

4 Rural Development and the Regional Construct: A Comparative Analysis of the Newfoundland and Labrador and Ireland Contexts

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Given their historical and cultural linkages as well as their shared status, until the last 15 years, as underdeveloped islands contiguous to larger industrial regions and societies, Ireland and Newfoundland and Labrador have become a topic of considerable interest among academics and the media, as well as among governments, for comparative purposes in understanding their recent development trajectories. As the authors of this chapter make clear in their analysis of planning and development policies in the two jurisdictions, despite many similarities, there are important historical, political, and economic differences as well. If lessons are to be learned for either jurisdiction, but particularly for Newfoundland and Labrador, understanding and appreciation of the different paths and contexts and their implications for comparative lessons are critical.

INTRODUCTION

IRELAND HAS EXPERIENCED a remarkable 15 years of rapid macroeconomic growth and development; the Irish economy now being depicted popularly as the “Celtic Tiger.” The achievements, challenges, and opportunities that have attended this transformation of much of Irish society, and of substantial parts of the landscape, have been variously documented. The significant record of initiatives in rural development policy, programs, practice, and organizational development have also received critical attention (e.g., Keane and Commins, 1994; Walsh, 1998; O'Hara and Commins, 1999, 2003; McDonagh, 2001; ÖIR, 2004; OECD, 2006). These developments have been substantial, involving regional-level development planning (e.g., Regional Authorities), multi-community area economic development (e.g., via LEADER+), county-based integrated strategic plans (for all 26 counties), special-purpose development consortia (e.g., the Border, Midlands, and Western Regional Assembly), community-based development pilot projects (e.g., FORUM in

northwest Connemara and Duhallow in northwest Cork and East Kerry, Kiltimagh, County Mayo), extensive experimentation and innovations in area-based partnerships (e.g., Meldon et al., 2002; Fitzpatrick Associates, 2003; O'Keeffe, 2006), and a variety of other initiatives. However, outside of the rich record of collaborative development and development planning evident in a variety of partnership arrangements (e.g., Sabel, 1996; Cavazzani and Moseley, 1999; Moseley, 2003a; Walsh and Meldon, 2004), a modest volume of analytical work has been completed on a comparative basis.

The province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Canada has seen a varied array of rural development initiatives over the last four decades (Fuchs, 1995; Greenwood, 1997; House, 2003). The rural deprivation associated with long periods of relative disadvantage (e.g., in per capita incomes, unemployment rates), high levels of dependency on primary resources (e.g., forestry, mining, fishing), endemic out-migration, and slow economic growth was exacerbated by the cathartic and wholesale collapse of the northern cod fishery in the early 1990s. In the more recent past Newfoundland and Labrador has seen substantial macroeconomic revitalization through alternative fishery activities and offshore oil development (e.g., the Hibernia field). The province looks to further development opportunities through the massive Voisey's Bay nickel mine development, more oil and gas development, continuing diversification of its small manufacturing sector, and new developments in the telecommunications-based services sector. Rural development initiatives over these four decades have been varied, involving a considerable amount of innovation, learning, and cumulative refinement of policy, process, and organizational design. The latest is a significant initiative, in the Canadian context, involving multi-community and multi-interest Regional Economic Development Boards, organized on a territorial or zonal basis, entering into formal performance-based contractual relations with the provincial and the federal government for long-term rural development. This process has now been refined after an initial period of operation and assessment.

RESEARCH PURPOSE AND APPROACH

The purpose of this research is to initiate a selective and exploratory comparative analysis of the rural development planning process in Ireland and Newfoundland and Labrador. The comparative analysis will be divided into two overlapping perspectives. The first will address development policy, its content, the underlying values and priorities that inform it, and the espoused rationale. These will be noted and a preliminary interpretation of each will be attempted. Second, the paper will initiate a comparative analysis of the process of development design, using the regional perspective as a case in point, and will examine this design in terms of its intent, rationale, direction, participants, and other characteristics, as well as its implementation as a revealed process of rural development planning.

The comparative analysis of rural development policy will be achieved by examining the central policy positions relating to rural development. These will be systematically compared on the basis of a set of criteria (e.g., the enunciated value basis, development assumptions, loci of responsibility for implementation) and the implicit or explicit development theories that appear to inform these policies (Bingham and Mier, 1993; Bradfield, 2002; Todaro, 2002). Then, the development planning process for each context will be interpreted by focusing on the regional development framework that has been designed and adopted in Ireland and in Newfoundland and Labrador. This regional development perspective will be informed by a critical examination of the approach adopted. This will be complemented and supplemented in Chapter 12 through a critical review of the overlapping concept of governance, as applied in these territorial contexts. This chapter will conclude with some research and policy implications emanating from this comparative research.

The research for this and Chapter 12 was conducted in Newfoundland and Labrador and in Ireland. It involved an extensive examination of documents (e.g., plans, policy documents, annual reports, academic papers, consultant reports), interviews with key informants in governments, in LEADER+ organizations, the Regional Economic Development Boards, in municipal and rural development organizations, and with researchers. Several on-site visits to development projects were undertaken.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN IRELAND AND NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR: CONTEXTUAL OVERVIEW AND POLICIES

Newfoundland and Labrador: The Policy Context to Rural Development

Newfoundland and Labrador's long history of attempts at economic development have involved a considerable variety of interventions. These have evolved from advocating the modernization (i.e., industrialization) of the fishery; an intensive period of railway building; vigorous attempts towards the establishment of a manufacturing sector and the associated process of external investment recruitment with substantial incentives; a controversial attempt at wholesale rural settlement relocation and consolidation; an equally controversial episode of mega-project promotion; continuing responses to an increasingly threatened fishery; eventually, a crisis-management response to the collapse of the northern cod fishery; a growing emphasis on the new information-based, high technology sector as the best means for longer-term diversification; a parallel focus on oil and gas exploration and on capturing the benefits of this new primary-resource sector; and the current concerns with securing the benefits of value-added processing and associated employment opportunities from the large-scale Voisey's Bay nickel and zinc mining development. People's aspirations for more economic independence and self-reliance, for more secure livelihood opportunities, for diversification and some release from an essentially colonial, staples-based economy, and for greater control in the prov-

ince's social, cultural, economic, and political development, permeated most chapters of this colourful and at times tumultuous story.

Recent decades saw a series of three federal and provincial development agreements (e.g., in the 1978-94 period), which provided the policy framework and the joint-funding base for the province's development. They also provided support for, among other things, the operations of indigenous Regional Development Associations (RDAs) that had emerged in the Great Northern Peninsula in the late 1960s. RDAs spread from there to the Eastport Peninsula, Fogo Island, and throughout the province until some 59 RDAs had been established as the key locally-based development vehicles for Newfoundland and Labrador (Fuchs, 1995). This indigenous development technology continues to this day. As part of the evolving rural development process the Newfoundland Labrador Rural Development Council (NLRDC) was set up as an apex organization. Notwithstanding their many successes, and their firm local roots, the RDAs became increasing project-based and focused on opportunistic acquisition of short-term funding, while becoming the funding mechanism for short-term employment to help individuals qualify for extended unemployment insurance support (Fuchs, 1995; Greenwood, 1997). What have been regarded as emergent distortions in their functions (e.g., widespread clientelism) and the lack of any integrated, longer-term development direction in their operations served to augment the growing concern that a more systematic and comprehensive approach to rural development was urgently required.

Responding to these issues and to the persistence of high levels of unemployment, often in and exceeding the 20-30 per cent range, the apparently intractable hemorrhage of out-migration, and the absence of structural development of the provincial economy — notably manifested in lack of diversification beyond the primary staples base (fishing, pulp and paper, iron ore) — the Royal Commission on Employment and Unemployment (1986) developed a comprehensive set of recommendations for development. These included the concept of development zones for regional rural development in the province. In partial response to these the province set up the Economic Recovery Commission (ERC) in 1989. Another development agency, the Enterprise Newfoundland Labrador Corporation was set up in 1991. In 1992 a new strategic development plan for Newfoundland and Labrador was introduced — *Change and Challenge*. This fostered increased collaboration between the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities (NLFM) and rural interests and augmented the momentum away from short-term project-based opportunistic development. The Newfoundland and Labrador Rural Development Council (NLRDC) also joined this initiative.

The strategic economic development plan, with 132 recommendations, highlighted the need to pursue development through 17 economic planning zones (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1992: 16). The purpose of these zones was for "better co-ordination and integration of economic planning and development activities" (ibid., 16). The more specific purposes of these development zones

included the preparation of economic development plans by the residents, the pursuit of joint development initiatives among communities, the strengthening of the zones' primary urban centres through Provincial investments (e.g., infrastructure), the integration of provincial development policies and programs through the five regional offices of Enterprise Newfoundland and Labrador and the local development organizations in the new zones, the provision of a focus for the province for the promotion of economic development at the local level, and the provision of a platform for the regionalization of Provincial administration.

