

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



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

Rural Development through Regionalism?

Kelly Vodden, PhD, Grenfell Campus Memorial University and Research Team



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- To assess the application and relevance of new regionalism in the Canadian context;
- To seek Canadian innovations in regional development; and
- To understand how these are evolving and if and how they are shared across space in networks of regional development policy and practice.



Sharing Knowledge and Building Capacity for Regional Development in Canada



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

- SSHRC Connections Grant 2016-17
- Update and share results
- National and regional workshops
- Webinars and online sessions
- Web and social media resources/info. sharing
- Edited volume

The Team

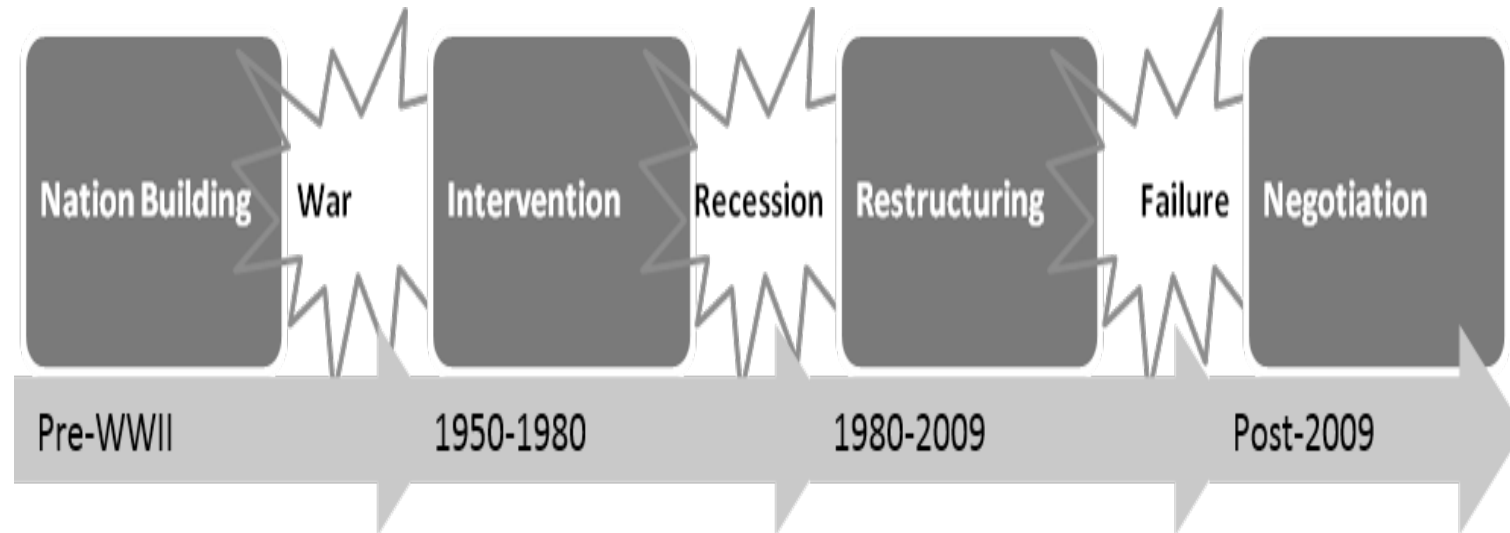
Research Team

Kelly Vodden (MUN; PI – NL lead)
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Heather Hall, U. Waterloo
Andreas Klinke – EPI, MUN
Al Lauzon – CRRF
Sean Markey – SFU
Kathleen Parewick – Municipalities NL
Bill Reimer – RDI, Brandon U./RPLC

Regional Policy History



Nation building: Immigration, infrastructure

Intervention: economic and social initiatives, infrastructure expansion, welfare state policies

