

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



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

# The Theory, Practice and Potential of Regional Development: Key Learnings & Policy Recommendations

# Panelists



- **David J.A. Douglas**, Professor Emeritus, University of Guelph
- **Ryan Gibson**, Libro Professor of Regional Economic Development, University of Guelph
- **Sean Markey**, Professor, Simon Fraser University
- **Bill Reimer**, Professor Emeritus, Concordia University
- **Kelly Vodden**, Associate Vice-President (Grenfell) Research and Graduate Studies and Professor (Research), Grenfell Campus, Memorial University

# Agenda



1. Project overview
2. Theme snapshots
3. Implications for policy and practice
4. Discussion
5. Wrap Up



# **Project Overview**

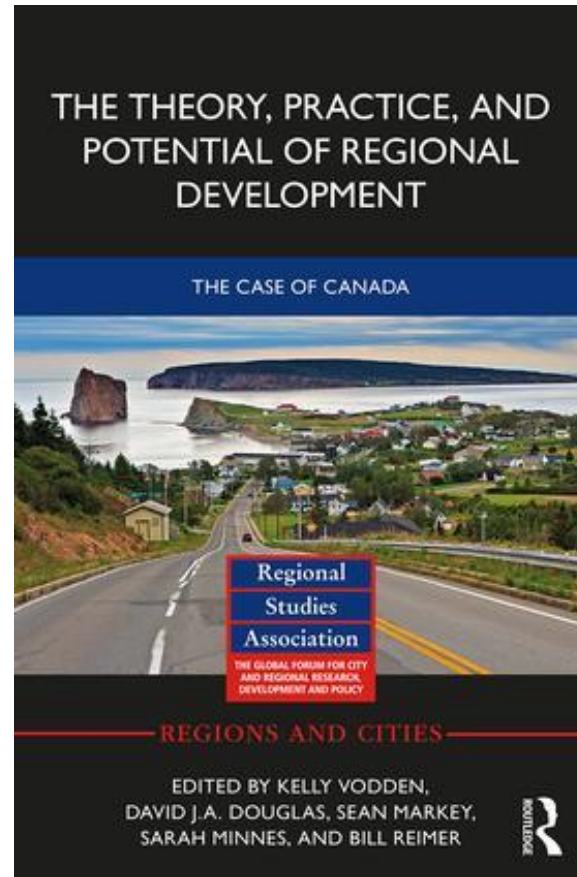
# Canadian Regional Development

A Critical Review of Theory, Practice, and Potentials



# Développement régional canadien

Un examen critique des théories, des pratiques et des potentiels



# The Team

## Research Team

Kelly Vodden (MUN-Grenfell, PI)  
David Douglas (U. of Guelph, ON & Integrated lead)  
Sean Markey (SFU, BC & Place lead)  
Bill Reimer (Concordia, QC & Rural-urban)  
Ryan Gibson (MUN/U. of Guelph, Governance lead)  
Heather Hall (MUN/U. of Waterloo, Innovation co-lead)  
Sarah Minnes (U. of Guelph/MUN/U of Sask, Project Coordinator)  
Sarah-Patricia Breen (SFU)  
Joshua Barrett, Ken Carter, Jen Daniels, Janelle Skeard, Stephen Parmiter, Kyle White (MUN)  
Luc Bisson (U. du Quebec a Rimouski)  
Matthew Brett, Craig MacKie, Amanda Weightman (Concordia)  
Lauren Edens (MUN/U. of Missouri)

## Co-applicants & Collaborators

Rhys Andrews & Terri Macdonald (Selkirk College)  
Ken Coates (International Centre for Northern Governance and Development, U. Sask.)  
Bojan Furst & Rob Greenwood (Leslie Harris Centre of Regional Policy and Development, MUN)  
Bruno Jean, U. du Quebec a Rimouski  
Andreas Klinke (Environmental Policy Institute, MUN)  
Al Lauzon (Cdn. Rural Revitalization Foundation)  
Kathleen Parewick & Craig Pollett (Municipalities NL)  
Kittiwake Economic Development Corp.  
Rural Policy Learning Commons (RPLC)  
Rural Secretariat, Govt of NL  
Preface author: Donald Savoie (U de Moncton)