This strategic plan was followed by the Task Force on Community Economic Development in Newfoundland and Labrador in 1994, and the release of their report, *Community Matters: The New Regional Economic Development*, in 1995. Besides emphasizing the need for a firmly community-based approach to rural economic development, and the disciplined application of strategic planning in a formal and systematic manner in the development planning process, the Task Force endorsed the development zone concept and the establishment of Regional Economic Development Boards (REDBs), and made recommendations on a restructuring of the Provincial organizational system for rural development. The Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) was the major player for the federal government in the Task Force, with the Economic Recovery Commission as the province's major player. Most of the Task Force's recommendations were accepted by the province, and a federal-provincial agreement ensued, the *Strategic Regional Diversification Agreement* (1996). Most of the 20 Regional Economic Development Boards were set up in the 1996-9 period.

The provincial government initiated a process of closure and dismantling of much of the organizational infrastructure from 1995 on (e.g., the ERD, ENL, the ACOA/Enterprise Network). In its place a new Department of Development and Rural Renewal (DDRR) was set up to take over the co-operation agreements with all the REDBs, and a Cabinet Committee on Rural Revitalization (CCRR) was set up to address priority rural projects. A new Comprehensive Economic Development Agreement was negotiated between the provincial and the federal governments in 1997. To promote greater grassroots participation in the development of social policy, A *Strategic Social Plan* (SSP) was introduced in 1999. The SSP divided the province into six Social Planning regions, established regional level committees, and sought to encourage "place-based" policy development as well as the requisite localized capacity.

After the election of a new provincial government in 2003 a *Comprehensive Regional Diversification Strategy* was announced. One year later, the Strategic Social Plan was transformed into a more consultative organization called The Rural Secretariat. Through it, the province was divided into nine regions and an appointed regional council was appointed in each region to work with the Rural Secretariat to advise government on social policy issues. Many of the 'planners' formerly attached to the SSP found employment as planners and resource personnel

in the Rural Secretariat. In addition, a new department — Innovation, Trade and Rural Development (INTRD) — was set up to attend to the rural development portfolio and the Province's working relationships with the REDBs.

A Ministerial Committee on Regional Renewal (2004-5) reviewed the collaborative rural economic development system in the province (Ministerial Committee, 2005). This Committee was chaired by the NLFM, and included ACOA, INTRD, and NLREDA. It commissioned a major review of the system from the P.J. Gardiner Institute. The Committee found that the overall system was functioning, but that several clarifications and fine-tunings were required, and that the REDBs required a number of refinements in terms of their focus, and their operations and management. Of particular relevance were the recommendations for a more singular focus on *economic* development as the boards' sole purpose, closer formal working relationships with municipalities, a more intensive and consistent involvement of business on and in the activities of the boards, a formalizing of the planning process involving strategic economic plans (SEPs), and a concomitant formalizing of the three-year operational integrated business plans. The core mandate of the REDBs was recognized and confirmed:

In the regional economic development process, REDBs should be recognized as the leading economic grassroots agency that co-ordinates economic planning and implementation for principal economic zone stakeholders. (Ministerial Committee, 2005: 9)

The Committee's recommendations included a re-articulation of the original five core functions of the REDBs, making them more explicit in terms of the core mandate, how the Boards should function, and who their principal stakeholders and partners were. Partnerships (e.g. with chambers of commerce, CBDCs, municipalities), co-ordination (e.g., of zone stakeholders, with federal and provincial agencies), and facilitation (e.g., of linkages between zone stakeholders and governments), and capacity-building (e.g., of stakeholders and board and zone staff) were prominent in the Committee's central recommendations.

The vexing question of implementation remained ambiguous. The Boards were expected to co-ordinate implementation of projects and programs. It was recognized that the "REDBs and the Community Business Development Corporations must create stronger linkages" (Ministerial Committee, 2005: 11). In exceptional cases it was acknowledged that the REDBs might actually take the lead and implement certain projects (*ibid.*, 16). However, this was regarded as an exceptional and normally undesirable role of these regional economic development organizations. However, the continuing expectation that the REDBs would continue to facilitate and co-ordinate the implementation of regional economic development across the province remained.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Policy on Rural Development

It has been said that the grand ambition in Newfoundland and Labrador's latest foray into rural development is a project to "institutionalize a partnership between government and community" (House, 2003: 235).

While provincial policy regarding the role and functions of the Regional Economic Development Boards is reasonably clear, the specifics of the province's intent in rural development in general, and the values underlying this intent, are not immediately self-evident. Beyond the obvious urgency of job creation, the cessation of involuntary out-migration and economic diversification away from most rural regions' precarious primary resources dependency, the overarching policy is not easily identified. The province at times subscribes to the need for "balanced" economic development across its diverse rural regions. For example, Minister Tulk indicated that "we will all — collectively — be challenged to ensure that all regions share the benefit of economic growth" (ACOA, 26 September 2000). The same news release calls for a "more open and accountable partnership between government and non-government agencies." One of the anticipated outcomes here would be "government being less directive and more supportive of development initiatives identified at the regional level." In addition, it is stated that "We have come to realize that effective development cannot occur with either a top-down or a bottom-up approach. . . . What will work is a true partnership that focuses on regional strategies." This is complemented by a commitment to some provincial government decentralization. The Throne Speech of 19 March 2002 acknowledges that "some regions of the province have not shared equally in our growth and prosperity." The province, with varying degrees of credibility, apparently subscribes to locally based development, in terms of process, organization development, and priorities-setting (e.g., Throne Speech, 2001). The province has committed to a process of what has been called in other contexts the "rural-proofing" of all policy and program proposals (e.g., Foote, 1996). Some recent pronouncements, either by the province, or by some of its partners (e.g., the NLFM) make more explicit reference to the role of regional urban centres in the process of integrated rural development.

Beyond these pronouncements it is not easy to categorically determine the core or foundational commitments that constitute the province's longer-term rural development policy. This lack of a central source, a charter document, or formal pronouncement on rural development policy leaves something of a vacuum in the Newfoundland and Labrador context. This lack is ironic in Canada's most rural province, and the rural regional development issue has been a central and contested issue in public policy and political debate since, indeed before, the province's entry into Canada (1949). The Royal Commission on Employment and Unemployment (1986: 374) did recommend a rural development Act. It also means that the emphasis underlying assumptions, problem definition, scoping, and other facets of this policy field are subject to significant variation and discretionary interpretation from time to time as alternating political ideologies and party and constituency pri-

orities dictate. Newfoundland and Labrador has witnessed a significant parade of changes in provincial governments over the last four decades and, as summarized above, an attendant plurality of interpretations and priority-setting in various conceptions of the “rural development” problem. These changes represent a mixed blessing for regional and locally based development initiatives and organizations.

Ireland: The Policy Context Relating to Rural Development

Prior to the accession of 10 new member states to the European Union (EU) in 2004, Ireland, after Finland, was the most rural member state in the Union. Returns from the 2002 Census of Population revealed that 38 per cent of the state’s population resided in the open countryside or in a settlement with a population of less than 1,500 people. While the agriculture sector has contracted dramatically in terms of direct employment and contributions to GDP, it continues to be the backbone of the rural economy in many parts of Ireland, and supports a large food-processing sector. Thus, agriculture, rurality, and rural development are significant policy concerns in Ireland.

Over the past three decades noticeable changes have occurred in Ireland’s approaches to rural development (Cawley and Keane, 1999; Crowley, 2003). Throughout the 1970s rural was very much equated with agriculture, and the focus of national policy was on maximizing funding from the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the European Economic Community (EEC). This uni-sectoral approach became somewhat diluted during the 1980s as the EEC introduced CAP reforms, and began to place more emphasis on regional development and inter-state cohesion. The greatest policy changes took place in the early 1990s. The McSharry Reforms of the CAP (1992) and the implementation of the recommendations of the EU White Paper on Rural Development, *The Future of Rural Society* (CEC, 1988), introduced the concepts of economic diversification, territorial competitiveness, ecological sustainability, and partnership governance.

EU influences have played a significant role in shaping and defining approaches to rural development in Ireland. On the domestic front, the growth and proliferation of endogenous approaches, reforms of local government, and the success of innovative national social partnership have combined to consolidate a more multi-sectoral, inter-agency and area-based approach to governance in rural (and urban) areas (Scott, 1984).

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Ireland’s approaches to rural development were largely influenced and shaped by the EU (then EEC). The Irish government and farm organizations were enthusiastic supporters of the productivist approach that underpinned the then Common Agricultural Policy. A focus on maximizing Ireland’s ability to secure the CAP funding dominated national policy, and state bodies strongly advocated initiatives such as the Farm Modernization Scheme. Commentators such as O’Hara and Commins (1999) observed that national policy equated

rural with agriculture, and that the dominant perception was that what was good for agriculture was good for rural society as a whole.