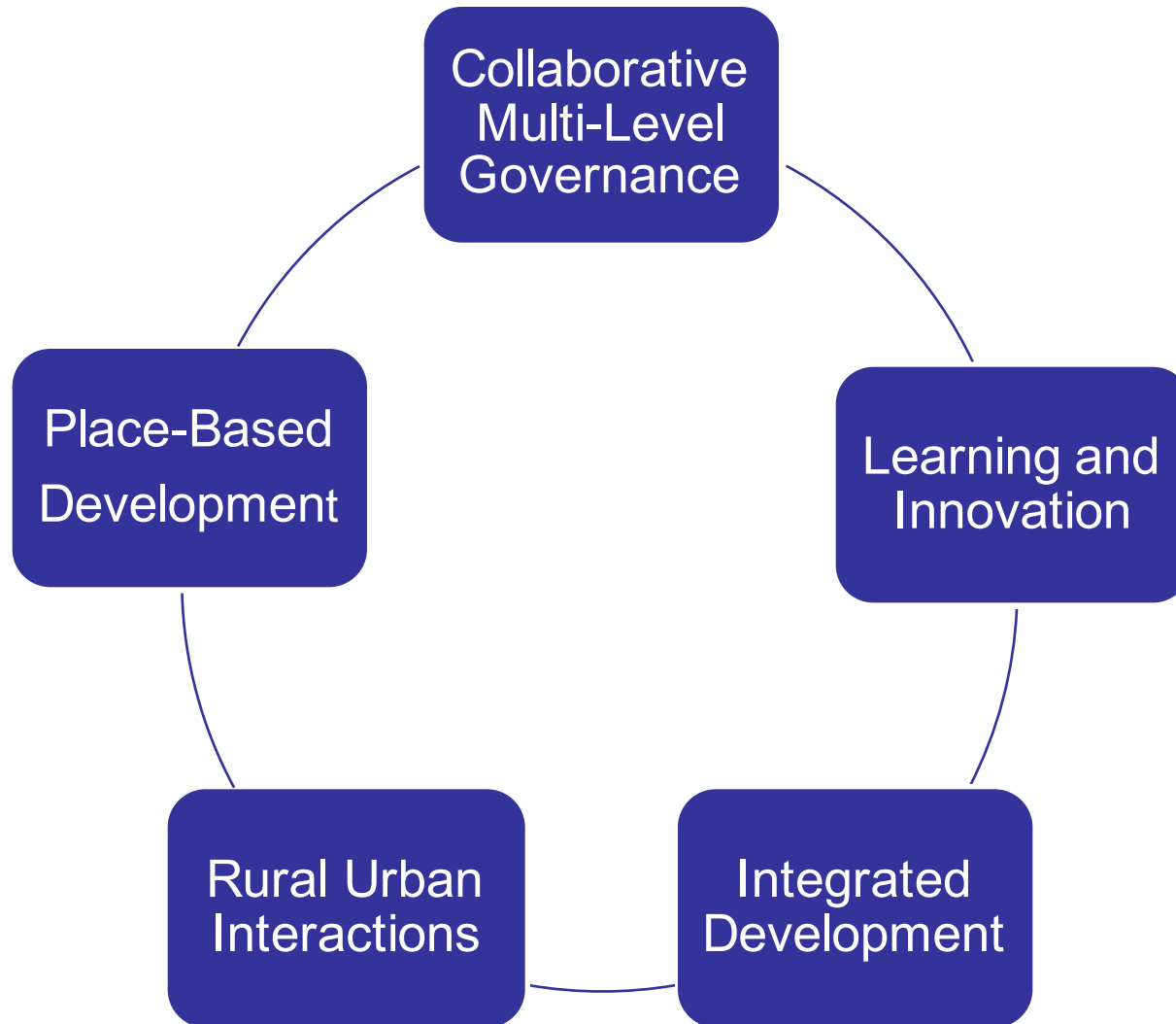
Restructuring: service reduction, downloading, capacity building (RD orgs)

Negotiation: **on your own** with bilateral arrangements (tenuous)

- Heavily conditioned by characteristics of each province and region

Markey et al. (submitted)

Key Elements of New Regionalism



Research Methodology

Mixed methods, interdisciplinary, case study-based

- 4 + 1 case study regions
- 5 core themes and indicators
- Document/literature review; 190 semi-structured interviews (fall 2011-spring 2014); (participant) observation
- Coding and pattern searching
- Multiple analytical “passes” with team dialogue and theme + case study region team cross-checking



'New Regionalism' in Rural Canada



Findings – **General**

- Some variations across and within regions and key themes, but **in general, there is a significant gap between policy and practice and the theory and rhetoric** of new regionalism and new regionalist ideas
- Points to challenges in policy and practice but also with regional development theory in the Canadian context

But ...

- Inspiring examples and local leadership

Case studies:

[Project Resources – Vignettes](#)

http://cdnregdev.ruralresilience.ca/?page_id=2

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Findings – Learning & Innovation

- Rural: informal processes, ‘quiet’ pragmatic innovation
- Formal organizations and supports concentrated in major urban settings, technology focused
- Minimum cross-sector or inter-regional/inter-provincial transfer of knowledge or deliberate learning and reflection

- ***Stay tuned for more!***

Reimer & Brett (2013); Hall et al. (2013, 2016); White et al. (2014); Carter & Vodden (submitted)

Inspiring Example: Selkirk College

Rural Development Institute & Applied Research and Innovation Centre

Theme: Learning & Innovation

NOW:

Learning by Doing

Student learning is the glue that binds!



Use a collaborative learning approach



Policies, procedures and integration of administrative functions provides a critical backbone

"DEVELOPING AND NURTURING PARTNERSHIPS WITH SMES TAKES TIME."

