12 Rural Development in Newfoundland and Labrador and Ireland: Governance and Its Prospects and Potentials

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In their second contribution to the volume, the authors review the implementation of rural development planning in the two island jurisdictions of the Republic of Ireland and the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The emphasis in this contribution is the application of theory about "ruralness," governance, and regional development and their relevance for attempts to create and implement rural development policy and programs in the two island jurisdictions. Local flexibility/autonomy and access to sufficient resources are highlighted as particularly important considerations in rural development success. The chapter continues the emphasis on detailed comparative analysis as a means to uncover similarities and differences in the societies, as well as governance initiatives, with an eye to extracting relevant lessons that can be shared.

INTRODUCTION

OUR EARLIER CHAPTER in this volume deals with two of the most fundamental issues in contemporary rural development, namely policy approaches and territorial constructs. It looks at how various layers and structures within the state (central and regional) have shaped the macro context within which rural development operates in a particular Canadian and in the Irish rural contexts. It observes how funding arrangements, institutional layers, and policy milieus have become more complex and formalized in both places. This chapter builds on the earlier analysis in Chapter 4. It begins by outlining the relevance of governance processes in area-based rural development. It then looks at how various structures and initiatives in Newfoundland and Labrador and in Ireland aspire to and/or give effect to principles and practices of governance. The chapter concludes by drawing out some lessons on promoting multi-level governance and the co-ordination of efforts at the local level for rural development.

GOVERNANCE

In this chapter, we do not attempt to encapsulate the broad-based discourse surrounding the concept of governance. Stoker's comment that "governance is ultimately concerned with creating the conditions for ordered rule and collective action" captures the essence of the concept (Stoker, 1998: 17). The salient characteristics of governance systems and episodes include shared power contexts involving various combinations of actors and institutions from government, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and other elements in civil society in fluid, horizontal relationships.

These arrangements are often highly instrumental, sometimes informal, involve blurred boundaries in responsibility and authority, and are more like customized collaborative networks than formal hierarchically defined structures (Rhodes, 1996). They contrast with and, indeed, are seen to largely replace the conventional formalized and often bureaucratic government-based arrangements that clearly reflected an unquestioned set of power relationships based on authority, sanctions, and exclusive access to strategic resources. Here the emphasis shifts from "power over" to the pragmatics of "power to"; novel, fluid, and at times unconventional partnerships and coalitions are formed to facilitate agency. Much of this is associated with the rise of neo-liberalism, the resurgence of the market as the optimal institution for the most efficient and efficacious allocation of public resources and public policy, and the so-called demise of the welfare state. On this basis governance is interpreted as a process through which government can find a way to exercise some power, as its quota of power and legitimacy diminishes, while at the same time sharing some powers and accessing others as it engages civil society and private interests through various forms of participatory process.

Through these more fluid, contextually responsive arrangements compliance can be negotiated, locally autonomy can be incorporated in the process and outcomes, operating codes can be learned and crafted through the process itself, and in the recognition of pervasive uncertainty, more opportunistic, flexible, and adaptable strategies formulated and implemented. Governance as a concept and an organizing framework, within "a new topography of political relations," is seen to have considerable purchase in rural development (e.g., Marsden et al., 1993; Marsden and Murdoch, 1998; Giguère, 2002).

However, the concept of governance remains nascent, still emerging amid a somewhat disjointed and far-flung discourse. Not surprisingly, its application is not accepted as either universal or unquestioned (Day, 1998; Murdoch and Abram, 1998; Douglas, 2005). Even some of its earliest formulators alert us to the paucity of cause-effect constructs and to the degree to which governance may simply be code for ideological positions relating to less government and the pre-eminence of the market (Stoker, 1998).

Notwithstanding the above, we look to the concept of governance as a shorthand formulation of pragmatic organizational and process constructions designed to get things done in rural contexts, where there is not only complexity and some uncertainty regarding real power and agency, but where instrumental power relations are negotiated in situ, and embedded in the context and in the relations between players on hand. Governance is a concept that attempts to make sense, after the fact, of innovative but practical organizational, resource allocation, and process arrangements that temporarily override established power and hierarchical formalities and focus on commonly accepted means to commonly desired ends. Considerable evidence of these adaptive behaviours can be found in rural development in different parts of the world today.

GOVERNANCE, PLACE, AND DEVELOPMENT

The issue of governance and the sustainability of governance arrangements are central to any efforts at area-based development. Place and space have emerged as highly significant drivers and determinants of development, including rural development (Peet and Hartwick, 1999). The merits of spatially or territorially based approaches over traditional sectoral and often disjointed approaches to development have been well-argued and demonstrated (OECD, 2001; Gardiner et al., 2004; Kitson et al., 2004). At the EU level the realization of the Lisbon and Gothenburg objectives[1] is predicated on a strong territorial approach. Policies, such as the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which traditionally were sectorally oriented, now reflect a greater territorial approach. Regional development now attracts greater financial allocations than was previously the case and economic policies are framed within the context of territorial cohesion. The European Spatial Development Perspective, agreed by member states in 1999, provides a framework for national, regional, and sub-regional territorial development approaches that are based on a polycentric approach (networking and complementarities between a number of functional centres, rather than agglomerations), inter-regional collaboration, and greater linkages between urban and rural territories. The attainment and maintenance of territorial competitiveness require high levels of inter-sectoral and inter-institutional networking and collaboration, so that development is increasingly based on valorizing and enhancing *local* resources and features, rather than relying on external or top-down interventions that have generally failed to deliver rural development objectives.

