Rural Governance in the Canadian Periphery

Lessons Learned for Regional Development

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Regional Development Policy – Challenges, Choices, and Recipients
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Overview

• Identification of the Canadian periphery
• Canadian Context of rural governance
• Six emerging themes
• Implications of emerging themes
• Summary
Identifying the Canadian Periphery

- Multiple dichotomies to describe the Canadian periphery
  - Rural – Urban
  - Heartland – Hinterland
  - Core - Periphery
- No universal accepted definition
- Characteristics include:
  - Small, aging, and declining populations (>10,000)
  - Out migration of youth
  - Large distances to urban areas
  - Natural resource based economies
Metropolitan Influenced Zones (MIZ) in Rural and Small Town Canada, 2006
using the Statistical Area Classification

Larger Urban Centres
- Census Metropolitan Areas (urban core of 50,000 or more with a total population of 100,000 or more)
- Census Agglomerations (urban core of 10,000 to 49,999)

Rural and Small Town areas (showing Metropolitan Influenced Zones (MIZ))
- Strong MIZ
- Moderate MIZ
- Weak MIZ
- No MIZ
- Territories

Map produced by the Remote Sensing and Geospatial Analysis Section (RSGA), Agriculture Division, Statistics Canada, 2008
Governance in Canada Periphery

- No single government department responsible for communities in the periphery
- Governance has emerged in the Canadian periphery
  - Perceived abdication of government responsibilities being picked up at the community/regional level
  - De-concentration of power
  - Shift in jurisdictional rights
### Overview of the Case Study Regions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governance Initiative</th>
<th>Approximate Population</th>
<th>Number of Communities</th>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bras d’Or</td>
<td>22,000</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>First Nations led network model</td>
<td>Resource and env'l management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayline Regional Round Table</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Elected Mayors and Chief</td>
<td>Northern transportation, food security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Waddington CFDC</td>
<td>6,457</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Municipalities, First Nations, labour, business</td>
<td>Economic development, capacity building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Peninsula</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Joint Mayors’ Council, Regional Council, Economic Development Agencies</td>
<td>Advocacy in tourism, transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yukon Regional Round Table</td>
<td>22,000</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Two members per community/First Nation</td>
<td>Regional cooperation capacity building, tourism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Themes Emerging

- Partnerships
- Communication
- Collaboration and shared power
- Scale
- Capacity building
- Evaluation
Themes Emerging

- Partnerships
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- Importance of formal and informal partnerships
- Multi-level engagement required from communities, community-serving organizations, government departments, academic institutions, and the private sector
- Commitment by individuals and organizations
Themes Emerging

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- Communication
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- Need for enhanced communications within communities and across scales
- Distance enhances the role of communications
- Need for new forms of communications to bridge distance; often these communications methods require enhanced technology
Themes Emerging

• Partnerships
• Communication
• Collaboration and shared power
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• Evaluation

• Short-term projects or issue specific arrangements provide a solid start, however, need to move beyond to more formal arrangements.
• Horizontal and vertical collaboration is essential in the Canadian periphery
• Types of power
Themes Emerging

- Partnerships
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- Geography in the periphery is a significant consideration
- Region represents an avenue for new forms of governance
- Size can be overcome with communications, technology, and trust
Themes Emerging

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- New capacities required for governance initiatives
  - Leadership
  - Financial management
  - Learning and innovation
  - Conflict resolution
  - Partnership management
Themes Emerging

- Partnerships
- Communication
- Collaboration and shared power
- Scale
- Capacity building
- Evaluation

- Evidence based decisions need to be made; often evidence is lacking.
- Trying to place evaluation within short-term and fiscal years is difficult, or impossible.
- Learning-focused evaluation provides important opportunities for enhancement of governance structures and process over time.
Implications of Findings

• Implications for local and regional development
  ▫ Transitioning from competitive to collaborative relationships with neighbouring communities and First Nations
  ▫ Challenges related to legitimacy and accountability

• Implications for policy makers
  ▫ Require new mechanisms for working with communities/regions as partners, not clients
  ▫ Horizontal management across departments is required and needs to be sustained over time

• Implications for researchers
  ▫ Need for a better understanding of new regionalism in the Canadian context
Summary

- Considerable focus on *the region* as an appropriate scale for development in Canada
- New governance initiatives built on old relationships
- Challenges related to shifting power to communities from government
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