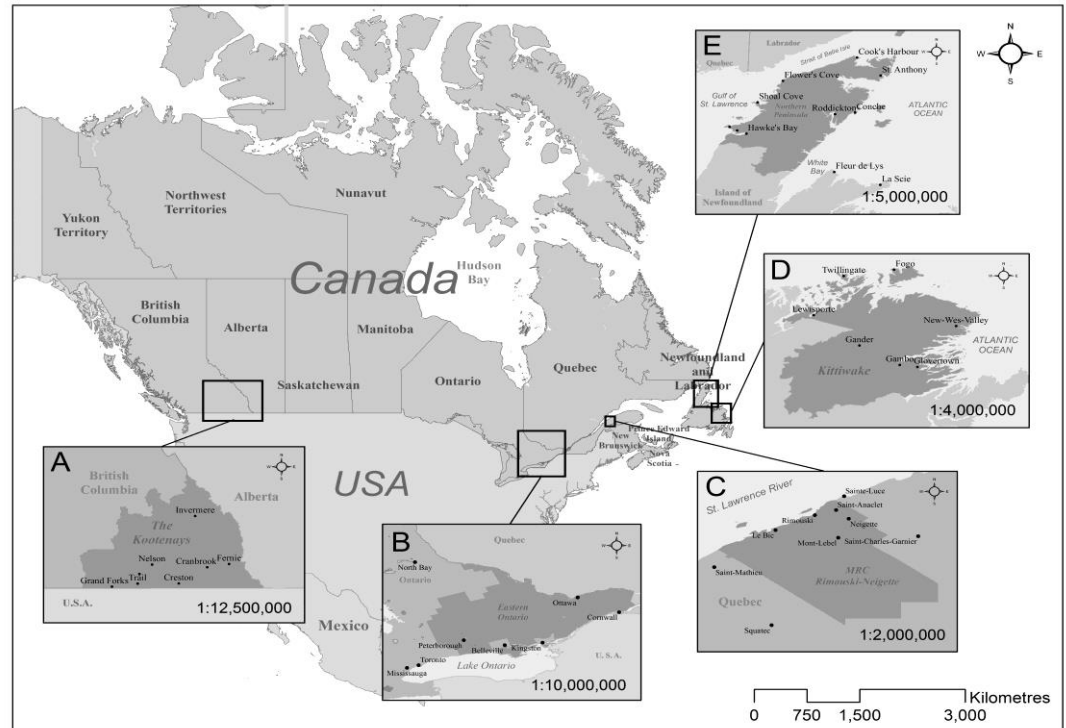
- How has Canadian regional development evolved?
- To what extent have new regionalist ideas been applied?  
Lessons regarding the merits or flaws of new regionalism from the Canadian context?
- What innovations can be seen in Canadian regional development?
- Are lessons and innovations shared across space in networks of policy and practice?

# Methodology/Project Approach (Chapter 4)

Mixed methods,  
interdisciplinary,  
case study-based

Initial project:  
2011-2015

Connections (KM):  
2016-2018



Map Courtesy of Myron King, Environmental Policy Institute, Memorial University of Newfoundland-Grenfell Campus


Project website (includes supplementary materials)

<http://cdnregdev.ruralresilience.ca/>



# Key Elements of New Regionalism (Chapter 3)





# **Multi-Level, Collaborative Governance (Chapter 5)**

# Multi-Level, Collaborative Governance



- Governance ≠ government
- New processes of governing
- Key characteristics of multi-level, collaborative governance
  - Process
  - Collaboration
  - Collective decision-making
  - Engagement of broad suite of actors

# Findings- Multi-Level, Collaborative Governance

- Diverse, but limited, experiences with multi-level, collaborative governance
- Emerging approach, often sector based or on time-limited initiatives
- Key hindrances to multi-level, collaborative governance
  - Past histories/perceptions of amalgamation
  - Limited human resources and volunteer burnout
  - Difficulty in operationalizing governance
  - Unequal power between rural and urban communities

# Multi-Level, Collaborative Governance



- “... it is pretty hard to collaborate with limited finances to do a whole lot more than just the basics.”
- “We hardly ever collaborate. We never have and it is hard as hell to collaborate on even a local level with anybody”
- “There is a lack of trust between communities, cities’ negligence to rural areas, and the lack of willingness of surrounding communities prevent collaboration.”