The transition from sectoral to territorial or area-based approaches can be defined in terms of a metamorphosis of how power is structured, distributed, managed, and legitimized. It may be viewed in terms of a transition from systems of government to systems of governance, where government embodies top-down or hierarchical power structures, and where agents operate without specific reference to others or to the spatial context within which they operate. Such systems are gen-

erally characterized by a lack of flexibility and spatial differentiation, or a "one size fits all" approach. On the other hand, territorial systems of governance prioritize the spatial over the sectoral, and seek to encourage and enable collaboration and joint actions between agents. Governance arrangements and the ensuing actions will invariably vary from one location to the next, but often are characterized by high levels of participation by local citizenry, a degree of flexibility in decision-making and resource allocation processes, the capacity to respond to local needs and opportunities, and the embodiment of top-down and bottom-up approaches to development.

It should be emphasized that governance does not guarantee or presume a spatial dimension to rural development. Even if public administrative or other discrete policy "silos" are breached and bridged through shared power and other pragmatic governance relationships, there may be little reference to, yet alone any harnessing of the fundamental territorial dimension of rural development process and practice. The governance dynamic will be played out *in* space, with the spatial dimension relatively passive; it will not operationalize the attributes of the place itself as a strategic active factor in the development process. It will not be place-based development. However, approaching rural development from the start from the spatial or territorial perspective inevitably fosters and facilitates horizontal governance relationships and behaviours. The "silos" become secondary. With the emphasis on people in place, as the subjects as well as the objects of the development process, the separations associated with sectors and organizational power bases are variously devalued and eroded. They become less relevant; the interrelationships between them that serve to develop the *space* are valued and accorded attention. So, the complex relationship between governance and space might be summarized as one where a spatial or territorial perspective may create the necessary conditions for governance, but not the sufficient conditions, or where governance relationships can be fostered with little reference to the spatial or territorial dimension of rural development.

As the following diagrammatic presentation of governance concepts illustrates (Figure 12.1), governance structures occupy a space between elected or representative government and participative government, where participative government refers to citizens collectively organizing and undertaking specific projects and/or initiatives. Thus, governance combines elements of the top-down and bottom-up, and it provides a forum where representatives of both can come together to promote agreed-on strategies. Such strategies are based on formal or prescribed rules that generally emanate from the top down (as the policy and institutional contexts described in the previous chapter) and informal or more flexible bottom-up approaches that allow variations within and between locales to be taken into account.

Figure 12.1:   The Concept of Governance

Relations between Government and Governance in an incremental process
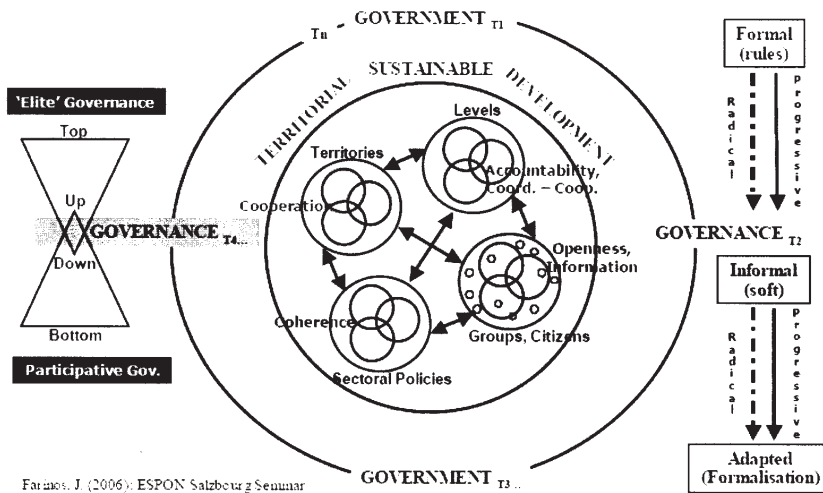
Source: ESPON (2006).

Governance arrangements in rural development imply a genuine effort to include the citizenry continuously in decision-making and, as the case study insights from Newfoundland and Labrador and Ireland in this chapter illustrate, a number of platforms have been created at the sub-regional level to enable citizens to feed into decision-making. Some of these democratic experiments have been more successful than others.

One of the more significant challenges for governance structures is the attainment of information-sharing and subsequent collaboration between agents, particularly those in the public sector. As a consequence of experiencing the transition from government to governance, individuals more often find themselves interfacing horizontally with and referring to locally based coalitions or partnerships rather than relating vertically to government bureaucracy. Governance structures also are challenged to ensure co-ordination between sectors, so that agencies operate as partners, pool resources, and contribute to the attainment of territorial competitiveness.

Given the backdrop on the evolution of rural development policy in Newfoundland and Labrador and Ireland, as presented in the Chapter 4, and the mandate and expectations of the Regional Economic Development Boards (REDBs) and the

Irish LEADER and APC organizations, what are the prospects and potentials for governance? A number of challenges may be suggested at this time to gauge the governance milieu.

