

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



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

# “Integrated” in Regional Development Discourse, Policy, and Practice

A Sampling of Perspectives

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“ ... regional planning strives to achieve a better integration of spatially organized economies on a basis of *interdependence (and reciprocity)* rather than *dependence (and exploitation)*.”

Friedmann (1975; 803).

The word, idea or concept of “integrated” in regional development has a very long pedigree (e.g. Mumford, 1938; Krueger et al, 1963; Friedmann, 1975, 1987). Its revealed stature, however, stretches from the inspirational and lofty ideal of normative aspiration, the well intentioned requisites of professional practice, a central concept in much theory, and the pragmatics of operational or technical specifications, on to what is now a jaded prefix in political rhetoric, and to an unconscious piece of jargon, long devoid of much meaning or intent.

Here we will sample from across this spectrum to garner a more informed and critical appreciation of what this term might mean in Canadian regional development contexts.

## **The Multidisciplinary and Interdisciplinary Perspective**

In much of the regional development literature, as well as the local development literature “integrated” has been associated, either implicitly or explicitly with either a multidisciplinary or an interdisciplinary perspective. We will not get into the extended academic discourse associated with these two concepts here. Thus, for example, perspectives from Economics would be combined in whatever manner with perspectives from the disciplines of (say) Sociology, or Political Science. This perspective has attained something of a normative status in development planning and management, as recognition of both the shortcomings of previous perspectives, dominantly those from Economics, and the real world complexity of regional and other development contexts. We are expected to frame and conduct our analyses in this manner.

Sometimes this is formalized in a particular methodology or technique as in Integrated Assessment or IA (Rotmans and Dowlatabadi, 1998). It is suggested that much of this has been informed by an egalitarian communicative rationality, stemming at least in part from Habermas and associates in critical theory (Tansey, 2005). Related to this a central concern of IA has been to integrate the often arcane and inaccessible language and concepts in the physical and biophysical sciences with the social sciences, notably through public participatory processes.

## **The ‘Other than Economic’ Perspective**

Another overlapping perspective (with the *interdisciplinary* perspective) promotes an “integrated” perspective in regional development and planning as a purposeful tempering of the hegemony associated with the long-established economic perspective (e.g. Friedmann and

Alonso, 1976). This *other than economic* meaning of an “integrated” approach sometimes serves to augment or perhaps moderate what is seen as the dominant economic perspectives at hand, or preempt their anticipated dominance by assertively bringing anthropological, etymological, ideological and other perspectives. It is some oppositional in tone and intent. Overlapping this is the “alternative Economics” perspective (e.g. Schumacher, 1973, Ekins, 1986; Max-Neef and Ekins, 1992; Ross & Usher, 1986) which attempts to take a more holistic view of contexts and episodes, by reforming the conventionally applied Economics theory and concepts.

### **The Levels of Government Perspective**

Another use of the term “integrated” relates to the expressed need to address development issues in the context of multiple levels of government. Even before the formal articulation of the concept of globalization (e.g. Dicken, 2003; Amin and Thrift, 2000; McMichael, 2004), regional development and regional planning have long been aware of the issues associated with layered political jurisdictions (e.g. Perks and Robinson, 1979). The attachment if not the integration of policy fields and their associated programmes and projects has been the subject of a significant body of literature and practice here.

### ***The Participation Perspective***

Another perspective on the notion of “integrated” planning and management relates to the question of participation. This has been a central concern in planning, whether in urban, neighbourhood or regional contexts (e.g. Arnstein, 1969, Thompson, 1976; Douglas, 1988). Ethical and other issues around inclusion, access, recognizing the plurality of communities, achieving what has been termed “voice”, addressing gender and other issues, have all engendered a demand for more integrating processes in planning, whether it is regulatory planning (Caldwell, 2010) or development planning.

### ***The Complexity Perspective***

Not unrelated to the concept of participation is the felt need to secure “integrated” perspectives, but not so much because of moral, ethical and social justice concerns, but to secure a better technical or methodologically sound appreciation of the real world complexity of the context in question. So the desire has been to garner and sometimes measure the admixture of local or regional perspectives in terms of their operating worldviews, the culturally sourced meanings in the place, the ideological lenses through which various actors see the situation, and other facets of the context or episode.

