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WHO IS BEING SERVED? NORTH CAROLINA REGIONS IN A NEW AGE

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Introduction

In recent decades North Carolina has seen a shift in the evolution of its formally designated regions that raises a question concerning the foundations for regional change and progress. Are these foundations anchored more securely by focusing public support on the social welfare needs of localities, or on local economic development initiatives? Perhaps there have always been reasons to question why states find it necessary to define formal multi-county regions for dispensing public revenues, especially since the implementation of such regions establishes another layer of public administration. But the issue grows more complex when recent changes in national political philosophy have contributed to the superimposition of a new set of North Carolina region s on one already existing. For the average citizen, and for many communities, it is becoming increasingly difficult to determine just what public is being served by the different and geographically overlapping regions, and to what end.

In North Carolina, multi-county regions became more politically problematic with the 1994 legislative mandate of seven economic development regions (Partnerships), whose boundaries only partially coincide with those of the existing 18 Lead Regional Organizations (LROs), that were established in 1971. This evolution is an issue in this paper, as is the probable impact of the state's intercession on individual counties that may not fit as readily into the new regional compacts as initially expected. Whereas the LROs represented a top-down redistribution of federal funds, the decline of federalism over the past two decades has encouraged a postfederal response where localities are now playing a greater role in determining their economic development prospects (Clarke and Gaile, 1992). Emerging from these conditions were a number of bottom-up, city-metropolitan centered economic development regions. These were subsequently formalized by the legislature as Partnership Regions to blanket the state in 1994. What are then the implications of this new postfederal regional structure for traditional issues in local-regional development? Have the issues of people versus place welfare, balanced growth, and support of lagging rural regions gotten lost in the shuffle? Are the LROs able to main-

Are the emerging overlaps in North Carolina's regions causing an unanticipated selectivity in the character and quality of public service to communities and individuals?

tain their commitment in the postfederal world, and to what degree might their potentially declining role be hastened by the new regional order?

I will first assess the varied conditions of our regions. How have demographic and economic development shifts over recent decades affected their potential for growth? How has this led to concerns that uneven development may continue to require direct state intervention in those counties least able to provide for their citizens? In this manner a typical regional geographic analysis of spatial variations evolving over time is complemented by a study of how public policy has shifted to further influence the concentration of economic activities and settlement patterns.

The Tarheel State has a rich diversity of physical and cultural environments in its 500 mile east-west reach from the shores of the Atlantic Ocean to the peaks of the Appalachian Mountains. This diversity is traditionally divided into the following physical/cultural landscape regions, Tidewater, Coastal Plains, Piedmont, and Mountain. Providing details on these varied landscapes will be our point of departure for evaluating North Carolina's changing socioeconomic regions.

The Environmental Context of Regional Development

North Carolinians have persisted in their belief, in spite of evidence mounting to the contrary, that the state is essentially rural. It is true that there exists no major dominant urban center, but rather three almost comparably populated urban regions sharing the "Urban Crescent" of the Piedmont. In fact, it was not until the 1990 U. S. Census of Population that the state's official rural population dropped to below 50 percent! So the historic absence of a primate city, as exemplified by Georgia's Atlanta, combined with a relatively evenly distributed rural population, persist in providing sustenance for the state's rural self image.

Popularity held perceptions of North Carolina's regional variations are united in the simplistic image rendered by cartoonist George Breisach in the *Charlotte Observer* in the mid-1980s (Figure 1). Traditionally, geogra-

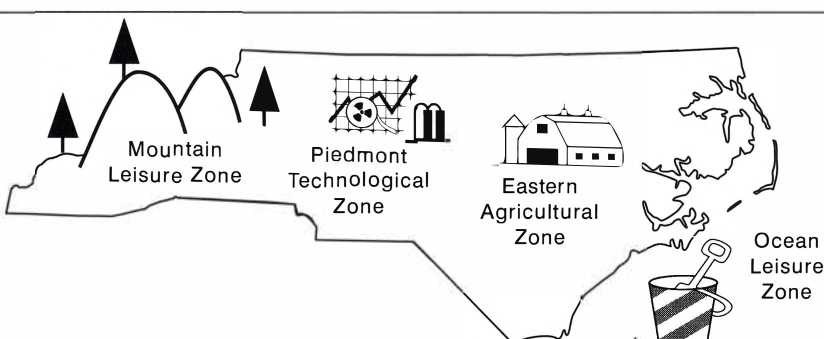


Figure 1. George's Breisach's 'Popular Image' of North Carolina
Source: Charlotte Observer, 1988

phers complement this image with a set of regional boundaries that define the four regions of Tidewater, Coastal Plains, Piedmont, and Mountain (Figure 2) (Clay, Orr, and Stewart, 1975; Gade, Stillwell and Rex, 1986).