Ian Parfitt, co-ordinator of the Selkirk Geospatial Research Centre (SGRC)

Manage expectations, engage in clear communications, state intentions up front

"WITH THEIR KNOWLEDGE AND RESOURCES, COLLEGES LIKE SELKIRK SHOULD BECOME CENTREPIECES IN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL TOWNS ALL ACROSS CANADA."

Colin Carera, owner and director, Valhalla Technologies

"COLLEGES ARE IN A GOOD POSITION TO SHOW LEADERSHIP IN BRINGING TOGETHER SERVICE PROVIDERS FOR THE BENEFIT OF BUSINESSES AND THE CANADIAN ECONOMY."

Terri MacDonald, Regional Innovation Chair in Rural Economic Development, Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute

Findings – Place-Based Development

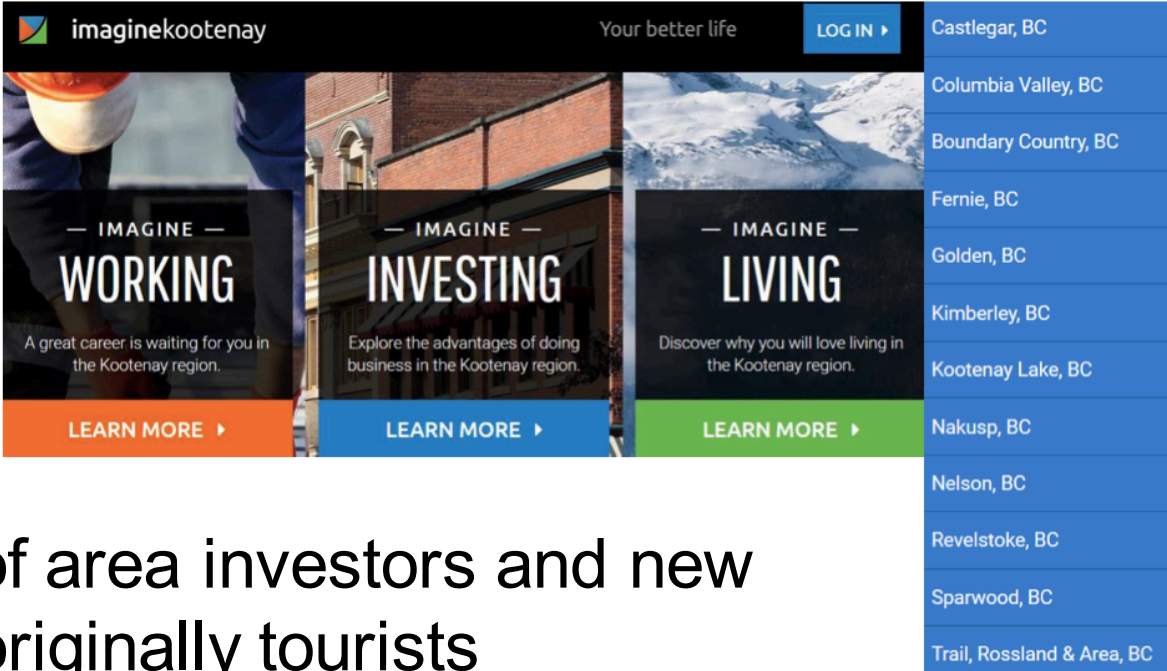
- Strong local sense of place and identity(ies) but generally not associated with official regions
- Issues of compatibility with old and new regionalist ideas of place and place-based development
- Most identify array of assets that afford development opportunities (including identity) but strategic application is limited
- Role for regional development organizations

Markey et al. (2015), Vodden et al. (2015), Breen et al. (2015), Daniels et al. (2015)

Inspiring Example: Invest Kootenay

“Your Better Life”

- 3 Regl Districts+
- Merging economic opportunity with lifestyle



The screenshot displays the Invest Kootenay website interface. At the top, the logo 'imaginekootenay' is on the left, 'Your better life' is in the center, and a 'LOG IN' button is on the right. Below the header, there are three main content blocks, each with a background image and a 'LEARN MORE' button:

- WORKING:** A person wearing a hard hat. Text: '— IMAGINE — WORKING. A great career is waiting for you in the Kootenay region.' Button: 'LEARN MORE ▶' (orange).
- INVESTING:** A brick building. Text: '— IMAGINE — INVESTING. Explore the advantages of doing business in the Kootenay region.' Button: 'LEARN MORE ▶' (blue).
- LIVING:** A snowy mountain landscape. Text: '— IMAGINE — LIVING. Discover why you will love living in the Kootenay region.' Button: 'LEARN MORE ▶' (green).