### ***The Efficiency and Effectiveness Perspective***

Another edge to this notion of concept of “integrated” emanates from the drive to secure desired or required efficiencies, or degrees of demonstrated effectiveness. Much of this is associated with what is now a diverse literature in evaluation. Not surprisingly a significant proportion of this may be sourced in public administration and associated concepts of the New Public Management (NPM) from, amongst others, Osborne and Gaebler (1992). Likewise it is associated with a desire to determine and measure *ex ante* the efficacy of proposed regional

and other development programmes and projects. In the managerial turn which we have witnessed over the last two decades one associates this perspective on “integrated” with the drive to “streamline” and “right size” government and all the trappings of governing.

### ***The Holistic Human Perspective***

Yet another perspective on the concept of “integrated” might be called a holistic human perspective. While overlapping with a number of other perspectives this has attempted to cover all the human dimensions of the development enterprise, from basic physiological needs to self-actualization. This perspective has informed the so-called Basic Needs approach to development in the 1970s (e.g. Hettne, 1995), as it has influenced the Sustainable Livelihoods approach to livelihood strategies in developing contexts (e.g. Scoones; DFID, 2007). Its Maslovian footings are self-evident, while not always explicitly articulated as such. It is associated with concepts of modernity and modernization, with the concomitant notions of a changed human being, equipped with new attitudes (e.g. individualism, market rationality) and released from the dominance of basic physiological and personal security imperatives.

### ***The Comprehensive Perspective***

This is a perspective long grounded in the tradition of urban and regional planning (e.g. Banfield, 1959; Faludi, 1984; Breheny and Hooper, 1985; Friedmann, 1987; Almendinger, 2002). The Weberian rationality underpinning the emergence what became formal planning procedures demanded that the survey, analysis, plan design, and planning itself secure a comprehensive understanding of the development context, and the issues at hand. Anything less would risk missing important dimensions of the situation, and possibly significant interrelationships among the myriad of factors operating in the milieu. It was argued that a set of plan alternatives could not be formulated without a thoroughgoing understanding of all facets of the situation. So the final plan, the recommended course of action logically emerging from the evaluation of the alternatives, and one that best responded to the ‘public interest’, could and should emanate from a rational comprehensive process. This perspective has been subject to trenchant critique and challenge, especially since the 1980s (e.g. Forester, 1989, Friedmann, 1987). In the Canadian context Mitchell and others have attempted to distinguish between an integrated approach to watershed and natural resources planning, and what he regarded as the impracticalities of a conventional comprehensive approach (Mitchell, 2008).

### ***The Politico-Territorial Perspective***

Since time immemorial political leaders of fiefdoms, tribal lands, nation states and empires have been exercised with the need to minimize the centrifugal forces which dogged their territories and threatened dissension and disintegration, and maximize the cohesive or centripetal forces which bound allegiances and secured some stability. This spatial tension remains a challenge in regional design today, and the planning and implementation of development policies (Douglas, 2006). Here we refer to this dimension of integration as the politico-territorial perspective. Many nation states have created a pan-territorial vision or code of integration, such as Indonesia’s Pansascila. The European Union (EU) has moved since its genesis in the Treaty of Rome (1987) increasingly toward an integrated territorial entity.

Initiatives such as the Schengen Agreement (1985) and several others have sought to facilitate the ease of movement of labour, capital, goods and services across all national borders, while a variety of supplementary treaties (e.g. Maastricht, Nice, Lisbon) have cumulatively fostered the economic, social, administrative and increasingly, the political integration of the 27 member EU.

### ***The Operational Perspective***

In policies addressing regional planning and in the practice itself “integrated” often refers to the operational dimension of this field. It refers to individual development tasks and associated activities and their functional connections to specific projects (e.g. roads, labour force training centres), and the instrumental connections between these projects with over-arching programmes (e.g. rural transportation, child care provision). This perspective often addresses the means-ends architecture of workflow schemas as task/activity input-output relationships expressing these as critical path networks, programme evaluation and review techniques (PERT), Gantt charts, precedence diagramming and other management frameworks. The technically rational planning process is operationally integrated through these interrelationships and management techniques (e.g. Douglas, 1994).