Towards the end of the 1980s this uni-sectoral approach to promoting the development of rural areas became somewhat diluted. The ratification of the Single European Act (1987) and other steps towards Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) required the Commission and member states to address inter-regional economic imbalances. The Commission (1990) drew up a set of indicators by which the so-called “lagging-behind” or “peripheral” regions could be spatially defined and identified. These indicators highlighted a correlation between peripherality and lower levels of GDP. The lagging regions were identified as Ireland, Portugal, Greece, most of Spain, and southern Italy. These regions were identified as “Objective 1,” and received over 60 per cent of the total financial allocation under the structural funds for the period 1989-93, amounting to 60.3 billion euros (1990: 221).

The introduction of a regionally differentiated approach to EU policies marked a shift away from the spatially blind approach that had characterized the CAP (ESPON, 2003; Ahner, 2004; Courades, 2004). During the period 1989-93 Ireland was the highest recipient per capita of EU Structural Funds. Over 25 per cent of Ireland’s National Development Plan (1989-93) was co-financed by the EU. This gave the EU considerable influence over the types of project supported. It marked an increased emphasis on the development of the physical infrastructure of rural areas and on education and training. The EU also furthered the role of endogenous agents and partnership structures in rural development (see more below).

The EU emphasis on spatial-differentiation and diversification of the rural economy were increasingly reflected in the rural development and related discourses within Ireland. The contraction of the agricultural sector, continuing rural depopulation, the growing urbanization and suburbanization of Irish society, and the increasingly apparent interdependence of the rural and urban economies accentuated calls for approaches to rural development to be placed in the context of *regional* solutions. Ó Cinnéide and Cuddy (1992: 75) articulated the need for a two-tiered strategy based on combining urban distribution with specific strategies to promote the development of rural areas that did not come under the direct influence of urban centres. They also recognized potential roles for endogenous organizations in local development and in service delivery.

The converging themes of endogenous potential, multi-sectoral integration and regionalized approaches were furthered by the evaluation of the LEADER I program (Kearney et al., 1995) and by the National Economic and Social Council (NESC). The NESC recommended further investment in animation, capacity-building, and locally based approaches to economic diversification. Both the NESC and Kearney et al. envisaged an enhanced role for the Local Action Groups within the LEADER program, and what were called Area Partnership Companies (APCs) in leading multi-sectoral approaches to rural development. In response, the

Irish government extended the program (LEADER II, 1995-9) to cover the entire state, excluding the major urban centres (PLANET, 2000). At the same time, a number of reforms of regional and local authority structures reflected increased emphasis on regional approaches to rural development planning and management.

The Salzburg Declaration

The Cork Declaration (1996) proposed an “integrated approach” to rural development in Europe, aimed at reversing rural depopulation, combatting poverty, stimulating employment and equality of opportunity, as well as responding to growing requests for more quality, health, safety, personal development and leisure, and improved rural well-being. Shortall and Shucksmith (1998) pointed out how the implementation of the Cork Declaration required that, “rural development policy be as decentralized as possible, based on partnership, participation, and a bottom-up approach” (1998: 74). In 2003 the European Union’s Directorate General Agriculture convened a rural development conference in Salzburg. The conference brought together representatives from national, regional, and local governments, farming organizations, partnerships, civil society, academia, and other stakeholders in rural development from throughout the EU-15 and the then candidate accession countries. The Salzburg Declaration, which issued from this conference, reiterated many of the key principles expressed in the Cork Declaration.¹ While this indicates consistency in the EU approach to rural development, the Salzburg Declaration failed to put forward any new or innovative proposals or frameworks. Indeed, the fact that this declaration reflected so much of what had happened eight years previously may, in the context of the impact of the CAP, be an indication of limited progress in the interim.

The Financial Perspectives for the period 2007-23, which the European Commission issued in 2004,² represent an attempt to redress the inconsistencies between the CAP and other elements of EU policy. In particular, they represent an effort to bring the CAP into line with the Gothenburg Principles on Sustainable Development (2001). The Commission identified three main priorities for the enlarged European Union as:

- sustainable development, encompassing competitiveness, cohesion, and the sustainable management and protection of natural resources;
- European citizenship, underpinned by an area of freedom, justice, security, and basic access to public goods;
- Europe as global partner, assuming regional responsibilities (2004: 6).

The Commission has proposed that “each programme must have a LEADER element for the implementation of local development strategies of local action groups. A minimum of 7% of national programme funding is reserved for LEADER” (ibid., 2). These proposals and financial perspectives represent the strongest commitment

since the Global Grant scenario of the early 1990s to local development partnerships on the part of the EU. They add to the need for a comprehensive evaluation of the *territorial* impacts of local development partnerships so as to inform national rural development priorities, contribute to the dissemination of best practice, and enlighten the implementation of rural development actions after 2007.

In general, commentators have lauded the EU's role in stimulating partnerships in Ireland, and have presented evidence of the EU's commitment to partnership governance and citizen empowerment (Healey and Reynolds, 1999; OECD, 2001; European Foundation, 2003). The European Model of Rural Development envisages *A Living Countryside*, with multi-functional agriculture and social and economic mixes in rural areas (Givord, 2000). Although the CAP and farm supports remain in place, the continuously declining numbers engaged in the primary sector and the appropriateness and cost-effectiveness of direct payments to agriculture in light of EU enlargement need to be constantly reviewed.

This overarching and evolving European arena of policy development, characterized by an increasingly integrated and territorial (i.e., spatial) approach to rural development, as against a directly subsidized agricultural sectoral emphasis, has been and continues to be highly influential in shaping the Irish approach to rural development.

The Irish Policy on Rural Development

In some contrast to the Newfoundland and Labrador case, Ireland has an explicit policy on rural development. The most recent manifestation of this policy emanated from the *White Paper on Rural Development: Ensuring the Future — A Strategy for Rural Development in Ireland* (Department of Agriculture and Food, 1999: 1). This has been fully accepted by the Irish government. The government's vision is articulated as follows:

The Government is committed to ensuring the economic and social wellbeing of rural communities, to providing the conditions for a meaningful and fulfilling life for all people living in rural areas and to striving to achieve a rural Ireland in which

- there will be vibrant sustainable communities with the range of age, income and occupational groups, such as to allow them to adapt to ongoing economic, social, cultural and environmental change and to enjoy a standard of living and a quality of life which will make them attractive communities in which to live and work; the maximum number of rural households and especially family farms, will be retained; there will be equity in terms of opportunity both between rural and urban communities and between communities in rural areas; individuals and families will have a real choice as to whether to stay in, leave, or move to rural Ireland;
- there will be sufficient income and employment opportunities to allow individuals and families to live with dignity;

- rural communities will enjoy access to education, training and lifelong learning and to an adequate level of social and other services and infrastructures;
- rural communities will participate effectively in the structure and decision making processes affecting them in an inclusive society based on the principles of equity, particularly in relation to gender balance and social justice;
- the cultural identity of rural communities, in particular the language, traditions, heritage and sense of community will be valued and retained;
- the rural environment will be respected and development in rural areas will take place in a sustainable manner.

The country's rural development policy is explicitly stated in a chapter (Chapter 11) of the *National Development Plan 2000-2006*. The policy (Government of Ireland, 2000: 199) specifies:

A dedicated focus on rural development policy with the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development as the lead Department; a regional approach to development; service and infrastructure provision; sustainable economic development; human resource development; and a determined focus on poverty and social exclusion.

This commitment and policy direction for rural development has been re-stated and reinforced in the recently released *National Development Plan 2007-13* (Government of Ireland, 2007).

RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY: A COMPARATIVE SUMMARY

Both Ireland and Newfoundland and Labrador have pursued rural development for extended periods of time, now stretching over half a century. The focus, the content, the assumptions and implicit development theories underpinning policy in both jurisdictions have changed over time. Both have evolved rural development policies within nested political structures, one federal-provincial, the other national-supranational. Both have evolved their policies from, in the Irish case a once-dominant industry (agriculture), and in the Newfoundland and Labrador case a dominant economic sector (the primary sector, with the fishery, mining, lumber, and other industries). Both have moved variously from a rural development policy that sectorally mirrored and essentially implemented overarching provincial or national economic policy priorities, to policies that are, from the start, more rurally based and rurally focused. Ireland is more explicit in its rural development policy than is Newfoundland and Labrador.

Rural development policies in both jurisdictions subscribe to the basic tenets of modernization, and unabashed integration with the global economy (Hettne, 1995; McMichael, 2004). The state is a more pervasive and active agent of development in the Irish case. Both subscribe, explicitly and implicitly, to notions of "regional balance," though in neither case is this fully articulated or translated into

development targets or formalized entitlements. The reduction in interregional disparities in opportunities and outcomes and the identification and exploitation of regional comparative advantage are common characteristics of policy in both cases; concepts long embedded in theory and in the regional development literature (e.g., Savoie, 1986; Bingham and Mier, 1993). Ireland has moved further and faster in diversifying its rural development policies and programs from the initially dominant *economic* focus to one that now encompasses social, social justice, cultural, organizational, institutional, and other dimensions of civil society, rural communities, and to some extent, rural local government. Both jurisdictions have gravitated towards a more local, endogenous, or bottom-up approach over time, one (Ireland) subscribing in more explicit terms to the principles of subsidiarity than the other. In both instances, local government has been belatedly included as an active partner in the development process, notwithstanding the very different local government histories and conditions in both contexts.