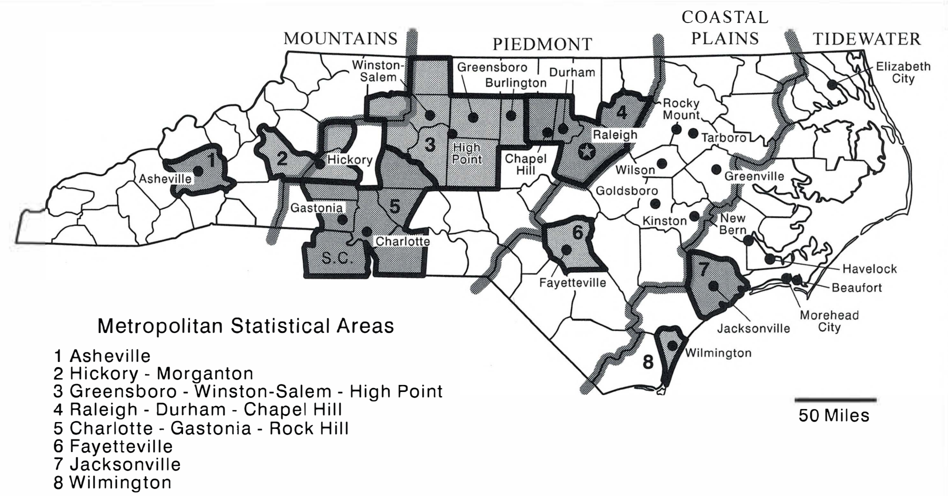


Figure 2. Regions and Metropolitan Statistical Areas in 1995
Source: Modified from Gade and Cui, 1994, p.27

Tidewater Region

Along the 300 mile coast settlement pattern of small towns only the Hatteras National Seashore provides a break. Traditionally dependent on fishing and coastal trade these communities are increasingly dominated by seasonal economies related to leisure activities. Riverine settlements from colonial times dominate the remainder of the Tidewater. Their fortunes are tied to fishing, port functions, small scale manufacturing, forest and food products, public services, and local/regional administration. Medium and small cities in this region, Elizabeth City (15,669, 1993 estimated population), New Bern (21,106), Beaufort/Morehead City (10,347), Havelock (20,072), Jacksonville (78,250), and Wilmington (59,378) have, in recent decades, benefited from extra-regional investment in state port expansion, higher education, military installations, and public services. The absence of a significant port city, like Charleston or Jacksonville, FL is notable. On the other hand, the highest small town population growth in the state is being experienced by the coastal resort communities (North Carolina Municipal Population 1993, 1994).

Coastal Plains Region

Here an agricultural economy and its dispersed rural settlement have persisted for several centuries. Urbanization is dominated by small agricultural service centers and a few medium sized cities, dependent until quite recently on labor intensive and low wage manufacturing industries. In the mid-1980s, three counties began billing themselves as Triangle East, the eastern manufacturing entrance to the Research Triangle (Cook, 1992, p. 22). Triangle East coalition towns of Rocky Mount (51,257), Wilson (37,638), and Tarboro (11,105), however, continue to show only slight population increases.

A larger urban region enters the economic growth mosaic when Triangle East is extended to the immediate east and south, to include adjacent counties. With East Carolina University's recently inaugurated medical center leading the expansion, Greenville (51,149) is the fastest growing urban center in the region, closely followed in size by Goldsboro (44,807) with its traditional economic anchor, Seymour Johnson Air Force Base. Kinston (25,863) is the designated home of that newest of North Carolina's large scale public/private joint venture economic planning efforts, the Global TransPark. Now, after nearly four decades of the success of the Research Triangle Park, state development experts point to the 21st Century as the century of air transportation, responding to the need for linking new economic growth to international markets, just-in-time production, and multi modal transportation. With legislative support in 1991, a several billion dollar investment in a 5,000 acre international air-cargo industrial complex centered by runways of 11,500 feet has been initiated (Kasarda, 1995). Fayetteville (79,320), with its Fort Bragg military installation, provides another source of economic stability in the Coastal Plains. Elsewhere, agriculture and its processing facilities, largely food and tobacco related, have provided decreasing employment opportunities in a region where a number of counties contain a majority African-American and/or Native American population. In the southern Coastal Plains, agriculture has recently turned around with the emphasis on large scale hog production. An estimated state hog population of 7.5 million, with about 80 percent of the production in this subregion, was recorded in July of 1995.

