
- the focus of collaboration is on public policy or public management.

According to Ansell and Gash (2007), governance processes need to include all six criteria to be categorized as collaborative governance. This criteria list is not a recipe for success, but rather a list of core components. The collaborative governance model (see Figure 1) outlines the conditions for the emergence of new governance, requirements to facilitate the process, and description of the collaborative process.

Figure 1: Model of Collaborative Governance



Source: Ansell & Gash, 2007, p. 8

Multi-Level Governance

Multi-level governance is the dispersion of governance across multiple jurisdictions, such that decision-making is shared among multiple actors at different levels (Hooghe & Marks, 2002; Marks et al., 1996). Bache & Flinders (2004) note a key feature of multi-level governance is the "dispersion of central government authority both vertically to actors located at other territorial levels, and horizontally, to non state-actors" (p. 4). This notion of authority as being polycentric is critical (Conzelmann, 1998, Benz & Eberlein, 1999). Furthermore, negotiation and non-hierarchical exchanges between levels of government and horizontal relationships are seen to be important features (Peters & Pierre, 2004).

Hooghe and Marks (2002) proposed two distinct types of multi-level governance: Type I and Type II. The foundation for Type I multi-level governance is federalism whereby power sharing is conducted on few levels. Type I multi-level governance consists of a central government and a system of non-intersecting sub-government levels. Governance levels do not overlap and can be viewed as nested to ensure only there is only one relevant jurisdiction at any scale. The purpose of Type I multi-level governance is quite general, with authorities across a number of areas.

The foundation for Type II multi-level governance is a series of jurisdictions operating at multiple territorial scales that are task-specific, such that residents are served by a variety of public agencies rather than the government. In Type II multi-level governance jurisdictions are organically structured to meet the changing needs of community residents. As such, the boundaries and membership within the jurisdictions can fluctuate from year to year. It is important to note the rules governing the creation and operation of Type II jurisdictions vary widely.

Research on multi-level governance has largely been focused in Europe, dominantly around the European Commission and European Union. The applicability of multi-level governance outside of the supra-national entity of the European Union is a challenge. In addition, multi-level governance has been depicted as a stronger descriptive tool, as opposed an explanatory tool (Conzelmann, 2008).

Based on the above, the definition of collaborative multi-level governance this research initiative adopts governance refers to a process and institutions, distinct from government, built on the foundations of collaboration and multi-level partnerships among community-based organizations, statutory agencies, and the private sector engaged. Governance empowers the regions through sharing of power and collective decision-making.

Challenges to Collaborative Multi-Level Governance

Emergent collaborative governance processes encounter a number of challenges. Booher (2004) articulates four key challenges for emerging governance.

Pluralism

Pluralism, the idea the public is neither informed enough nor inclined to be active in public policy, serves as a deterrent to new governance processes. Pluralism leads the public to assume new governance processes lack authority and legitimacy because it operates outside the traditional realm of accountability that people are familiar with.

Activism

The role of partnership in collaborative governance may initially appear to be at odds with activism, or the need to confront injustices with activism. Individuals and stakeholders may feel collaborative governance sets unacceptable constraints on the terms of engagement, hence tying the hands of activists.

Institutional Challenges

Collaborative governance often diverges from the current political and bureaucratic styles involving adversarial and hierarchical relationships. Existing adversarial relationships can be difficult to change and serve to challenge the ability of collaborative governance to bring all stakeholders together.

Transaction Challenges

A prerequisite of collaborative governance, much like any new style of governing or partnership building, is time, financial resources, and support. Stakeholders need to recognize these requirements and be prepared to make the necessary investments while acknowledging potential opportunities and risks.

Summary

The literature of new regionalism is nascent, similar to the emerging literature of governance (Douglas, 1998). New regionalism articulates the resurgence of regional development due to the inability of neo-liberalism, Keynesianism, and post-Fordism to generate responses to spatial inequalities. Governance is a critical component of new regionalism, such that Wallis (2002) declared, “new regionalism is all about governance” (p. 2). The region, as indicated by Markey et al. (2008) and Polèse (1999), is a manageable scale for designing regional development policies and programs. New regionalism represents a movement by the nation states to shift towards pluralistic governance to better respond and coordinate policies and programs at the regional level (Bellamy et al., 2003; Carley, 2006; OECD, 2004; Pike, Rodríguez-Pose, & Tomaney, 2006). The literature of new regionalism, spanning both North American and Western European researchers, advocates partnerships and strategic alliances as critical for service and program delivery in the global economy (McDonald et al., 2008; Morgan, 2004; Pike et al., 2006). Unlike previous approaches to regional development, new regionalism utilizes partnerships and networks to exchange information (McDonald et al., 2008). The development of partnerships, networks, and coalitions facilitates a place based alliance of key economic, social, and political actors (Pike, Rodríguez-Pose, & Tomaney 2006; Keating, 2000). These partnerships, networks, and coalitions can tackle complex challenges and opportunities provided their composition consists of a plurality of public and private actors (Rhodes, 2000).

The dynamics of the shifting patterns of governing in rural areas is of vast interest and importance to rural communities, government, and academia. In a similar manner to how Douglas (1998) describes the region as a contested concept, so too are the concepts of governance and new regionalism. Both emerging concepts provide opportunities to enhance the collective understanding of shifts in governing. This proposed research will employ the

collaborative governance framework to empirically measure governance in two rural areas. The results of the research will advance both nascent concepts.

Heeding to Stoker's call for the use of frameworks to describe changes in governance, this research will investigate collaborative multi-level governance initiatives across Canada. The research focuses on measuring the blurring of responsibilities, understanding how accountability emerges.

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The *Canadian Regional Development: A Critical Review of Theory, Practice and Potentials* project is a multi-year research initiative funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The project is investigating how Canadian regional development has evolved over the past two decades and the degree to which Canadian regional development systems have incorporated New Regionalism into their policy and practice.

The project is conducting an empirical assessment of Canadian regional development using a multi-level network, mixed methods case study approach in four provinces: British Columbia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario, and Québec. The assessment of regional development across the case studies is based on the five key themes of New Regionalism: i) collaborative, multi-level governance; ii) integrated versus sectoral and single objective approaches; iii) fostering knowledge flow, learning and innovation; iv) place-based development; and v) rural-urban interaction and interdependence.

The project is lead by Kelly Vodden of the Department of Geography at Memorial University. The research team includes David Douglas (School of Environment Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph), Sean Markey (Geography, Simon Fraser University), and Bill Reimer (Sociology and Anthropology, Concordia University). In addition, graduate students at all four universities are engaged on the project.

Further information on the project can be obtained either at <http://cdnregdev.wordpress.com>. The project has been financially supported in part by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Leslie Harris Centre for Regional Policy and Development.



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