The definition of regions as the spatial units for rural development policy and programs have contrasting roots in Ireland and Newfoundland and Labrador; the former being largely responsive to externally (EU) generated criteria, the latter being delineated by a provincial public inquiry and then provincial fiat. Notwithstanding the glacial creep evident in the incremental reformulation of the EU's CAP and the maturation of the EEC into the EU, with attendant policy developments, rural development policy in Ireland has evolved in comparatively stable, predictable conditions within the state's national development planning process (since 1958). In contrast, rural development policy in Newfoundland and Labrador has traversed radically different periods of federal regional economic development policies and programs (e.g., Savoie, 1986; Coffey and Polèse, 1987; Fairbairn, 1998) and significant shifts in focus and priorities across a series of provincial governments.

The Irish rural development policy now firmly supports and invests in what is increasingly referred to as a "place-based" approach through a rich array of local partnerships, networks, County-based integrated development strategies, and other spatially articulated arrangements. Building on the social partnership model invented and successfully applied at the national level, multi-stakeholder area-based partnerships are embedded in the Irish rural development policy and practice (Sabel, 1996; OECD, 2001; Greer and Murray, 2003; O'Keeffe, 2006). The spatial dimension of Irish rural development policy is reinforced and applied through the three generations of the LEADER program, and the state's own *National Spatial Strategy*. There is not, as yet, a provincial development plan for Newfoundland and Labrador, and no evidence of a political commitment to specify development policy through spatially specific development priorities for all communities and areas within the provincial territory. The REDBs, and now the emergent Rural Secretariat regions, do not have the depth, breadth, density, and intensity of the area-based partnerships that now cover rural Ireland.

Ireland's rural development policy is significantly influenced by the dominance, growth, and rapid spatial extent of the Greater Dublin Area (GDA). It serves to polarize many issues and sets in stark contrast the conditions (e.g., infrastructure, unemployment levels) and the relatively modest growth prospects of more peripheral rural regions (e.g., County Donegal). In part, it has precipitated the setting up of development organizations specifically designed for non-metropolitan, rapid growth contexts (e.g., the Western Development Commission). The same degree of urban primacy and spatial-economic dominance does not pertain in Newfoundland and Labrador. So there are bona fide rural development policies, as opposed to growth management policies, that have been formulated for and are applicable to rural areas in close proximity to St. John's (e.g., in the Irish Loop Region).

In both contexts, rural development policies and associated practices have at times been opportunistic, and not always evidently congruous with enunciated longer-term strategies. Ireland has, from time to time, drawn on substantial development funds from the EU. Newfoundland and Labrador has drawn on changing federal government policies and funding provisions. Opportunism and a degree of clientelism has coloured practice, compared with enunciated policy, in both jurisdictions from time to time. This fact and other factors have meant that in both cases the tension, systemic to most rural development contexts, between longer-term perspectives and commitments (to cumulative investments for personal, organizational, institutional, and community capacity development) and shorter-term projects with associated concrete "deliverables" remains as a structural challenge for all concerned.

DESIGNING AND USING THE REGIONAL CONSTRUCT IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT:
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Region: A Development Framework

The role of the state has been a centrepiece in the development discourse for decades (e.g., Todaro, 2002; Hettne, 1995; Peet and Hartwick, 1999; Martinussen, 1997). In times of complex transnational governance structures and interventions (e.g., the EU, NAFTA, WTO), the roles and relevance of the state become even more problematic and complex. At the same time, in conditions of rural restructuring associated with globalization, the resurgence of neo-liberal ideology in public policy, and other factors in advanced capitalist contexts, there is growing evidence of increased localism, spatial differentiation and active constituencies fostering vigorous and assertive local development (Marsden et al., 1993). These interrelated conditions pose a variety of challenges in rural development. "As a result, governments are increasingly recognizing the need for a more locally tailored or territorial approach" (OECD, 2006: 53). One response is to focus on meso-level structures and organizations as intermediaries to accommodate the spatial differentiation and the inability of the state to dictate locally relevant policies and programs, while at the

same time allowing for the articulation and implementation of the state's agenda (via selective decentralization) through sub-state territorial systems. The region and its organizational and other accoutrements is one such arrangement (Douglas, 1997, 1999, 2006). Such area-based development organizations have been employed in a great diversity of contexts over the last century. Both Ireland and Newfoundland and Labrador have rich histories of regional policy and program initiatives. Recent applications in Ireland and Newfoundland and Labrador in Canada provide interesting insights as to their efficacy in the context of rural development.

The Regional Economic Development Boards in Newfoundland and Labrador

Rural development in Newfoundland and Labrador, primarily rural economic development, is carried out on a regional basis, through the 20 regions of the Regional Economic Development Boards (Figure 4.1). The primary and most immediate basis for the policy relating to the mandate of these regional organizations is to be found in Recommendation No. 3 of the report of the Task Force on Community Economic Development in Newfoundland and Labrador (Task Force, 1995: 65), which states:

Establish 18 Regional Economic Development boards to perform the following five functions:

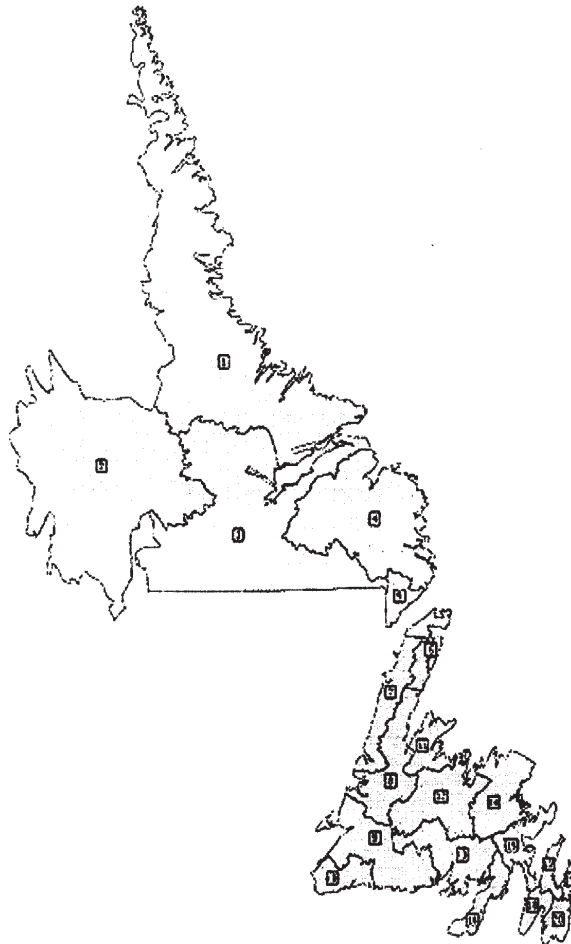
1. leadership role in the development and implementation of zonal strategic economic plans
2. operate a business investment centre through Business Development Centre Board
3. provide support to organizations and communities within the zone
4. co-ordinate all social and economic initiatives relating to regional economic development in the zone
5. promote public participation and community education.

Greenwood has articulated the mandate as one to “oversee the development of a strategic economic plan and control a business investment centre . . . co-ordinate other social and economic initiatives within the zone . . . foster community education and public participation. . . .” (Greenwood, 1997: 130-1). The REDBs were expected to take the leadership for rural economic development, for strategic planning and related matters (Task Force, 1995: 65).

The “new regional development” was to be implemented through a new funding mechanism, the *Strategic Regional Diversification Agreement* (SRDA), with initial implementation through the Economic Recovery Commission (ERC). The SRDA was replaced by a negotiated *Comprehensive Economic Development Agreement*, which provides core administrative and related funding for the province's 20 REDBs. Drawing on pilot projects and other experiences in Norway and elsewhere,

a particularly innovative dimension of this initiative was the introduction of five-year performance contracts, binding on all parties (i.e., the new Regional Economic Development Boards, and the federal and provincial governments). These are formally reported, reviewed, and updated on an annual basis through a joint monitoring process.

Figure 4.1: Regional Economic Development Board Zones in Newfoundland and Labrador



Source: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, at: <www.intrd.gov.nl.ca/intrd/economicboards.htm>.

The REDBs were proposed and designed to be “community-based boards” (Greenwood, 1997: 127). These footings have been cited as fundamental to their success: “The democratic legitimacy of the regional boards is a prerequisite for effective negotiation and compliance by government” (Greenwood, 1997: 134). This assertion of democracy raises questions as to whether they could be such, whether in fact all or most of them have actually developed as such, and, if so, whether they are perceived in those terms.