The Piedmont Region is accommodating an increasing share of the state's population, but regional economic disparities persist through the state

Piedmont Region

The settlement pattern of this region is best described as a multi nucleated "Urban Crescent". It has three distinct urban clusters: "Metrolina" with its core of Charlotte (450,716) and Gastonia (56,219); the "Piedmont Triad" with Greensboro (187,726), Winston-Salem (162,595), High Point (70,190) and Burlington (41,916); and the "Piedmont Triangle" with Raleigh (234,220), Durham (144,276), Cary (57,187) and Chapel Hill (42,918). These clusters are embedded within designated Metropolitan Statistical Areas, which, along with the much smaller Hickory (29,201) MSA, demonstrate an almost spatially continuous urban region (Figure 2). A number of Piedmont counties continue to be largely rural in character, though several are affected by spill over suburban and exurban growth.

The Piedmont's three urban clusters comprise 19 of the state's 100 counties, and contain about 45 percent of the state's 1994 estimated population of 7,023,663. Functionally, this is a very complex industrial and service region with a diversity of jobs that act as an important magnet for growth due to migration.

Mountain Region

In this region there are two distinct patterns of settlement. In its eastern foothill portion there is an extension of the western Piedmont's dispersed and slow growing small manufacturing towns, depending largely on textiles, apparel and furniture production, with interstices of relatively dense rural settlement. Connected to this is the Asheville (65,064) Basin, with its concentration of tourism facilities and manufacturing plants. The remainder of the Mountain Region is dominated by relatively small towns, mostly retail service centers and county seats. Several of these have been affected by large scale tourism and recreational resort development, as, for example, those centralized in Watauga-Avery counties in the northwest, and dispersed through the southwestern mountains to the Great Smoky Mountains on the Tennessee boundary.

Four Decades of Regional Change

To lead into a discussion of the state's role in regional definition and development, let us provide first a brief on the changing regional conditions of population settlement and economic development for the most recent decades (Gade, 1989; Gade, 1991; Gade and Cui, 1994; Gade, Stillwell and Rex, 1986).

1950s

Previous decades of net out migration from North Carolina culminated in the 1950s. Peripheral regions, the Mountain and Coastal Plains, are approaching exhaustion of their surplus labor and are developing an aging population. Non-peripheral rural areas similarly lost population, but in their case, mostly to adjacent urban areas within the state. Growth is largely confined to the Piedmont cities and to areas with large military installations, like Fayetteville and Jacksonville.

1960s

Selective out migration from rural areas continued, but at a reduced rate. A significant turnaround in intrastate migration fueled growth in metropolitan areas. Central cities saw an increasing share of their population relocating to their fringes. In the process, they became more segregated by race, a process also influenced by the gradual increase in returning Afro-Americans to their home state, though not necessarily to their home county. The Piedmont initiated a megalopolitanizing process with the gradual fusing of the three major urban clusters. Meanwhile, Mountain and Coastal Plains counties became more disadvantaged, though labor intensive, low wage industries, dominated by branch plants, were localizing in rural areas and slowed the outflow of people.

1970s

This was North Carolina's decade in the sun. The sun-belt migration took hold with the state experiencing unprecedented regional change. Positive impacts though became largely to the rapidly growing metro regions, where stronger inter regional linkages were facilitated by an expanding interstate highway system. These influences continued the growth of suburban and exurban employment, service, and residential centers. General improvement in the quality of life and inter regional transportation also aided the growth of the mountain and seashore related retirement, and vacation home and resort, communities (Bennett, 1992).

