Governance at the Heart of Regional Development?
An Exploratory Investigation of Rural Regional Governance Initiatives in Newfoundland and Ireland
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Introduction
What is at the heart of regional development in rural communities? Rural, remote, and coastal communities throughout Canada and internationally are presented with the opportunities and challenges of initiating and maintaining sustainable development, often in the face of declining resources and traditional economies. In response to the dynamics outlined by forces such as post-productivism and competitiveness, the current literature mandates the need to understand and implement innovative approaches to policy and governance. Communities are seeking new forms of governance to address challenges and opportunities associated with changing social, economic, and environmental dynamics. Within governance studies, collaborative governance has emerged as a potential framework for understanding the evolution of rural and regional development. Based on the collaborative understanding of governance initiatives in two settings, the Northern Peninsula Regional Collaboration Pilot Initiative in Newfoundland and the South Kerry Development Partnership in Ireland, are examined as potential case studies of collaborative governance. This presentation outlines the two initiatives and concludes with an appropriate case studies of collaborative governance. An enhanced understanding of collaborative governance in these two settings will assist in assessing governance’s relationship to regional development.

Governance
Governance has been described to use a wide range of processes and activities. Governance 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; 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 governance. The eclectic academic approach has been compounded by the multiple uses of governance by government, corporations, non-profit organizations, and the popular media. Rhodes (1996) provides a frequently quoted definition of governance, “a change in the meaning of government, referring to a new process of governing; or a changed condition of ordered role on the new ways in which society is governed”. Key components of Rhodes’ description are the movement towards new ways of governing, use of new processes, and change of ordered rule. The shift from government to governance is a debate still taking place, however, there is a growing consensus across the literature of the shift towards governance. Governance is described as a range of initiatives of federal and provincial governments (e.g. Goodwin & Painter, 1996; Jessop, 1998; Rhodes, 1996).

Collaborative Governance

Collaborative Governance

Hearing to Stoker’s call for the use of frameworks to describe changes in governance (Ansell & Gash (2004)) and to develop the collaborative governance framework, incorporating Stoker’s five foundational governance propositions. The critical issues inherent in Stoker’s (1998) governance propositions can be addressed through this framework. According to Ansell and Gash (2007), this framework provides the ‘basis for further empirical testing and theory elaboration’ (p. 562). The collaborative governance framework provides a solid framework to understand initiatives in rural areas and a platform for comparisons across jurisdictions.

The collaborative governance framework emerged as a response to failures of initiatives and problems at the community level (Armstrong & Stratford, 2004; Fung & Wright 2001; Henton et al., 2006; Newman et al., 2006). 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). Six criteria for collaborative governance are identified by Ansell and Gash (2007):

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

According to Ansell and Gash, 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.

Governance in Rural Newfoundland and Ireland

To build an enhanced understanding of whether governance is at the heart of regional development two illustrations of rural regional development are examined. Each case study is examined from the perspective of meeting the six criteria of collaborative governance set forth by Ansell and Gash.

Northern Peninsula Regional Collaboration Pilot Initiative

In 2009, the Newfoundland and Labrador Speech from the Throne committed the province to exploring a new model of regional collaboration with communities. The speech outlined the government’s desire to “work with community and regional leaders to explore new collaborative forms of governance that advance regional sustainability” (Government of NL, 2009). The Northern Peninsula was chosen for study because of the regional partnerships and experience with collaboration, including the Northern Peninsula Development Corporation, St. Anthony Basin Resources Inc, and the Northern Peninsula Development Partnership. The Northern Peninsula Pilot Initiative has three task priorities.

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

Newfoundland and Labrador Speech from the Throne

The Northern Peninsula Pilot Initiative is tasked with three primary responsibilities:

- to provide advice to government decision-makers to ensure better investment of government funds with the region,
- to create a forum for community leaders, economic development agencies, and community service organizations to discuss challenges and opportunities within the region, and
- to provide advice to provincial government on how best to develop and support innovative regional collaboration across the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Pilot Initiative is led by a provincial ministerial committee consisting of representatives from five departments together with a local advisory committee consisting of representatives from local government and development agencies.

South Kerry Development Partnership

The South Kerry Development Partnership (SKDP) represents an established rural regional governance forum in a rural Ireland. Ireland established a series of regional partnerships in the late 1990s to early 2000s to address social exclusion and declines in rural economies. The South Kerry Development Partnership responded to a Local Employment Initiative and the European Union’s LEADER programme (Walsh et al., 1998). The Partnership grew from a local understanding of the need to exist the Economic and Regional Research, and the Ireland Canada University Foundation, the Northern Peninsula Regional Collaboration Initiative in Newfoundland, and the South Kerry Development Partnership in Ireland, are examined as potential case studies of collaborative governance. This presentation outlines the two initiatives and concludes with an appropriate case studies of collaborative governance. An enhanced understanding of collaborative governance in these two settings will assist in assessing governance’s relationship to regional development.

Governance at the Heart of Regional Development

Through primary and secondary research two forms are seen to possess the six key criteria of collaborative governance. The table outlines a brief assessment of the six criteria for each region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria of Collaboration</th>
<th>Northern Peninsula</th>
<th>South Kerry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Governance level</td>
<td>Inter-governmental</td>
<td>Local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Multi-sector</td>
<td>Multi-sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants engaged directly in decision making</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants consult non-government stakeholders</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making process</td>
<td>Consensus</td>
<td>Consensus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance objective</td>
<td>Economic development</td>
<td>Economic development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the table above, it appears both illustrations represent collaborative governance according to the Ansell and Gash framework. The two regions are ideal for further comparison based on their similarities, particularly in the roles of individuals and organizations in influencing the governance process, the role of geographical boundaries, and the relationship between forms of governance and government.

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