The elements in the REDBs’ design and mandates are interrelated. The interrelationships between these elements are also tied to the performance of the province’s 20 boards, and to their survival. Without a demonstrable legitimacy within their territories and before their federal-provincial counterparts, the boards’ power, leverage, and credibility would be compromised. Without the financial and personnel resources to materially co-ordinate in an effective manner and — even more demanding — to provide leadership here, the boards’ role and relevance would be incrementally prejudiced. Failure to effectively co-ordinate (however this is assessed) would exacerbate any deficiencies, real or perceived, relating to a board’s legitimacy. And while political choices after the acceptance of most of the Task Force’s recommendations meant that the boards did not inherit the Community Business Development Corporations (CBDC) business development functions, the expectation that they would provide leadership in the development and *implementation* of their zone’s strategic plans remains, albeit through co-ordination and facilitation. Without the committed resources for business development, the boards are inevitably weakened and removed from immediate effect on this core dimension of rural economic development. They have to pursue business development resources elsewhere.

Core funding for the boards, annually in the order of \$150-200,000 (approximately 25 per cent from the province, 75 per cent from ACOA) is for administrative and general operations, therefore, most boards most of the time have to pursue project funding (that is, specific enterprise proposals) through various provincial and federal agencies. Their only assured “product” for their constituency is, therefore, their Strategic Economic Plan, annual reports, and a variety of communications and related outputs. If they are successful in securing support for local businesses, communities, and other interests in their development proposals they might further their credibility, relevance, and legitimacy. But their own proposals, and those of their constituencies that they might promote and vigorously foster, have to be made to a variety of government agencies, which are line departments or equivalents, few of which might have a substantial understanding of and empathy for integrated rural development and none of which are bound, in terms of the specifics of their program priorities and resources allocations, by the provisions of the REDB/province/federal government accord.

All of this may signal that a shortfall in the design, and/or the political decision regarding the remit of the boards, combined with a modest funding commitment

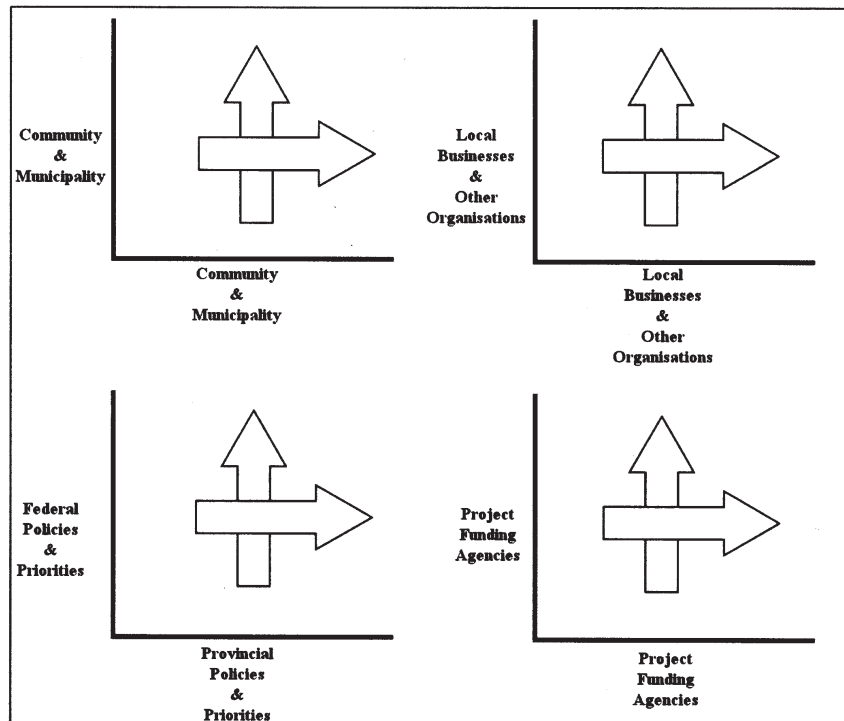
has left the REDBs at some risk. In terms of their mandate they lack a central element in rural economic development, i.e., the investment and business development function, and authority. They lack a secure and realistic resource base to undertake this core function. This difficulty has been addressed on a number of occasions (see, for example, House's [2003] review of this issue and the question of Community Capital Corporations, and related development vehicles). While much of the business development investment and related business development services appears to have remained within the purview of the Community Business Development Corporations (like the Community Futures Development Corporations in other parts of Canada), the activities of the CBDCs, ACOA's regional initiatives, and those of others may or may not accord with and reinforce the REDBs' strategic directions. And the efficacy of their initiatives has, in fact, to be continuously negotiated. This core function effectively is beyond the ambit of the agency most concerned with it.

A central challenge facing the REDBs relates to what might be called the contested negotiation milieu. The boards are charged with negotiating among a considerable array of communities in their zones, including some municipalities. This is a daunting challenge at the best of times and the rural development record speaks to the many risks, challenges, opportunities, and pitfalls here (e.g., Baker, 1993; Korsching et al., 1992; CWC, 1997, 2000; King, 2004; Walsh and Meldon, 2004). The boards are expected to reach out to, persuade, and involve a significant cross-section of the business interests, representatives of the education sector and other community services, fishers, organized labour, municipal personnel, and others. This sectoral dimension of the board's responsibilities is demanding and involves not only a significant outreach and communications process to encourage participation from these disparate sectors, but also a maintenance function to ensure their continuing participation, inclusion, and effective engagement in the development process. Finally, the boards have had to negotiate their resource base (and survival) on an annual basis with a combined provincial/federal team, and nowadays with each of them separately. Very significant challenges for the boards include: changing political priorities, which have been clearly evident in the short lives of the boards to date; the degree to which previous provincial government initiatives can be disowned and cancelled by ensuing provincial governments from a different political party; the inevitable uncertainties with shifts in departmental and agency portfolios; and the changing roster of senior personnel to deal with. In short, these periodic negotiations are fraught with uncertainties. They are, by definition, exercises in negotiated outcomes conducted through vastly unequal power relations.

Hence, the REDB functioning must be understood as a process that is conducted over a contested negotiation surface characterized by three axes of negotiated outcomes, a surface that shifts its gradients, peaks, and troughs from year to year, if not more frequently (Figure 4.2). Confounding this dynamic negotiation surface further we may add in the REDBs' opportunistic project proposals and the negotiations

and case-making that go with them, with a variety of provincial and federal agencies. We then have an additional axis of complexity here. In sum, this is a very demanding milieu for a local, volunteer-based rural development organization to work in. It is even more demanding when we add the expectation of leadership in plan preparation and notably, implementation facilitation and co-ordination.

Figure 4.2: Regional Economic Development Boards: Four Dimensions of Operational Complexity and Challenge



Another important consideration relates to the evolving relationships between the REDBs' two major partners, i.e., the federal and provincial governments, their interpretations of the rural development issues and opportunities, their funding of the rural development enterprise itself, and their modus operandi as partners. While this topic is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is too important not to mention here. The various formal agreements, which have typified the federal/provincial collaborative process since the late 1960s, have provided important and relatively secure road maps for the sharing of responsibilities and the funding formulae. Generally,

the federal government has provided about 70 per cent of the funding for collaborative rural development programs and projects in Newfoundland and Labrador. The most recent of these umbrella accords is the Comprehensive Economic Development Agreement, initially entered into in 1997 with extensions and expansions agreed on in 2002-3.

However, the working relationship between the federal and provincial governments is not always one of close collaboration on rural development. For example, in the last couple of years it has been reported that some uncertainties or reservations have surfaced in the province, contributing to a concern to moderate any further commitments, or perhaps even the current level and types of commitments to the development agenda. A call for examination, more information, and a formal assessment of the rural regional development process has ensued (e.g., via the P.J. Gardiner Institute report to the Ministerial Committee). In some contrast, in the interim the federal government has pressed ahead with a number of unilateral rural development initiatives (e.g., Innovative Communities Fund, 2005). Over the last year or more ACOA has heightened its interaction with the REDBs, directly funded the placing of Economic Development Officers in all Boards, moved its contributions of REDB funding from 70 per cent to 75 per cent, and collaborated with each of the 20 boards in the design and completion of three-year Business Plans for each Board's activities and priorities. The shifting nature of the federal-provincial partnership here is one of the conditions of fluidity and occasional uncertainty that the REDBs must contend with; an environmental condition that has direct implications for their resource base, their leverage, their program priorities (e.g., business development versus social development), their government partners on-site in the regions, and many other matters.