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR:
PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES IN GOVERNANCE

The REDBs operate under conditions generic to so many organizations active in rural development; they are, in effect, "creatures of the province" — to borrow a term from Canadian public administration. While they have in one of their roots the indigenous and robust inheritances of the Regional Development Associations (RDAs), which should provide some institutional ballast, their roles are both spatially and functionally much more diverse and demanding than the RDAs. More to the point, the REDBs have been brought into being since 1996 through the commitment and initiatives of the province. Their existence essentially is premised on the interest and commitment of the province.

Related to provincial interest and commitment, the resources and the remit of the REDBs are directly influenced by the vagaries of federal-provincial relations and those individual and/or joint interests in and commitment to rural development. As they shift from time to time, the operating environment for the REDBs shifts. Keeping abreast of these shifts, decoding their implications, and availing their districts of the opportunities (if any) they provide are significant challenges for the volunteer-based Boards. And the Boards are subject to information availability, communications processes, and negotiations in a vastly asymmetrical three-way partnership.

As already noted, the functional effectiveness of the REDBs is directly related to the nature of their relationships with departments and agencies associated with particular projects (e.g., aquaculture, hiking trails). These are unabashedly instrumental relationships developed for the purposes of funding, preferences, and perhaps competitive positioning. More often than not the REDBs are active in a zero sum external investment recruitment process among one another within their home province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

A culture of "grantsmanship" is perpetuated across two levels of government, and a changing roster of programs and projects, as well as personalities. The REDBs may swivel from a predominantly economic development agenda, as per their mandate, towards one focusing more on social development. This appears to have been the case for many boards in the recent past. This drift in focus and core activities may have been fuelled by such factors as Human Resources and Skills Development Canada's (HRSDC) energetic re-entry into the broader field of social development, and the associated availability of significant sums for projects. This refocusing, in turn, may have been augmented by local pressures to address specific and very visible community development issues in the REDBs' territories (such as

education and social welfare), and the attractive constituency capital to be gained from addressing these in a concrete and timely manner (Strategic Partnership Study Group, 2002).

As regional economic development is central to the role and relevance of the REDBs, the continuing questions remain regarding resources (i.e., capital) and the related one: the breadth of their mandate. A consistent response to the question of the core mandate of the REDBs evokes the terms "lead, facilitate, and co-ordinate." But questions of capital and mandate are not confined to the challenging process of preparing, updating, and maintaining the regional strategic plan. As we have seen, they go beyond the plan into implementation, co-ordination, and the local economic development process itself. Access to capital and securing the provision of investment and business development services (BDS) are generally accepted as pivotal factors in rural economic development. Without the capital resources in place, unlike the oft-mentioned Community Capital Corporation concept, the REDBs face a particularly onerous challenge.

Related to this central issue is the parallel role, and potentially competitive functions, of the Community Business Development Corporations (CBDCs). With their business development functions as integral components of the organizations, the CBDCs could potentially be the most potent partner in the actual implementation of the REDB's strategic development plan. The degree to which an intensive operational integration between the CBDCs and the REDBs has taken place is uncertain, but does not seem to be common. How might the REDB ensure that the CBDC is supportive of its business development and related investment priorities? And how can the CBDC's own investment support priorities be made sensitive to and indeed serve to reinforce the REDB's strategic agenda?

In contrast to what seems to be strong participation by the municipal sector in the REDBs, the presence of the business community is often reported to have fallen short of expectations. The earlier period of board formation (e.g., 1996-9) saw a considerable and vigorous pattern of participation by most of the regional business communities across the province. With some exceptions, this appears to have diminished. The causes for this are likely many and varied (e.g., a decline in motivation after the initial intensive strategic planning phase, inadequate succession planning, volunteer fatigue). However, a growing gap appears to be evident here. Given the centrality of the economic development facilitation and co-ordination function of the REDBs, and the expectation for them to provide leadership here, this thinning out of the partnership base poses some very significant challenges.

The recent announcement of the formation of a Rural Secretariat and the installation of nine regional boards and staff support across the province may exacerbate what is already a complex and at times confusing development organizational landscape. With the CBDC areas, the REDB regions (zones), many other federal and provincial administrative regions, and now another regional template with, by all accounts, considerable political investment underpinning it, Fuchs's spectre of the

"crowded kitchen" looms large (Fuchs, 1995: 53). Not unlike many other contexts (e.g., Ireland), clarification is certainly required as the current situation not only generates some uncertainty regarding the mandate and viability of the REDBs, but also complicates their leading, facilitating, and co-ordinating remit.

The resourcing of the REDBs is a significant challenge, not unlike that faced by most rural volunteer-based organizations. The support now provided by the Executive Directors and the Economic Development Officers should enhance a sense of continuity and the abilities of the boards to focus on longer-term development strategies, and especially capacity development in the region and the region's communities and organizations. It will be important for the boards to effectively recruit the appropriate roster of volunteers from time to time to respond to its changing economic development agenda, and the REDB's emerging strategic priorities (such as agri-tourism, home-based business, new telecommunications enterprises, and niche value-added food-processing). This calls for the appropriate organizational bylaws to facilitate volunteer turnover and cyclical re-resourcing of the board, as priorities change. It also calls for an organizational culture that critically scrutinizes its own volunteer management process. This is especially important as the REDBs focus on structural change in their regions, capacity-building, and longer-term strategic directions, in contrast to a preoccupation with shorter-term projects and related government transfers that characterized earlier development modalities in the province.