# Place (Chapter 6)

# Place Conceptual Framework

## Identity

- Sense of place
- Regional definition



## Participation

- Participation
- Regional collaboration
- Planning at regional level
- Associations
- Structures



## Mobilization

- Branding
- Buy local
- Resource Mgmt
- Sustainability
- Recreation**
- Econ dev**
- Water**
- RD structures



# Findings – Place-Based Development

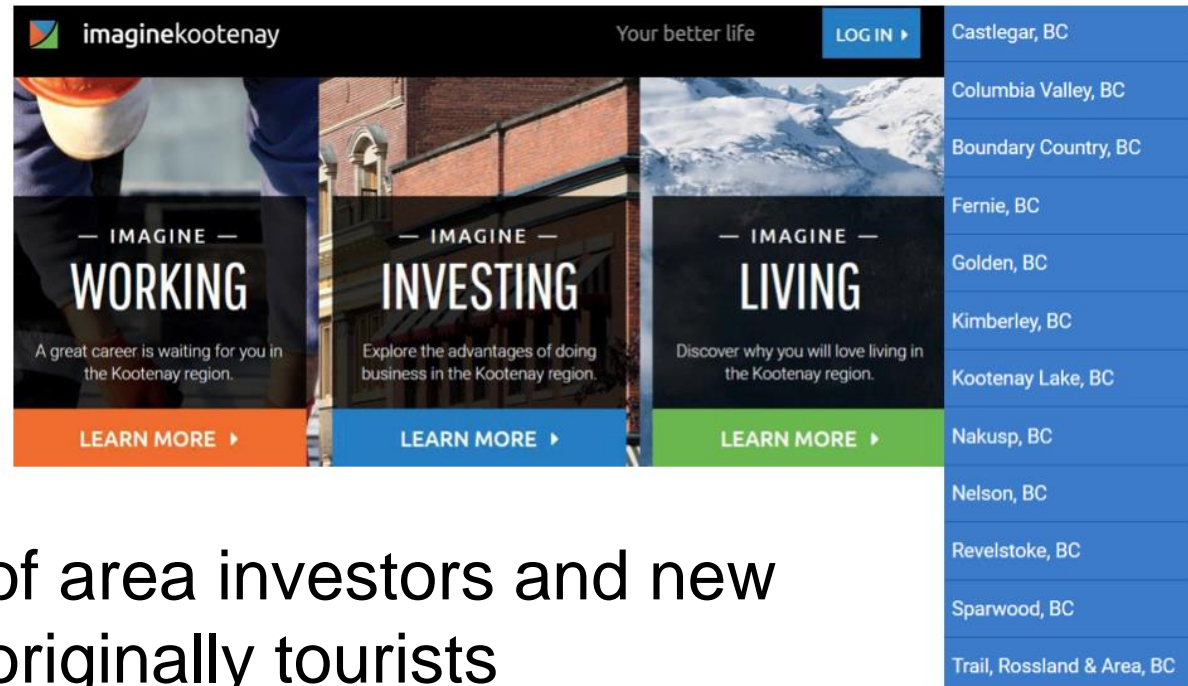
- Strong local sense of place/identity, evidence of place-based development, but generally not associated with regions
- Weak regionalist development institutions and jurisdictional tension, overlap, confusion
- "Reluctant regional cohesion." Fear of, and negative legacies associated with, regionalization
- Most identify array of assets that afford development opportunities (including identity) but strategic application is limited, emergent



# Example: Imagine Kootenay

“Your Better Life”

- 3 Regl Districts+
- Merging economic opportunity with lifestyle
- Over 70% of out of area investors and new business people originally tourists
- Lack of consistent, available information



<https://imaginekootenay.com/>

# Example: Regional Capacity Building

## Water and the Rural Training Challenge:

- Water operators need continuing education to maintain certification
- Issues and challenges with traditional training
- Design and pilot of alternative (regional) approach
- Short term success
- Long term challenges