IRELAND: TERRITORIAL AND REGIONAL DIMENSIONS OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

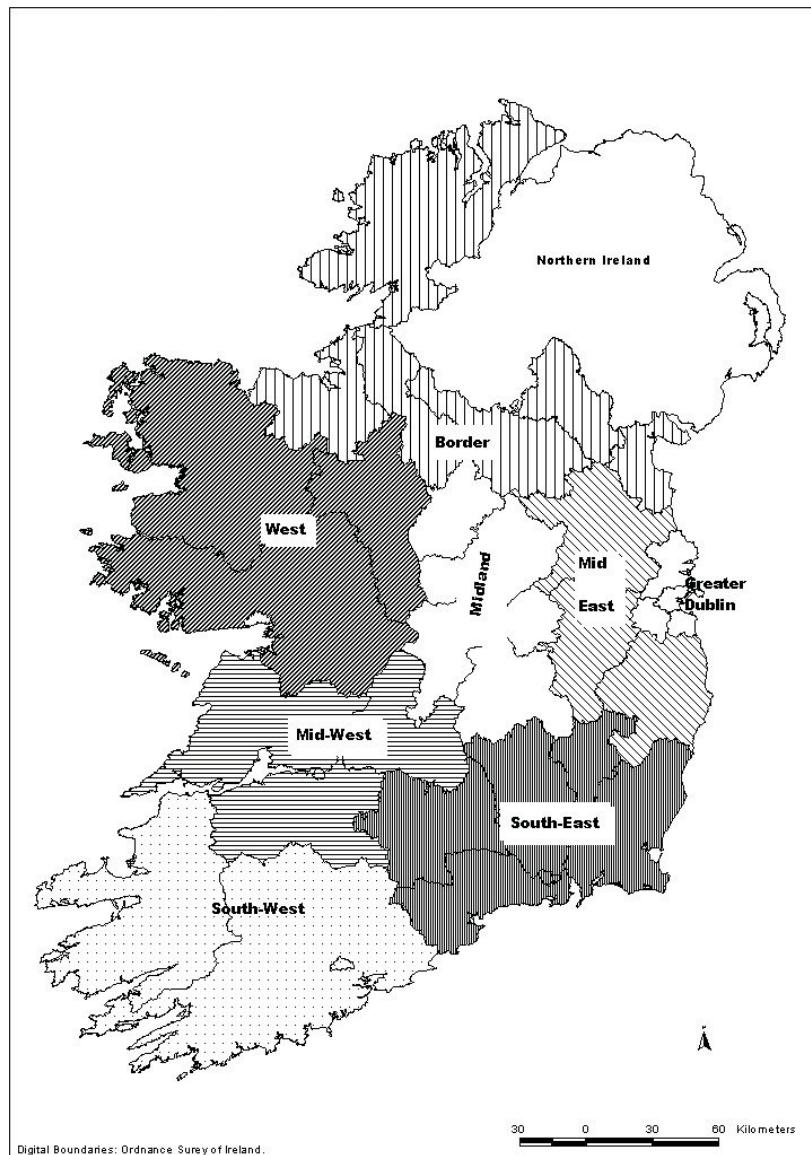
The Regional Authorities

In Ireland eight regional authorities, established in 1994, draw their membership from local authorities (Figure 4.3). The Regional Authorities have been given the statutory role of providing regionally based co-ordination between public authorities, and responsibility for monitoring and advising on the role of programs that are EU co-financed.

In 2002, Ireland introduced its National Spatial Strategy (NSS), the purpose of which is to support balanced regional development and sustainable growth throughout the state. It comes in the context of the rapid growth of the Greater Dublin Area, and the persistent demographic and economic decline of many rural areas, particularly those in the west of the country. The NSS advocated a polycentric approach to regional development, and it identified a number of designated regional urban centres as "gateways" and "hubs." Following the publication of the NSS, the eight regional authorities were charged with leading a consultation process to for-

ulate regional planning guidelines for the promotion of the NSS objectives. These guidelines serve to inform local authorities and statutory bodies.

Figure 4.3: Ireland: The Regional Authorities



Ireland's Local Government and Local Development

Ireland's traditionally weak local government system (Barrington, 1991) has undergone significant reforms as a result of the growth of endogenous approaches to development. In 1996, the Department of the Environment published a White Paper, *Better Local Government*. As a result, local authorities have established thematic strategic policy committees (SPCs), which include membership from civil society. Although the SPCs' role is formally one of consultation, they have had considerable impact on the agendas and policies of local authorities.

The SPCs with responsibility for Community and Enterprise have become the forerunners to County and City Development Boards (CDBs). Since 2001, County/City Development Boards have been operating in each of Ireland's 35 local authority areas (cities and counties). Each board brings together representatives of local government, the state sector, social partners, community sector, and local development, namely LEADER and Local Development Partnerships. The boards (CDBs) are charged with co-ordinating the development efforts of all members with the aim of delivering on an agreed 15–20-year territorial development strategy. Initially, the boards tended to exhibit a considerable degree of autonomy, and they benefited from the cross-sectoral inputs. However, they have become increasingly aligned with city/county councils. Most are based in the civic offices and their staff are appointed by and now report to the city/county manager or other local authority functionaries. While LEADER and Local Development Partnerships have generally been enthusiastic contributors to County/City Development Boards, they have become increasingly skeptical of them, not only due to their association with local government, but also because CDBs have made some overtures to government advocating that they subsume various functions currently executed by the local development sector.

The Emergence of Locally Based Partnership Governance Structures

We have stressed many of the complexities that have emerged in the exogenous institutional milieu that is concerned with rural and local development in Ireland.³ We have pointed to the influence of the EU in shaping national approaches, particularly in promoting a more multi-sectoral, integrated, and spatially differentiated approach to rural development. At a local level, the EU has exerted considerable influence in the emergence and development of local governance structures. The EU has served as something of a "cajoler" (Borscheid, 2000) in bringing partners together, and has provided co-funding for local development.

With the rapid growth of Ireland's economy over the past decade and more, and the subsequent reduction in the state's reliance on EU transfers, the attitudes, roles, and responsibilities of the Irish political system and statutory bodies are an increasingly significant variable in Ireland's local development partnerships.

The EU as Initiator of Local Social Partnership

Parallel to the National Development Plan and the Community Support Framework (1989-93), the EU began to channel funds to endogenous and partnership structures through a number of “community initiatives.”⁴ In addition, the CSF provided for the operation of a global grant to fund spatially-targeted local development in disadvantaged areas. The global grant was administered in Ireland by what was called the Area Development Management (ADM),⁵ established as an intermediary body between the government and the European Commission. Initially, local area development plans were prepared by partnership structures in 34 designated areas. These were submitted to the ADM, appraised, and allocated funding on the basis of five-year action plans. The establishment of the community initiatives and global grant under the former ADM marks a significant departure from the previous channelling of resources to top-down agencies. It also manifests recognition of the need to support development activities other than mainstream agriculture in the rural context, and must be seen as the first concrete step that gave effect to endogenous development through local partnership, as the 1994-7 National Development Plan (Government of Ireland, 1993: 19) stated:

The Government recognizes the importance of a local dimension to enterprise and employment creation and the importance of developing the capacities of local communities to contribute to tackling unemployment and pursuing local development.

Domestic Factors Combine with EU Influences

The extent of Ireland’s economic problems by the 1980s and the growing social and economic disparities between areas emphasized the need for more innovative approaches to policy. The promise of EU funding, the positive lessons from alternative approaches in other parts of Europe, and the encouragement of economic commentators such as the Economic and Social Research Institute prompted the Irish government to experiment with area-based approaches to development (Callan et al., 1996; Atkinson et al., 2003). The government had already been involved in providing part-funding for the poverty programs and the Integrated Resource Development (IRD) Initiatives, and had observed the contributions of the community and voluntary sector in finding local solutions to the problems of poverty and exclusion.

These factors combined to promote the emergence of an “area-based” or spatial approach to rural development. The area-based approach demonstrated a realization that poverty and disadvantage have spatial or geographical dimensions, and that solutions should be spatially based. This emphasis predated a similar spatial perspective gaining increased acceptance throughout other OECD countries (OECD, 2006). The increase in levels of poverty during the 1980s had made the spatial dimension of poverty much more visible. High levels of unemployment (over 50 per cent in some communities), and poverty in particular geographical concentrations

brought associated problems of crime, substance abuse, and violence. These high-visibility dimensions of poverty and disadvantage were most evident in urban centres. Dublin City Centre, and some northern suburbs as well as parts of Limerick manifested the greatest concentrations of social deprivation. Citing a National Economic and Social Council (NESC)⁶ analysis in 1990, Walsh noted how the policy importance of these “unemployment blackspots” provided a “*prima facie* case for the development of area-based programs” (Walsh, 1999: 282).

Taking this view forward the NESC recommended that public bodies and state agencies commit to “area renewal and community-based co-ordination.” The Council argued for cross-sectoral change, allied with economic stability and a social dimension. Subsequent NESC reports and recommendations to government further emphasized the need to develop a partnership model at the local level, and the potential for social and economic development that could derive from “harnessing Ireland’s high levels of community involvement, extensive voluntary associations and absence of deep social divisions” (cited in NESC, 1994: 12). In terms of institutional arrangements the NESC argued very strongly that Ireland look to the economic and social models in other European states such as Austria, Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, where government and the social partners were collectively involved in employment policy formulation and delivery, and where employment policies had a particular focus on poverty alleviation.