The nurturing of partnerships and the development of governance systems is not independent of the participant's development record to date. And after almost 10 years the record for the REDBs is mixed. Conventional indicators such as jobs created, jobs retained, new businesses started, new commercial investment, re-skilling of the regional labour force, and related measures do not furnish a substantial record of success across the system of REDBs. Several exceptions where substantial business development occurred have been recorded. In addition, the Boards' activities in business retention and expansion have been a high-profile and generally well-received initiative. Given the relatively short period of post-planning development implementation activity for some Boards (e.g,. 2000-6), concrete expectations on these counts may be premature. In addition, much of the REDBs' activities have been related to strategic information generation (such as research and surveys), building collaborative networks and partnerships, getting the Board as a volunteer organization underway, and selected project promotion and implementation (such as rural tourism and hatcheries). Some observers see the major outcome of the REDBs' activities to date as a structural shift in the development culture in Newfoundland and Labrador; a positive change away from direct (government) dependency and project opportunism towards subsidiarity, longer-term development, development capacity-building, and greater local self-determination.

However one views the record, the question of attribution (i.e., the net effect directly associated with the REDB's participation) has to be addressed. All of this, therefore, does pose a challenge for the REDBs. To be even-handed any assessment here will require a candid and critical reflection on the expectations of all parties in this innovative enterprise, and a realistic scrutiny of the resources invested by all parties. Ensuring that all interests subscribe to the investments in the REDBs as seed-bedding investment, investments that are *generative* for longer-term structural change, both in terms of development outcomes (e.g,. participation in the new information economy) and in terms of the development process (e.g., network-building), will be one of the greatest political challenges for the REDBs and their constituencies.

RESPONDING TO THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR THROUGH GOVERNANCE

Taking the nascent concept of governance as a conceptual framework we may envisage the REDB story as an overlapping four-phase process (Figure 12.2).

Each of these phases has to be viewed in the complex three-/four-way interactive spaces suggested in Figure 4.2. Each phase is played out within a three- or four-dimensional space, an interest surface of agents and organizations interacting with varying degrees of intensity and longevity with other agents and organizations, all embedded in the prevailing institutional milieu. These transactional spaces (e.g., between communities, sectoral interests, federal and/or provincial government agencies) differ in terms of the activity agenda and the dominant players involved.

The formation phase, from 1996 on, involves intensive activities drawing on established networks (e.g., via the RDAs) and creating new ones. It also involves extensive discussions, formal and informal surveys, explorations regarding the issues on hand, and many other matters, as well as the appropriate interests to involve in the new development organization, the REDB. Processes of negotiation are central here. This phase and the following phase are redolent of the conceptualization by Bryson and Crosby (1996) of the planning process as one involving "forums, arenas and courts." Central to the extended conversations in the formation phase, and especially in the REDB's planning and design phase, are the creation and communication of meaning, which is done through social practice and via what Giddens (1984) has called principles of "signification." Interpretative schemes are used that draw on participants' bedrock principles of language and world views. In this first phase "power over" has to be confronted. The instrumental dynamic is designed to communicate, convince, and negotiate the anticipated net benefits of a potential "power with" regarding some contributions and perhaps concessions from those with a real or assumed "power over." The negotiation is designed to persuade all parties in the enterprise of a potential collective capacity that may be achieved, with

attendant future benefits, which at the same time is achieved without, at a minimum, significantly compromising the power bases of the collaborators. So, this formative phase is one where seeking attention, retaining attention, and exercising influence (i.e., buy-in) are fundamental. We are familiar with this process as "communicative action" (Forester, 1989). As a critical time of aspirations and expectations it is a phase in the development process of leveraging available social (bonding) capital through community, professional, and other networks, while at the same time investing in bridging social capital for expanded alliances and collaborators (Gittel and Vidal, 1998).

Figure 12.2:   Governance and the REDBs: Complexities and Challenges through Four Overlapping Phases
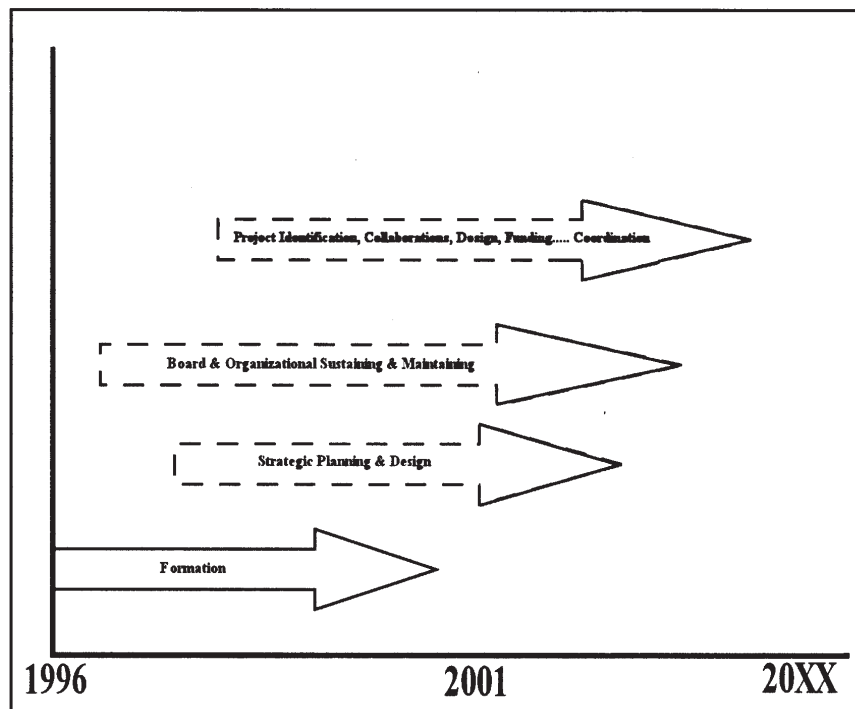
The overlapping planning and design phase also involves extensive communication through research, workshops, meetings, and related activities. Here "problem framing" is a central activity (Schön, 1978). What are the central issues to be addressed here? What is meant by "rural economic development"? What are the principal threats and liabilities that have to be faced? Where are the current development trends taking the regions? What are people's visions for their region? What