### ***The Growth/Equity Perspective***

Again, overlapping with some other perspectives there is a broader perspective within which regional development and planning is traditionally couched. It is said to be “integrated” as it responds to the now classic (but contested) dichotomy involving on the one hand national economic efficiency and growth objectives, and on the other regional or spatial objectives addressing outcomes relating to equity, welfare and (re)distribution. We might refer to this perspective on the need for some integration as the growth/equity challenge. It is alive and well in current political and other debates across Canada, even if it is not always articulated as a challenging compromise, or a public cost of entertaining a regional or spatial dimension to societal development (e.g. Savoie, 1986; Courchene, 1986).

### ***The Systems Theoretic Perspective***

The emergence of systems theoretic approaches to development planning, the critique of our post-Enlightenment scientism and attendant reductionism, and the chequered record of policy and practice have all combined to re-focus our attention on the realities of complexity, multi-functionality, diversity, randomness and uncertainty that characterize the world we live in, and attempt to plan (e.g. von Bertalanffy, 1968). “Integrated” approaches have variously attempted to address these systems realities and acknowledge that we do not and cannot fully “know” what is there and how it functions, yet alone predict its trajectory and “manage” it! (e.g. Gunderson and Hollings, 2002). Chaos theory has achieved some currency here. “Integrated” as taking a systems theoretic perspective, even if not always formally articulated as such, is another view on the various meanings of this term in regional planning.

### ***The Trans-Border Territorial Perspective***

With the globalization of economic systems and increased interest in barrier-free markets, regions straddling both sides of two or more national political borders have received increased attention. Not unlike historical arrangements between trading cities such as the Hanseatic League (13th-17th centuries) in Northern Europe, there is increased interest in minimizing the disruptive effects of borders. Research, policies and projects have addressed the need to maximize the integration of labour markets, the regional markets for goods and services, the connecting infrastructures (e.g. rail, roads), the regulatory and administrative systems (e.g. licenses, professional accreditation, taxation), and other elements in what are increasingly seen as functional regions. This perspective on the concept of integration we refer to as the trans-border territorial perspective. Some arrangements are narrowly focused such as those between Canadian and American cross-border jurisdictions (e.g. Windsor-Detroit). Others, such as those now under the active promotion of successive INTERREG policies of the EU are much more multidimensional (OECD, 2010). These cover everything from rapid transit systems, common external investment recruitment policies, industrial clustering initiatives, maximizing the potentials of learning regions and many other facets of the integrating region. Examples include the Öresund (Denmark and Sweden), the Vienna-Bratislava region (Austria and Slovakia) and Frankfurt-Slubice (Germany and Poland). Under the powerful umbrella Cohesion Policy of the EU these initiatives are strongly advocated and usually involve complex trans-border partnership organizations. Larger trade-based initiatives with limited degrees of integrative objectives include the Emerald Triangle (Laos, Cambodia and Thailand).

### **Summary**

This resource note set out to initiate a critical exploration of the concept of integrated, especially as it might apply to regional development planning. It was acknowledged that its use, and perhaps abuse, stretches across a very considerable spectrum. A quick scan of texts on development, planning, community development, regional analysis and related fields produces significant contrasts. In many substantial texts the term is not to be found in the index. In many it receives cursory attention. In others it is apparently assumed to be understood; everyone knows what is meant by “integrated area development”, or an “integrated” approach to the problem. So its meaning cannot be taken to be universally understood, or accepted. Not surprisingly its application in practice is not likely to be any less diverse, and perhaps as a consequence it will be highly unpredictable.

What it does suggest is that the problems, opportunities and challenges in the regional context can be seen through a variety of lenses, or types of ‘integratedness’, that allows us to understand them as more complex, more interrelated and more multidimensional than we might have perceived them, at first glance. As a result of this it suggests that we interrogate regional development policy and the practice of regional planning in a somewhat more demanding manner to establish its sensitivity and responsiveness to the varying dimensions of complexity which this concept suggests.

The brief review here also suggests that there is considerable overlap in several of the ways this concept might be interpreted, though each dimension (e.g. the levels of government perspective) might be argued as pivotal, depending upon the context.



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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 ideas, policies and practices associated with “New Regionalism” into their policy and practice.

The project is conducting an empirical assessment of Canadian regional development using a multi-level, 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.

Kelly Vodden (Environmental Policy Institute, Grenfell Campus and Department of Geography, Memorial University) is leading the project, together with co-investigators 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 at <http://cdnregdev.ruralresilience.ca>. The project has been financially supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Leslie Harris Centre for Regional Policy and Development.



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