An earlier NESC (1986) publication, *A Strategy for Development*, prompted government and the social partners to engage in centralized negotiation and the formulation of a collective agreement for the realization of agreed-on economic and social objectives. This collective approach at the national level has seen national wage and productivity agreements replace previous systems of local bargaining. Reviews of these national partnership agreements (Table 4.1) have been largely favourable (Sabel, 1996, 2001), and have generated considerable interest in Newfoundland and Labrador (Strategic Partnership Study Group, 2002). It is generally agreed that national partnership agreements have contributed significantly to economic growth, employment creation, and reductions in the levels of (absolute) poverty, and have enhanced social inclusion in Ireland.⁷

Table 4.1: National Social Partnership Agreements

1988-90	Programme for National Recovery
1991-3	Programme for Economic and Social Progress (PESP)
1994-6	Programme for Competitiveness and Work
1997-9	Partnership 2000 for Inclusion, Employment and Competitiveness
2000-3	Programme for Prosperity and Fairness
2003-5	Sustaining Progress
2007-10	Towards 2016 (T16)

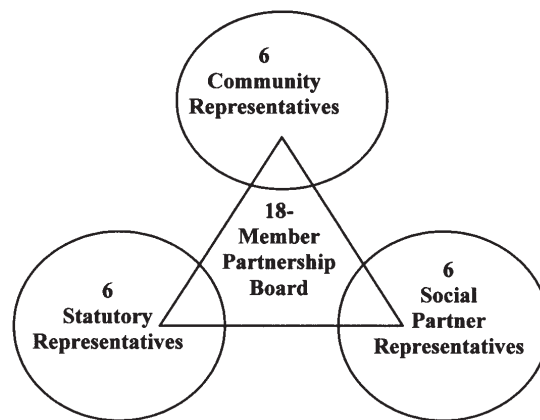
From National to Local: Transfer of Development Models

The national social partnership represents a critical element in the horizontal linkages that affect partnership processes in rural development. As the OECD noted; “The initial success of the partnership model at national level was one of the reasons for its extension to the local level” (OECD, 2000: 3). The second national partnership agreement (PESP) provided the mechanism for government and EU support for the emergence of the partnership process at the local level. Its implementation paralleled a period of significant EU financial transfers to Ireland under the Structural Funds, as previously outlined. Under the PESP 12 pilot area-based partnership companies were established to:

... apply, in the labour market context, at local level, the approach that was applied at national level, namely to have a problem-solving approach, to mobilize the resources of those who had a potential contribution to make, and to be flexible in devising remedies, including a willingness to experiment. (McCarthy, 1998)

Sabel (OECD, 1996) suggests that the partnerships were established as a means of overcoming political instability. Of the 12 new pilot area-based partnership companies, four were located in rural areas namely, South Kerry, South West Wexford, West Waterford, and North Mayo. These areas were selected by the government on the basis of their high levels of socio-economic disadvantage, including high levels of long-term unemployment, poor farming conditions, and a weak economic base. Like the national partnership structures, the area-based partnership companies (APCs) brought together representatives of the state and the social partnership, but in incorporating the principles of endogenous development they also included representatives of the community and voluntary sector. As Figure 4.4 shows, APCs were based on a tripartite structure.

Figure 4.4: APC Membership and Structure



They were “founded on the principles of consultation, participation and inclusion, and were seen by some as a way of renewing the culture of governance by making public organisations more dynamic and responsive to the needs of civil society” (OECD, 2001: 4). Indeed, the PESP agreement had specified that local communities would be the primary movers. Conferring this responsibility on the community and voluntary sector emphasized the distance from endogenous approaches, but it also marked out the “Irish partnerships” from those in other European states. It had been the case generally in other parts of Europe, and to a large extent still is, that partnerships were formed out of a coming together of the public and business sectors, and that the community and voluntary sector was “invited” to join the partnership at a later stage (e.g., Jones and Little, 2000; Westholm, 1999).

The APCs were funded by the Irish Exchequer and from the EU (through the global grant) to a total of IR£8.8 million (11.17 million euros) between 1991 and 1993. In many cases they were successful in raising additional funds locally, and in securing financial contributions from the statutory sector at the local level. The impact of the APCs in tackling unemployment exceeded targets. The National Development Plan published by the government in 1993 recommended extending the same partnership structure to other areas, on the basis that “these area-based approaches have yielded significant results in terms of enterprise and employment, community development and improved services for the long-term unemployed” (1993: 71).

Emergence of LEADER

A similar pattern marked the emergence of leader as a further catalyst to the partnership process (and regional approaches) in rural development, whereby the success of 16 rural development groups in the implementation of the LEADER I Programme (1991-4) led the way for the LEADER II Programme, which was extended to all rural areas in 1995/6. LEADER (Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale) is an EU initiative that has given effect to the model of area-based, multi-community, and integrated rural development as envisaged in *The Future of Rural Society* (1988). Over 200 LEADER groups were established in the 12 EU member states, and each was allocated a budget to support innovative projects by entrepreneurs, existing business, community associations, or combinations of actors with the objective of securing the development of the local rural economy. Projects in mainstream agriculture were precluded from LEADER support. This vision of strategically tailored area-based intervention in the development of rural communities was also captured in the European Commission White Paper, *The Future of Rural Society* (Commission of the European Communities, 1988: 53), which stated that:

The very idea of diversifying rural economies on the basis of their indigenous potential requires that whatever rural development programme is embarked upon, it must be based on actual local circumstances.

The White Paper went on to propose that the EU provide direct resources for initiatives to give effect to the formation of locally based rural development partnerships that would have responsibility for the implementation of an integrated and multi-sectoral rural development program. It stated that this proposal was designed to complement the existing policy strategy of supporting family farms, but recognized the need for a broader approach to development that would develop opportunities using other local resources.

Consolidation and Development of Local Partnership Approaches

During 1994 and 1995, each of the 38 area partnership companies in Ireland engaged in an intensive local consultation and strategic planning process, with the objective of producing a strategic local development plan to tackle disadvantage and social exclusion in its catchment area. The plans were then submitted to the former ADM for appraisal, which in turn decided on the financial allocation to each partnership.

In 1995, the government, in realizing that disadvantage was not confined to the designated APC areas, decided to invite applications from community groups for the remaining 17 per cent of the available global grant. Over 50 groups applied, and most received technical assistance from the ADM in compiling their applications. Ultimately, 33 were successful in securing funding and were known initially as Community Groups. In 2004 they were formally recognized as community partnerships. Their structure and modus operandi are similar to that of the APCs.

At present, APCs and CPS implement the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP) in disadvantaged urban and rural areas, representing about 65 per cent of the national territory. The LDSIP operates on the same principles as the LDP, namely that of targeting the most socially excluded persons in disadvantaged areas, and is also administered and supported by the ADM. The overall aim of the program is:

... to counter disadvantage and to promote equality, social and economic inclusion through support for Partnerships and Community Groups, who adopt a partnership approach to tackling local issues on the basis of comprehensive, integrated Local Development Plans designed to counter social exclusion and to equitably target the most disadvantaged individuals and groups within their areas. (ADM, 2000: 8)

The LDSIP comprises three measures, under which eligible projects must come. These are: community development, youth support, and services for unemployed people. This approach to local development represents a combination of the area-based approach with a sectorally targeted approach. It is based on the notion

that disadvantage and poverty exist in degrees, and that within spatial units of deprivation disadvantage may be experienced differently by people and groups depending on their own life situation. As Haase and McKeown (2003: iv) note:

The *raison d'être* of area-based initiatives is that space is an important aspect of the structuring of social processes. Many people are willing to pay a premium in order to reside in affluent neighbourhoods and to pay private school fees in order to provide their children with a superior education and a head start in their careers. The chief purpose of the area-based Partnerships is therefore to counter the effects of the additional or cumulative effects arising out of the clustering of poor households.

THE REGIONAL CONSTRUCT: A COMPARATIVE SUMMARY

The differences between Ireland's and Newfoundland and Labrador's regional-based approach to rural development are significant. While the roots of Ireland's regional configurations are longer (Horner, 2000) and have undergone a confounding series of reconfigurations, Newfoundland and Labrador has had in its Regional Development Associations (RDAs) the foundations of a regional approach to rural development for some time. As already noted, Newfoundland and Labrador's approach through formal contractual arrangements is notably innovative. While both jurisdictions have lived with the universal problem of multiple administrative regions (e.g., health, tourism) and the overlaid confusion that this can generate (such as Fuchs, 1995), Ireland's is exceptionally complex. In part, the successes achieved in Ireland's rural development have been won in spite of this complex, confusing, and at times ambiguous plethora of regional and sub-regional jurisdictions.

While Newfoundland and Labrador's approach has shifted from time to time away from a dominant focus on the economic development objective, it has maintained this focus. In contrast, Ireland's participation in the EU, and the urgency of the development issues at hand, has meant a cumulative broadening of the regional rural development remit well beyond purely economic considerations (such as jobs, new businesses) into social welfare, culture, and other development priorities. This has influenced the nature of the regional constituencies and participant profiles, as well as the geographic configuration of the regions themselves. This is especially evident in the spatial delineation of LEADER areas and those encompassed by the APCs.