are the relevant goals, objectives, and development priorities? What are the strategic alternatives for development? What is the required action agenda, and who are the key players? Here the challenge of seeking and getting the attention of the rural region's residents and organizations shifts from organizational development to policy priorities and an action agenda. This involves once again selected claims to attention, and hence potentially formative processes of communicative action (Forester, 1989). Development strategies are crafted and formally approved. In this formal decision-making phase, analogous to Bryson and Crosby's "use of arenas," bedrock principles of "domination" are evident in the unequal distributions of resources, access, power in making and enforcing generative rules, and power in transformative relations. These all are in play here. The planning and design phase is extremely important for the development planner, one where power to influence if not shape much of the agenda (i.e., what gets attention, what does not) can be exercised.

The next phase, once initiated, permeates all REDB activities and involves a variety of intentional strategies and tactics to reinforce the organization's relevance, credibility, and legitimacy. Much of this conceptualizing would already have been achieved by visible and broadcasted success in development project approvals and funding (see below), particularly in concrete evidence of positive development outcomes (e.g., new jobs, jobs retained, new industrial and commercial investment, new physical infrastructure). This maintenance and sustaining phase might have a period of intensive activity (e.g., in pre-empting a hiatus after the celebrated adoption of the REDB's strategic plan), but may also be seen as a "vertical" phase that effectively intersects all others. The sustaining phase involves continuing communicative action to address power centres that remain threatened, or are otherwise reluctant partners in the development networks. At the same time, the tasks of persuading flagging partners (or doubting potential partners) that the route to "power to" is via processes that will generate "power with" receive concerted attention here. This phase parallels the centrality of creating solidarity in community development. Maintenance activities include succession planning and volunteer recruitment for the Board itself, reporting back to and negotiating activities with the formally enlisted organizations and other Board members, and publicity and promotion. It may also involve formal acknowledgements and recognition of various partners' contributions, community celebrations, and other reinforcing initiatives. Educational and other media activities, briefing and securing the commitment of provincial and federal politicians, and many other activities will be part of this ongoing phase.

Furthermore, this phase also involves what Bryson and Crosby (1996: 474-5) refer to as the "management of residual conflict" through the concept of "courts." Societal norms are enforced; appeal is made to formally agreed-on accords (e.g., the adopted Strategic Economic Plan) and to other records of understandings and entitlements. Bridging and bonding social capital is drawn on, and sanctions are

variously applied. In this regulative environment attempts to manage, or at least to control some elements of conduct are evident. Bedrock moral or evaluative standards or logics are called on and applied as social principles of "legitimation."

The fourth phase involves the identification of individual projects, discussions, multi-party agreements, formal proposals, a variety of protocols and negotiations, approvals, and secured resource allocations. For many this is the core activity of the REDBs and the acid test of the relevance of these development organizations and of the planning and related investments involved. Clearly, this phase is where the wherewithal of the alliances, liaisons, partnerships and networks is put to the test. Political capital, communications power, personal persuasion, the credibility of the analytical argument, leverage that the REDB might access and use, and many other facets of the organization's resources are on call here. The purported instrumental sequence — the purported results chain that is supposed to emanate from collective and negotiated investments in "power with," to concrete outputs manifesting "power to" — is taken to task here. The fluidity and blurring of jurisdictional boundaries that the partners subscribed to (with some risk) and the shifts in instrumental power that these involved will be re-examined here for productive results. The promissory notes are due. Success in this phase reinforces the REDB's investments in sustaining and maintaining the organization and its mandate. Likewise, it may serve to allay fears or some erosion of credibility evident among the Board members, and/or their partners in and beyond the region. Legitimacy is reinforced through the "deliverables" and at least some conflict is obviated or ameliorated. The investment in governance is justified, or otherwise.

The profile of successes here can, of course, serve to reproduce the pattern of power relations prevailing in the region, and thereby further embed privilege and hegemony. On the other hand, the purposeful design and promotion of a particular roster of development projects (e.g., to mentor networks for lower-income enterprise start-ups) may reduce power imbalances evident in patterns of social exclusion and structural disadvantage. The profiling of projects, and the attendant investment in carefully designing them, promoting them, and securing their approval and resources, is directly dependent on success in negotiated governance arrangements.

