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

Développement régionale canadienne
Un examen critique du théorie, de pratique et des potentiels

Sense of Place...Now What? Place-based Development in an Era of New Regionalism

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SFU SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY THINKING OF THE WORLD

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Outline

- New Regionalism
- Project Overview
- Place and Place-based Development
- Findings

- Spoiler Alert!...
  - New Regionalism **NOT** Present
- Anecdotes and prospects

New Regionalism

- PUSH:

- State and industrial restructuring

- PULL:

- Economic competitiveness
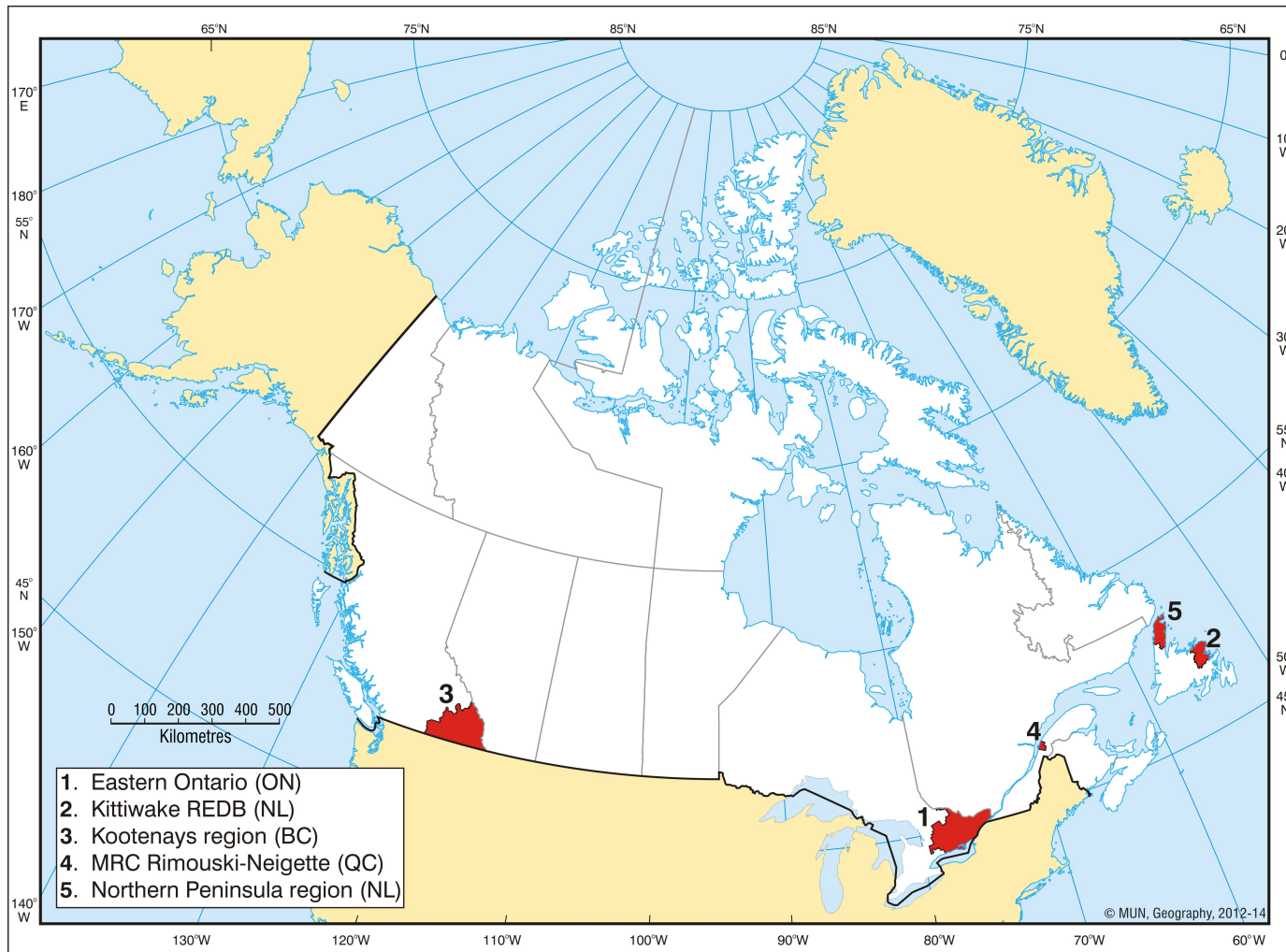- Social processes
- Territorial planning

Project Goals

1. Undertake a critical assessment of the application and relevance of new regionalism in the Canadian context;

2. Seek Canadian innovations in regional development; and

3. Understand how these are evolving and if and how they are being shared across space in networks of regional development policy and practice.

Methodology

- Multi-level case study approach

1. Eastern Ontario (ON)
2. Kittiwake REDB (NL)
3. Kootenays region (BC)
4. MRC Rimouski-Neigette (QC)
5. Northern Peninsula region (NL)

© MUN, Geography, 2012-14

Methods cont'd

- Mixed methods, interdisciplinary
  - Document/literature review
  - Semi-structured interviews
  - (Participant) observation

  - Pattern searching and theme indicators
  - Multiple analytical "passes" with team dialogue and theme vs. provincial team cross-checking

Place

- Place-based development is a holistic and targeted intervention that seeks to reveal, utilize and enhance the unique natural, physical, and/or human capacity endowments present within a particular location for the development of the in-situ community and/or its biophysical environment.

Place = Home

"The most radical thing you can do is stay home."

Symmetry of Canadian Regional Development: 30-30-30

- 30 years of the **long-boom** (1952 – 1982)
- 30 years of **restructuring** (1983 – 2013)
- 30 years of…**???** (2014 – 2044)

May 2013 Closure of the Rural Secretariat

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: *Identity*

- Community identification
- Rural identity
- Fuzzy boundaries
- Double-edge of transience
- Lack of regional affiliation ("geographic corridors")

Findings: *Regional Structures*

- Weak, informal
  - Flexible, nimble
- Silos vs. territorial approach
- Jurisdictional tension
- MRC exception
  - But viewed as top-down within the region
- Lack of capacity for co-construction

Findings: *Community vs. Region*

- "Reluctant cohesion"
- Zero-sum competitiveness
- Historical patterns of (economic) isolation
- Recognition that lack of collaboration is hurting
- External motivators

Findings: *Regionalism as Rationalization*

- Infrastructure deficit

- Service withdrawal

- Legacies of amalgamation: irony of forced regionalism

- "Push" regionalism

- Infrastructure discussions, examples

Lessons for Policy

- Investment vs. cost mentality
- Support regional institution-building
- Build capacity for co-construction
- Rural voice?
- "We only have the capacity to work with the willing."

Lessons for Practice

- The NEXT 30: Abandonment/ Independence…Liberation?
- You are "on your own"
- Organize
- Program Bend…*Collateral Collaboration*
- Move from anecdotes to structurally significant institution-building

Lessons for Academia

- Jones and Paasi (2013): How do regions become?

- Evidence, evidence, evidence…We have: weak political regions; marginally functional regions; and anecdotal developmental regions

- Rural lens…increasing responsibility

- Expand regional discourse beyond narrow understandings of competitiveness

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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 of New Regionalism 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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