The EU effect is dramatically evident in the delineation of Objective 1 regions within Ireland. While the entire country was designated as an Objective 1 area, with associated supplementary funding for development (such as infrastructure), the progress of national economic development has meant that Ireland has now been divided into two overarching regions; the western and border (with Northern Ireland) areas retaining their Objective 1 status, and the rest of the country in transition out of this level of support. This macro two-way division of the country's rural re-

gions has been formalized as the Border, Midlands and Western Region and the Southern and Eastern Region. The former, the BMW, has its own formally constituted Assembly. All of this allows for the application of different EU policies and programs in the two macro-regions, different national policies and programs, and different collaborative agendas among the Regional Authorities and others. While the recent Ministerial Committee has recommended more interregional co-operation and collaboration in Newfoundland and Labrador, and while there is some evidence of the emergence of an informal grouping of zonal boards among the zones in the western parts of Newfoundland island, the 20 regions are foundational for a study of area-based rural development and there is no parallel macro-configuration contemplated as yet.

The funding base for the various regions in Ireland is far more extensive than those in Newfoundland and Labrador. While it varies over different programming periods, the operational funding and the program and project funding for rural regional development in Ireland is at an entirely different scale than that in Newfoundland and Labrador, not atypically being tenfold larger on a per capita basis. This contrast in funding reflects the parallel breadth of the rural development approach in Ireland, being much more holistic, and the European ideological investment in and longer commitment to rural regional development. The results, however, have meant that the regional organizations in Ireland have been able to invest much more in capacity-building, retain a significant array of professional resources, engage in sophisticated long-range and strategic planning (IRD Duhallow, 2006; Wicklow Rural Partnership, 2004), pursue the integration of development initiatives (such as youth counselling and environmental management, labour-force retraining and cultural development, social inclusion, and enterprise development), and make the process increasingly community-based.

Various regional configurations in Ireland, not all, are expected to manifest and practice what has been called “bottom-up” planning and development. This is at times rendered as synonymous with “community-based” planning and development. This cannot be the case for the multi-county regions under the jurisdiction of the Regional Authorities, and even less so for the two macro-regions. It can be the case for the LEADER, the APC and other sub-regional entities where access, citizen engagement, and participation around a host of issues and opportunities are much more feasible. In some contrast, the extensive geographical territories that make up the REDB regions across Newfoundland and Labrador were expected to provide the platform for a “community-based” development planning and development co-ordination process. The degree to which this is feasible is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, demands on the Newfoundland and Labrador regional organizations, in this respect, are far more onerous than for those in the Irish context. This again dramatizes the centrality of the *spatial dimension* of rural development policy and planning. Relative location (that is, from major urban centres), distance, the configuration of the rural settlement system (such as highly concentrated mar-

ket towns and villages versus scattered remote hamlets and outports), population and employments densities, the very shape of the regional or sub-regional construct, and the pervasive issue of accessibility (in all its dimensions, including time, cost, and power) all directly influence the sustainability of the rural region and the efficacy of policy and practice.

The relative maturity of a spatial approach to rural development evident in Europe (for example, Faludi, 2002) contrasts with the uneven commitment to this perspective in Canada. While there is some evidence of resurgence in Canada (Douglas, 2006) and the term “place-based” rural policy has achieved some currency in Ottawa, the sectoral approach to development remains dominant. The Cork Declaration (1996) and ensuing declarations have reinforced the principles of subsidiarity, an acknowledgement of the relevance and legitimacy of localism, and the imperative of a spatial approach to integrated rural development. Subsidiarity has been given even more potency in the Irish context with the interconnecting of the National Development Plan and the National Spatial Strategy, and the fortifying application of the social partnership consensual development process from the national level to the local. A spatially based culture of rural development planning and management has been crafted.

Rural regional development in both Newfoundland and Labrador and Ireland has operated under the continuing tensions and centripetal forces of political centralization. The perennial and systemic dynamics of core-periphery stresses around decentralization, dilution, and the elusive notion of devolution are to be found in both jurisdictions. Among many issues, this raises the question of the real roles of the regions (such as administrative arms of central government), the foundations of their democratic legitimacy (such as locally elected, nominated from stakeholder groups, attributed representative authority), and the manoeuvrability they can negotiate and secure within their formal remits (O’Keeffe, 2006; Byron, 2003). The Irish case is made all the more complex because of the plethora of overlapping organizations at the local level and the historical strength of the county as a unit of local government (and social and cultural representation). The county is a key player in the weak Regional Authorities, and now in the area-based consortiums called County Development Boards. Indeed, the county provides the basic geographic template for most area-based spatial arrangements in Ireland. The county may serve to underpin the forces of decentralization that the 36 successful LEADER organizations have achieved. But this is uncertain. The insertion of the nine new Rural Secretariat regions over the REDB regions in Newfoundland and Labrador and the recommended tightening of the strategic planning and annual business planning procedures here might serve to augment the processes of centralization. Political and administrative centralization remains a systemic part of the rural development dynamic in both contexts.

Both jurisdictions use the region as a mode of spatial organization and rural development planning and management. Notwithstanding many successes and the

status of spatial planning in Ireland, the regional entity in terms of geographic delineation and its remit remains a contested entity here. The regional configuration appears to be less of an issue in Newfoundland and Labrador, but the question of resources, the breadth of the organizations' remit and capacity across several fronts, remains a major issue.

CONCLUSION

We have attempted a critical exploratory comparative analysis of the rural development policy and planning processes in Ireland and Newfoundland and Labrador. Unavoidably selective, we undoubtedly miss points and perspectives that would materially enhance the comparison. Notwithstanding obvious differences in context, both in terms of the historical and current socio-economic rural conditions and prevailing policies, it has been argued that there are other dimensions of the rural development process that provide useful points of similarity and contrast.

Rural development in both Ireland and Newfoundland and Labrador has evolved, and continues its uncertain trajectory, in terms of policies, program, and practice. Ireland's process has become much more integrated and multi-faceted or holistic, has penetrated rural spaces to very local levels, is characterized by a complex blanket of interrelated networks, partnerships, and area-based local organizations touching on virtually every facet of rural life throughout the country, and reflects the overarching policy priorities of the state as exemplified in the *White Paper on Rural Development*, National Development Plan, and National Spatial Strategy. At the level of the LEADER Group or Area Partnership, planning and implementation are generally closely integrated through organizational design and substantial budgetary provisions and other commitments. In contrast, rural development in Newfoundland and Labrador remains sectorally divided. The principal rural development organizations, the Regional Economic Development Boards, focus on economic development priorities, have very modest operational budgets, and while charged with strategic planning and the facilitation and co-ordination of development implementation, do not have any program or project implementation resources. This poses significant challenges for the REDBs, and inevitably dilutes the province's leverage and presence in fuelling the rural development agenda. Notwithstanding several instances of interregional co-operation and collaboration, it is likely that it also augments the interregional differences in development capacity and performance. While there is a commitment to prepare a provincial development plan, the lack of articulation between a clearly enunciated macro-policy for rural development and the regional/local development agenda, is another point of contrast between Newfoundland and Labrador and Ireland. The latter has something of a charter and road-map for all concerned, with attendant commitments, expectations, and entitlements; the former is less secured and, therefore, that much more vulnerable.

Both contexts have adopted a regional (area-based/territorial) approach to rural development. Both exhibit different degrees of complexity, with Newfoundland and Labrador's REDB regions variously relating to several provincial regional delineations, and now the new Rural Secretariat's regions, and Ireland's complex web of overlapping rural development spatial arrangements (such as APCs and LEADER), supra-regional organizations (such as the BMW), and county-based development organizations, all further confounded with the formalized presence of the ironically weak Regional Authorities. It may be speculated that, albeit for different reasons, there are likely to be significant diseconomies and shortfalls in development efficiencies and potentials here.

Bearing in mind the differences between these two contexts, nevertheless, considerable opportunities persist for further fruitful comparisons and the possibilities of selective two-way transfers and appropriate adaptations of policy, programs, organizational design, and practice.

NOTES

1. The Salzburg Conference agreed on guiding principles for the future of rural development policy, based on economic diversification, environmental sustainability, and partnership approaches at the local level.
2. COM (2004) 489 final and COM (2004) 490 final.
3. See Chapter 12 for a critical commentary on the concept of governance and its application in the Irish and Newfoundland and Labrador rural development contexts.
4. These community initiatives were designed and initiated at European Commission level, and operated in a similar way across all member states. Among them were NOW (New Opportunities for Women, an equality initiative), LEADER (rural development initiative), INTERREG (regional and cross-border development), and HORIZON (promotion of equal opportunities for people with disabilities). Under community initiatives, EU funding was channelled via national agencies or departments to those structures that were ultimately implementing the project and that enjoyed high levels of financial and implementation autonomy. In most cases, the implementation structures took the form of a partnership, and brought together relevant and interested parties including the state, social partners, and project beneficiaries.
5. Area Development Management was relaunched as Pobal in 2005, following changes to its structure and new government appointments to its Board of Directors. Information about Pobal and the programs it administers and supports can be found on the company's website: <www.pobal.ie>.
6. The NESC was established in 1973 to provide a forum for discussion of the principles relating to the efficient development of the national economy and the achievement of social justice, and to advise the government through the Taoiseach (Prime Minister) on their application.
7. A more critical analysis is provided by Allen (2000).

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