Inserting these four overlapping phases into the complex three-part (and likely four-part) transaction surfaces mentioned in our earlier chapter (see Figure 4.2), one can envisage a particularly complex and challenging operational milieu. One can envisage the "curves" of legitimacy, credibility, resources acquisition, participatory engagement, social capital, leverage potentials, political impact, organizational capacity, concrete effects (e.g., facilitated employment growth), and so on, moving up and down and interactively over time through these phases. As concrete "deliverables" are attributed to the REDB's initiatives, credibility and, therefore, legitimacy may grow. As funding stalls in the intergovernmental labyrinth, participation might plateau and wane. As matters stagnate, the municipal partners might

assume much of the co-ordination leadership in the process. As the Board exerts influence on the CBDC's investment agenda, more broad-based impacts might be evident and the organization's capital in the region commensurately enhanced, and so on. The Boards operate in a very complex, dynamic relational milieu and there are complex and, as yet, poorly understood interrelationships between progress through these four overlapping phases and the transactional dynamics that are central to the REDB's co-ordination and facilitation mandate.

The still-evolving concept of governance provides a useful lens to view the formation and activity profile of Newfoundland and Labrador's Regional Economic Development Boards. It may be applied to the establishment and functioning of the REDBs when conceptualized in these four overlapping phases. Structures and behaviours associated with the concept of governance are clearly in evidence; indeed, the concept may be seen as a structural element cutting across and linking all four overlapping phases — governance modalities are of the essence here. When combined with Bryson and Crosby's conceptualization of the planning and management process via "forums, arenas and courts," and Forester's use of critical theory for communicative action in the planning process, these aspects of governance throw further light on some of the nuances of the functioning of these organizations and on the many challenges they face.

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR: SUMMARY

Our review of some of the challenges currently facing and likely to be before the Regional Economic Development Boards in Newfoundland and Labrador suggests that the concept of governance has some purchase here, and that there are two broad areas for future attention. The first is the overarching mandate for these innovative development organizations. The second relates to some of the characteristics of this elusive concept we call "governance."

One is mindful of Byron's (2003: 12) contention:

Significantly, in Newfoundland policy making is concentrated in St. John's. There is no county or district level administration with substantial devolved powers and responsibilities. The provincial government's power to define the terms of developmental problems and to apply the solutions that it deems appropriate has not, heretofore, been tempered by a need to respond to, or to negotiate with, lower levels of representative government. . . . An evident reluctance to abandon a monopoly on policy making continues to foster a top-down approach from St. John's, despite the contemporary rhetoric of local empowerment.

Within a political culture that this suggests, and one that the development history of the province would tend to substantiate, the authority and responsibility devolved to the Regional Economic Development Boards must be seen as both substantive and substantial. They are in many respects daring and entrepreneurial. They consti-

tute a significant experiment worthy of attention across Canada, America, Europe, and elsewhere. Notwithstanding their qualities, the anecdotal and other impressions of executive directors and Board members "run off their feet" are cause for reflection. Likewise, the mixed record of REDB performance that has been regarded "as good as could be expected" given the resources applied to the project and given the counterpart performance of provincial and federal partners also provides cause for reflection.

The formal mandate to facilitate, co-ordinate, and provide leadership for the strategic planning process for regional economic development and to function in the *implementation* of this development strategy is an onerous charge. Especially demanding is its formalizing in a binding performance contract made even more so when the success of the tripartite role is essentially dependent on the goodwill, energy, conviction, and cohesion of a small group of (likely over-extended) volunteers in the rural region.

The Boards have had to invent themselves, from active RDAs in the regions, from local municipalities, labour organizations, educational organizations, business organizations, and others. They have had to actualize governance systems. They have had to enter into a formal strategic planning process for the design and implementation of a development plan for their region. They have had to recruit and maintain staff. They have had to enter into a plethora of alliances and networks to explore, promote, and otherwise move ahead a great variety of development projects. They have had to deal with a changing roster of federal and provincial programs, projects, and personnel. They have had to develop and maintain a legitimacy and relevance in and for their regional constituencies.

Given the resources made available to the REDBs, essentially for operations and maintenance purposes, and the absence of immediately accessible development funding, one would have to question the long-term sustainability of the current arrangement. While several REDBs may have close working relationships with a CBDC working in their region, these relationships have to be individually negotiated; they are not assured. Furthermore, the business development funding resources potentially available through them are by statute within the control of the CBDCs. The REDBs essentially have no core resources for development management. The gap between the high expectations for the REDBs to lead, facilitate, and co-ordinate development implementation, in addition to doing so for planning, and the inadequacy of the resources available for the former function suggests an area requiring immediate attention.

How does this situation redound on governance potentials? Given the scarcity of development resources, the first impression might be that as a consequence, the imperative for co-operation and collaboration will be sufficient incentive to propel the development of governance structures (for "power with" to get to "power to") and related process. And there is already evidence of extensive networking and inter-organizational activity across most regions. Likewise, the incentive to fash-

ion ways and means to move towards "power to" conditions, as against "power over," is likely to be significant given the emergence of yet another new regional structure and associated power bases in the Rural Secretariat. On the other hand, new organizations often have a period of muscle-flexing to secure their formal turf, which might militate against significant horizontal overtures for co-operation and resource sharing, at least for an initial period. Emerging evidence is that of municipalities playing a more vigorous role in rural development beyond conventional municipal functions (e.g., land-use-planning, physical infrastructure), either directly or through their organization, the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities. However, rural municipalities are not guaranteed the requisite resources to be fully effective partners (Douglas, 2003). In sum, the question remains: will the numerous challenges faced by the REDBs suggested here provide the spark to ignite and sustain the emergent governance systems already evident in rural regions, or will they extinguish the spark through jealously protected domains and an REDB system devoid of any credible local development implementation and co-ordination resources, including governance investment resources.