On the right side, there is a vertical sidebar with a blue background and white text, listing various regions in BC:

- Castlegar, BC
- Columbia Valley, BC
- Boundary Country, BC
- Fernie, BC
- Golden, BC
- Kimberley, BC
- Kootenay Lake, BC
- Nakusp, BC
- Nelson, BC
- Revelstoke, BC
- Sparwood, BC
- Trail, Rossland & Area, BC

- Over 70% of out of area investors and new business people originally tourists
- Lack of consistent, available information

<http://www.investkootenay.com>

Findings – Integrated Development



- Highly integrated development policies and practices rare
- Dissonance appreciation of complexity and interconnected nature of development issues and policies and practices
- Little response in practice to balancing questions of economic growth and social equity or adoption of a holistic perspective

Inspiring Example - Frontenac Arch Biosphere



(FABN, 2011)

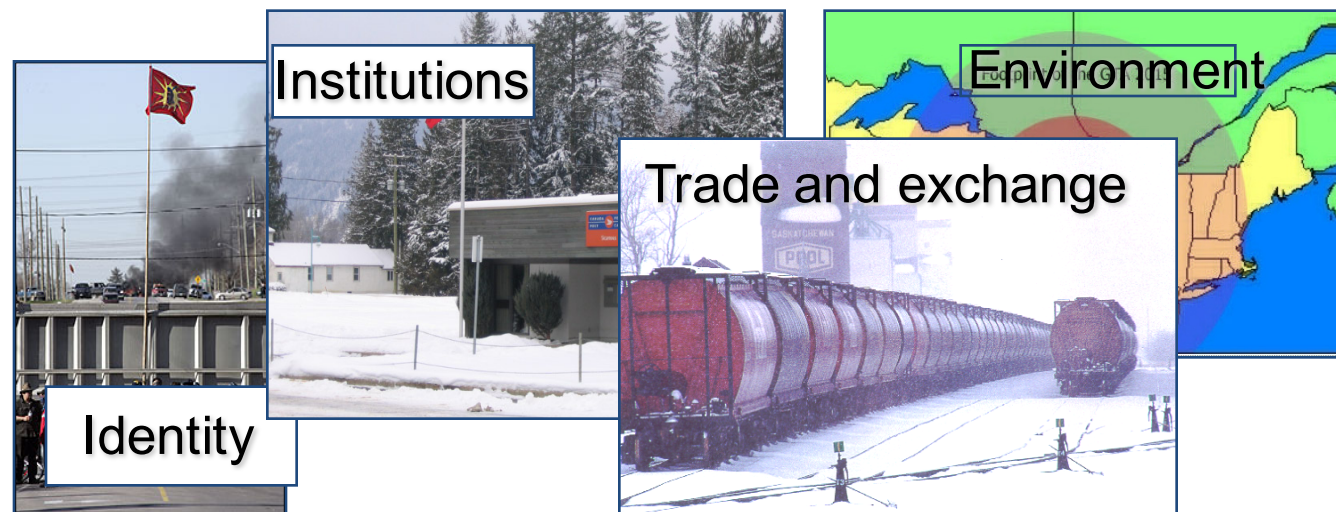
"Biosphere reserves help to bridge the gap between ecology and economy by bringing together organizations and people in our communities in a dialogue on achieving a sustainable way of life"

(Ruttan, 2004, p. 108)

Local flavours; Explore the Arch; Biosphere Trails Council; FAB Arts; Educators Network for sustainable communities; Conservation partnerships; State of the Biosphere Report

Findings – Rural-Urban Relationships

- Weak local-federal institutional relationships
- Trade and exchanges dominant in private sector; institutional interdependencies in public sector
- Little focus on environment and identity based interdependence
- Tensions regarding appropriate policy and programming within rural and urban regions (city regionalism)



Reimer et al.
(in prep)

Findings - Collaborative, Multi-Level Governance

- Regional orgs have promoted a variety of multi-sector governance arrangements (often senior gov't-facilitated)
- Only occasionally policy or program co-construction
- Often reliant on sometimes single purpose, fragile organizations that lack significant capacity, barriers
- In some regions considerable inter-local government collaboration – **a foundation for regional governance?**

Vodden and Hall (2013), Gibson (2014), Vodden (2015), Vodden et al. (2014, 2016), Hall et al. (2016), Gibson et al. (in prep)

Inspiring Example – Eastern Ontario Wardens Caucus

- Quarterly meetings of County CAOs for networking, and information purposes
- Evolved after pressures of downloading and amalgamation (late 90s)
- Work in conjunction with provincial and federal governments to promote the Eastern Ontario region and focus on mutually agreed upon strategic priorities



Some Overall Conclusions



- Recognition that regions and regional development matter
- New regionalist practice emergent at best in small town and rural Canada
- Significant barriers to new approaches - time and legacies key factors
- Need for increased attention to rural and rural-urban dynamics and a more holistic, place-based view of development

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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 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.ruralresilience.ca/>

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