### • Traditional:

- In-class
- Broad or generic content
- Out of region
- Expensive

### • Regional Alternative:

- Hands on
- System specific
- Local
- Cost-effective



# **Integrated Development (Chapter 7)**

# 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



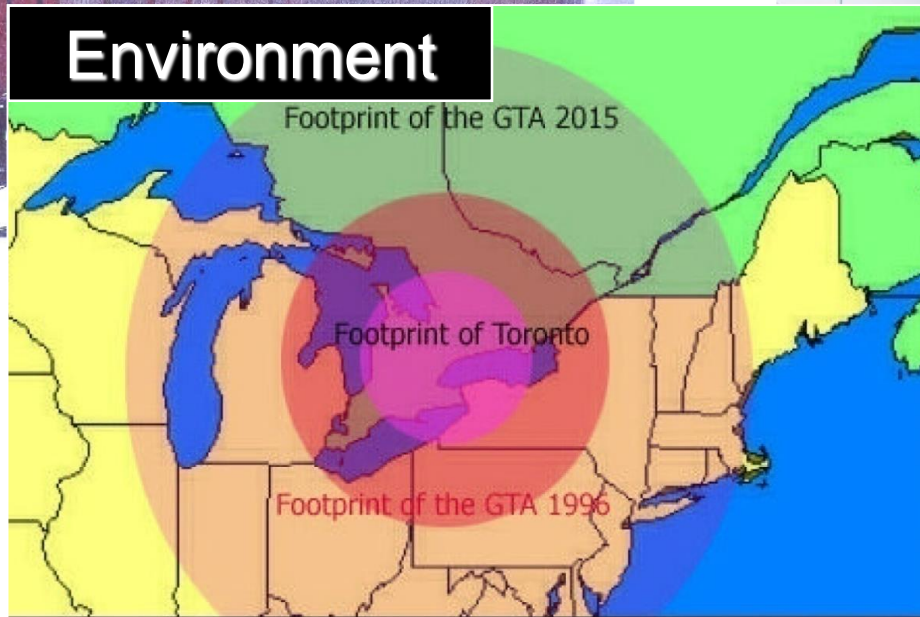
# **Rural Urban Interdependencies (Chapter 8)**

# Rural and Urban are Interdependent

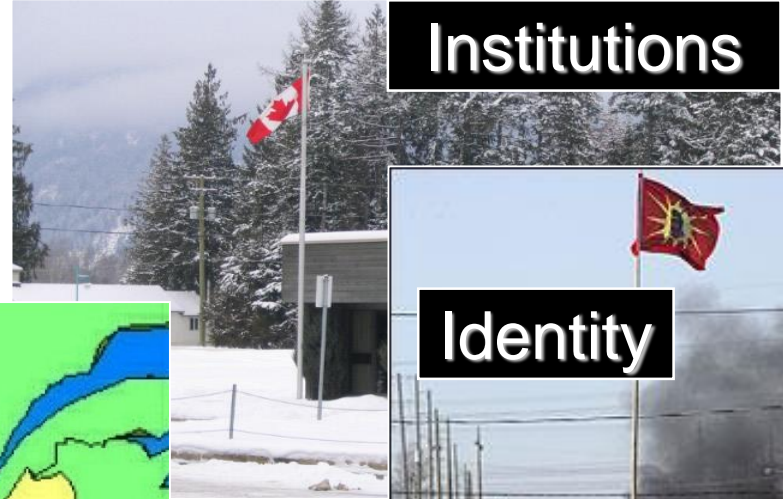
## Trade and exchange



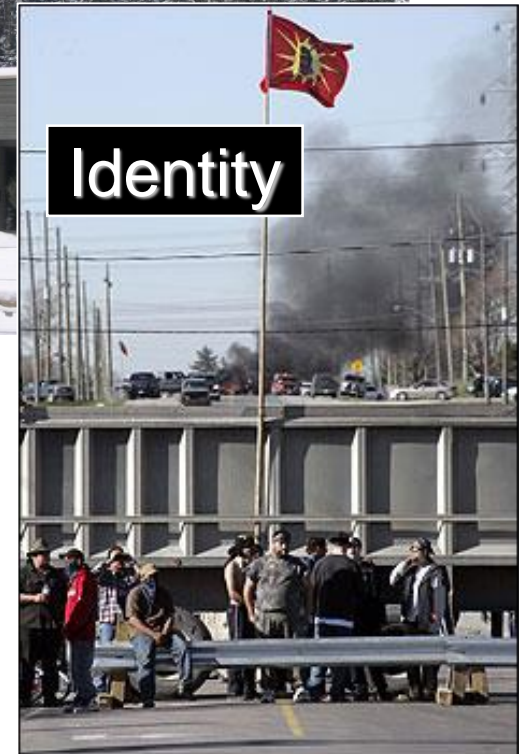
## Environment



## Institutions



## Identity




# Findings – Rural-Urban Relationships

- Little recognition of rural-urban interdependence
- Mostly **institutional** recognition
  - Local and provincial – not federal
- **Exchanges:** knowledge, finances, service, people
- **Environment:** recreation, water, waste, land
- **Identity:** cultural similarities and differences