IRELAND: PARTNERSHIP IN GOVERNANCE

The emergence and consolidation of LEADER and Local Development Partnerships in Ireland have come about against the backdrop of a weak system of local government, a political system characterized by clientelism and a centralized state (Roche, 1982; Barrington, 1991; Gallagher et al., 2001; Callanan and Keogan, 2003). Endogenous actors, mainly from the community and voluntary sector and the European Union have combined to give Ireland a complex, yet competent set of locally based bodies that enable local development and have strengthened local governance. Thus, in less than two decades, Ireland has gone from being fairly characterized as having a large vacuum in local governance to a situation in which the country now has a number of interrelated sets of local governance structures. Indeed, the Irish experience in promoting local development is frequently presented as a model that newer democracies in Central and Eastern Europe can emulate (Ahner, 2004; ÖIR, 2006). Ireland's local development partnerships have been particularly successful in promoting a bottom-up approach to development, based on extensive local consultations and citizen participation.

In addition to providing supports and services to specific target groups,[2] the partnerships implemented a number of strategies to enhance citizen (and more specifically, target group) participation in local decision-making. New community structures were established in areas where none previously existed, while existing groups were facilitated to expand their membership and become more representative of disadvantaged sectors. Partnerships also developed their own structures. They established community forums to promote inter-community networking, and in many instances these forums elected representatives to the board of the partner-

ship or community group. Boards and sub-committees also recruited representatives from each of the program target groups. LEADER resources for animation and capacity-building have promoted inter-community co-operation and networking, thus complementing efforts under the successive Local Development Programmes. Under the LEADER I Programme community and voluntary associations represented less than 25 per cent of project promoters. Under the LEADER+ Programme they have accounted for almost 50 per cent of promoters.

At the local level the community and voluntary sector has been the main driver in the establishment and maintenance of area-based development in LEADER and Area Partnerships. In several instances the local business community and agricultural interests, such as producer co-operatives, were instrumental in getting organizations off the ground. They provided financial support and professional expertise to a number of the emerging LEADER groups and assisted them in formulating business plans. While the central state was, albeit due to EU influences, generally supportive of the fledgling partnerships, the same cannot be said of local government in Ireland. Indeed, many within the local government sector viewed the partnerships as a rival, and some advocated that local authorities rather than LEADER Boards should be responsible for the disbursal of project funds (Lynch, 1996). Many within the local development sector were no less critical of local government, which they associated with poor public service provision and the neglect of disadvantaged communities. A number of partnerships included a clause in their articles of association that excluded local authority officials or members from their boards. Thus, in terms of participation in and formation of area-based partnerships (LEADER and others, such as the APCs), the situation in Ireland contrasted with that of Newfoundland and Labrador, where municipal authorities were from the outset much more supportive of local development.

Since the mid-1990s reforms of Ireland's local government system have contributed to greater interaction between local government and local development. Local authorities have established sub-structures that facilitate inputs into decision-making by interests outside local government, including the productive sector and community and voluntary associations. In response to the OECD review (Sabel, 1996) of Irish partnership, which had pointed to their "fragile democratic legitimacy," the government in 1999 obliged all LEADER and Local Development Partnerships (i.e., APCs and others) to include at least two elected local authority representatives on their board of directors. It was anticipated that this step would strengthen the democratic accountability of the local development sector. Local authorities were obliged in turn to include local development representatives on their Strategic Policy Committees. While a subsequent commentary on Irish partnerships (OECD, 2001) did not address this issue specifically, an examination of the projects promoted by LEADER and Local Development Partnerships since 1999 clearly reveals a continuous increase in the number of projects facilitated and delivered in conjunction with local authorities, particularly in the areas of the mainte-

nance and management of residential areas, village enhancement, and the provision of recreational spaces in communities. A number of environmental projects have also been promoted based on collaborative approaches. Thus, local government is becoming increasingly visible as a partner and is becoming absorbed into local development.

Reviews of the Local Development Programme (LDP) and the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP), by Goodbody Economic Consultants (2002a, 2002b) and by Haase (2005), record that APCs and CPs had exceeded their targets. These achievements were most evident in respect to the individuals and groups supported, and the level of social capital development at the local level. However, Turok (2001) questions the extent to which partnerships have actually succeeded in promoting significant change among the public-sector bodies, especially with regard to their pooling of resources so as to be more effective in targeting social exclusion. Similarly, Scott (2004) has pointed to the need to place greater emphasis on mainstreaming. The Community Workers' Cooperative (CWC, 2000: 40) pointed to the need for state agency personnel to "improve appreciation of community development." Haase and McKeown (2003) express stringent criticism of mainstream agencies that have been reluctant to buy into the concept and practice of partnerships. Indeed, they criticize initiatives such as RAPID[3] and CLÁR,[4] which they claim "operate in isolation, generally failing to avail of the knowledge and experience of the existing area-based partnerships" (2003: 25). While these observations point up anomalies in the state's perceptions of local governance arrangements, developments over recent years give cause for optimism regarding the sustainability of local partnerships. The state is increasingly recognizing the capacity of civil society to organize itself and manage local development. Since 2001 the Irish government has invested over $500 million to address the shortage of childcare places in Ireland. The bulk of this funding has been allocated to community associations, most of which have benefited from the advice and guidance provided by the local development sector. A national rural transport program has been rolled out through the local development sector, and the government is currently in the process of outsourcing a social/economy/community services program to the sector. Thus, while the vertical dimension of governance relations in Ireland has been its most challenging aspect to date, the out-sourcing arrangements referred to here signal a gradual willingness on the part of the state to share power and responsibilities with other actors. Moreover, Ireland has allocated a greater percentage of CAP Pillar Two resources to LEADER than has any other EU member state for the period 2007 to 2013. The challenge for the local development sector lies in ensuring that increased responsibilities are matched with increased resources. It should be noted, however, that while Ireland's partnerships have been endowed with significantly greater resources than their counterparts in Newfoundland and Labrador, this did not occur generically, but rather as a result of pro-active efforts on the parts of a number of