# Implications – Rural-Urban Relationships

- Consider all four spheres: Exchanges, Institutions, Environment, Identity
- Institutional focus is strategic since it is recognized
- Frame environmental and identity issues in interdependence, not conflict
- Facilitate communication among rural and urban places



# **Innovation and Learning (Chapter 9)**

# Findings – Learning & Innovation

- Limited attention to rural regions and resource sectors
- Informal processes, ‘quiet’ pragmatic innovation vs. regional innovation strategies
- Formal organizations and supports often in major urban settings, technology focused and often change with new governments - yet knowledge infrastructure and regional innovations that support organizations can and do play a key role in rural regions

*Hall et al. (2013, 2016); White et al. (2014); Carter & Vodden (2017)*

# Some Inspiring Examples




**BC:** Selkirk College Rural Development Institute & Applied Research and Innovation Centre, KAST and MIDAS fabrication lab

**ON:** Trent U. DNA regional innovation cluster and maker space, PECIC and First Stone, Eastern Ontario Warden's Caucus

**NL:** Energy efficiency/maximizing heat utilization, SABRI, Shorefast on Fogo Island, Central Continuous Improvement Network (CME)

# Findings – Learning & Innovation

- Minimum cross-sector or inter-regional/inter-provincial transfer of knowledge or deliberate learning and reflection
- Narrow objectives of formal learning and evaluation processes that occur
- Disconnect between formal and informal processes (often ad hoc)
- No dedicated national body charged with information gathering and sharing
- Role for provincial research centres and organizations/networks such as CRRF and RPLC



# **Implications: Policy and Practice (Chapter 10)**

# Implications: Policy and Practice



What are the implications of the CRD analysis for policy and practice?

- Levels: Communities, Regions, Provinces, Federal
- Actors: Formal Decision-makers, Businesspeople, Volunteers, Activists, Community Development Agents, Citizens

# 1. Policy: Think regionally

- Identify regional assets
- Identify provincial supports for regional development
- Identify activities that connect regional communities and people
- Identify regional communities in need of support and create plans to provide it
- Identify and create opportunities to learn regional development skills
- Facilitate exchanges among regional communities, groups, and networks



## 2. Policy: Act globally

- Identify existing global connections and interests: trade, institutions, associations, networks, visions
- Identify community and regional assets of global interest: economic, human, social, cultural
- Develop relationships with urban centres for economic, information, exchanges, recreation, food and water quality, cultural events.
- Develop initiatives and local capacities to welcome newcomers

# 3. Policy: Devolve responsibilities

- Identify activities and responsibilities best located at regional level
- Create and/or support regional organizations (formal and informal)
- Provide adequate resources for regional governance
- Adopt a long-term approach (10 to 20 years)
- Facilitate inter-organization communication
- Provide extra resources and programs for weaker communities and/or organizations

## 4. Policy: Be inclusive

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- Identify interested organizations, businesses, formal and informal groups, associations, networks, and government agencies
- Support existing organizations and networks operating in the region (economic, corporate, voluntary, recreation, social action, cultural, artistic and family)
- Develop initiatives and local capacities to welcome newcomers

# 5. Policy: Increase communication

- Use existing channels, venues, and networks (local, regional, provincial)
- Develop and support information brokers
- Utilize multiple venues and formats
- Build adequate communication infrastructure
- Focus on issues of mutual concern: land use, health and education services, food and water quality, climate change impacts

# Policy Implications

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1. Think regionally
2. Act globally
3. Devolve responsibilities
4. Be inclusive
5. Increase communication

**Support Research**



# Discussion

# Thank You!

To buy the book:

<https://www.routledge.com/The-Theory-Practice-and-Potential-of-Regional-Development-The-Case-of-Vodden-Douglas-Markey-Minnes-Reimer/p/book/9780815365211>

Project website (including supplementary materials):

<http://cdnregdev.ruralresilience.ca>