partnerships to source funding that would complement their core program(s), and which would enable them to further rural development objectives.

Ongoing reforms of local government pose both challenges and opportunities for local partnerships. One aspect in particular, which has been promoted jointly by the Department of the Environment, Heritage, and Local Government and the Department of Community, Rural, and Gaeltacht Affairs, has come to be known as "cohesion." This seeks to re-align the boundaries of local development agencies to coincide with those of local government. Cohesion has posed difficulties for a number of LEADER and Local Development Groups, which had been operating on endogenously defined, rather than administratively defined delineations. Cohesion also requires LEADER and Local Development Partnerships, which had been operating separately (each with its own Board of Directors), but within the same or overlapping catchment territory to come together to form a single structure, that is: organizational integration. While the process of cohesion may pose short-term challenges for particular groups and individuals, who fear a loss of autonomy or status, it must be seen as part of a broader move towards the realization of integration and multi-sectorality at the local level (Westholm, 1999; ÖIR, 2004), that will contribute to strengthening the local development sector and make it a permanent, more visible and stronger player in rural development. A number of actors in local development object to what they perceive as a top-down imposition of cohesion, and point to the lack of consultation that accompanied the commencement of the process. Cohesion has also been marked by concerns that longer-established organizations would subsume smaller and newer ones. While these concerns are legitimate, in the context of local governance, cohesion ought to be promoted as a means of ensuring that local development reduces its reliance on short-term funding cycles, so that long-term strategic planning for territorial development is enabled.

CONCLUSION

The Irish experience points to the importance of permitting local autonomy in the design and implementation of rural development. The global grant system, through which partnerships have the freedom to approve or reject projects and allocate resources within specified guidelines but without having to refer to regional or national authorities, has increased their ability to innovate. This arrangement has coupled financial accountability with local governance, encouraged a high level of transparency, and represents a positive aspect of rural development in Ireland relative to Newfoundland and Labrador. Nevertheless, systems for evaluation, monitoring, and reporting to funding bodies (government departments and the EU) tend to emphasize quantitative outputs, with the result that partnerships are tempted to pay greater attention to short-term or high-visibility projects rather than investing in stimulating and supporting citizen participation in local governance, which re-

quires longer-term commitment, particularly in disadvantaged and peripheral communities.

Horizontal linkages between agents of local governance in Ireland need ongoing attention. The cohesion process will consolidate structures and advance multi-sectoral and integrated approaches to local development, and significantly reduce inter-partnership competition in particular areas. These new structures will be challenged to maintain a bottom-up orientation, in the light of government proposals to increase the level of the state sector and local government participation therein. The strengthening of inter-partnership networking has the potential to see partnerships making greater contributions to economic and social policy, and to promote the emergence of more formal linkages between national and local social partnership. Thus, while the cohesion process directly addresses the spatial dimension of current complexities, it needs to be followed by a process that formalizes the participation by local governance structures in arrangements that shape and influence the macro- and meso-level policy contexts in which they operate.

NOTES

1. In 2001 the EU heads of government at a Council meeting in Lisbon agreed on a series of steps, with the objective of making the EU the most competitive global economic space. Two years later, this was supplemented by an agreement under the Swedish presidency of the EU (at Gothenburg) that incorporated the principles of sustainable environmental development into the Lisbon strategy.

2. The Programme Handbook (ADM, 1995) specifically listed the following target groups: long-term unemployed, other unemployed, low-income farm families, lone parents, youth at risk, travellers (ethnic minority indigenous to Ireland), disadvantaged women, people with disabilities, homeless people.

3. RAPID — Revitalising Areas through Planning, Investment and Development — was launched by the government in 2001, and is aimed at improving the quality of life and opportunities available to residents in the most disadvantaged urban communities. Twenty-five target urban areas have been selected. RAPID's objectives are to promote social inclusion, tackle spatial concentrations of unemployment, and stem the social and economic costs of social exclusion. The program seeks to promote collaboration between local communities, agencies, and government departments. It is administered by ADM, on behalf of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

4. CLÁR (Ceantair Laga Árd Riachtanais) is an initiative promoted by Minister Eamon O Cuiv, and launched in 2001. CLÁR seeks to promote the regeneration of disadvantaged rural areas. Initially, 16 disadvantaged rural areas were selected on the basis of having lost over 50 per cent of their population since the foundation of the state. Following the publication of the 2002 census of population figures, these 16 areas were expanded and additional ones were added. The objective of CLÁR is to ensure the prioritization of these areas in the allocation of resources under the national development. Further information on RAPID and CLÁR is available from the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs: <www.pobail.ie>.

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