1980s

The slowing of the sun-belt phenomenon and a lessening of inter regional migration appeared to be offset by a willingness of more people to travel even further from their home to their place of work. An increasing percentage of metropolitan residents were vacationing and owning second homes in the state's periphery, intensifying flows and linkages between regions. However, the relative distance in per capita income levels between the wealthiest and poorest counties persisted at a rate approximating 250 percent, as it has been the case since the 1950s. Piedmont counties also continued to see an increasing concentration of the state's residents (Gade, 1989).

Net returns of these decades of change to regional development are well summed in Figure 3. This shows one set of results from a larger study that evaluates three decades of change in North Carolina's counties (Gade and Cui, 1994). The socioeconomic index was fashioned by combining different data sets including: 1. unemployment rate; 2. percent persons in poverty; 3. median family income; and 4. percent aged/disabled receipts of social security income, food stamps, and AFDC aid to dependent, aged and disabled individuals. These comprise essentially the measurements used by the state in defining disadvantage counties. On this basis, the best conditions of life in the state (highest scores) are found, with very few exceptions, in a large set of contiguous, essentially urban, Piedmont counties. Conditions of the peripheral counties appear to worsen with increasing distance from the urban counties of the state.

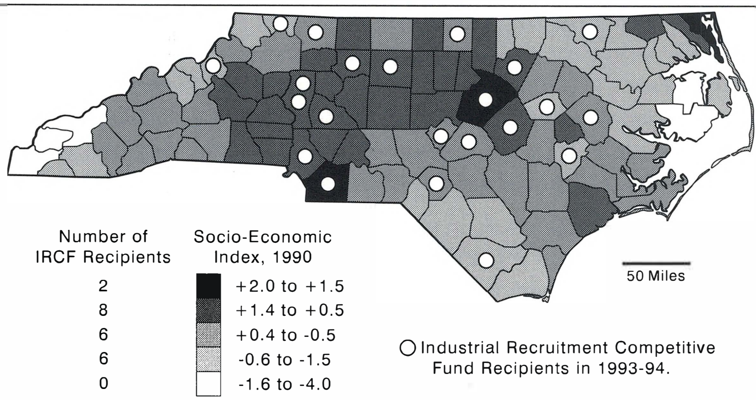


Figure 3. Socioeconomic Index and Industrial Recruitment Competitive Recipients
Sources: Gade and Cui, 1994, p.39; North Carolina Department of Commerce, Public Affairs Office, 1995.

The State Anchors Its Economic Development Policy

What has been the state response to obvious needs in socioeconomic development and to patterns of regional disparity? It is Archibald Murphey, a lawyer and state senator from Orange County, who is generally credited with providing the initial direction for what became the persistent twin cornerstones in state planning policy, transportation improvement and public education. In 1815, Murphey presented the first set of state economic development reports, wherein the problem of people fleeing the state for perceived better opportunities in the West was highlighted; "thousands of our poorer citizens being literally driven away by the prospects of poverty" (Escott 1991, 35). The state chartered the North Carolina Railroad in 1849 and underwrote two-thirds of the cost of construction to link Goldsboro with Charlotte over Raleigh, Hillsborough, Salisbury and Concord. Commercial agriculture flourished in the Piedmont and Central Coastal Plains by the 1880s, and with it the market towns, as well as further initiatives for rail transportation.

> ***By mid-19th Century the state was sailing toward the terra incognitae of balanced regional development with public policy firmly anchored in transportation and education access for all***

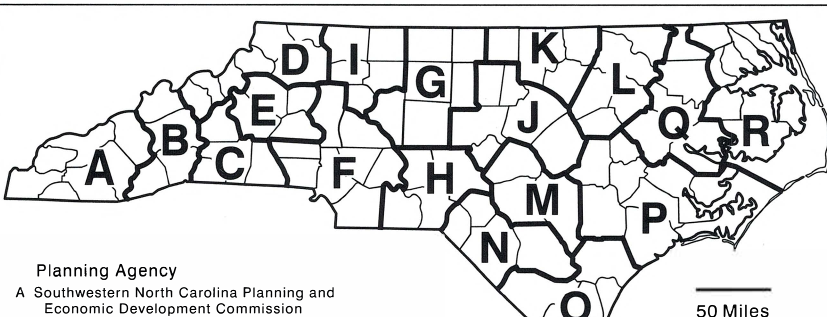
North Carolina became known as the "Good Roads State" in the early part of the century. Continued investment in road building earned the state the sobriquet of "progressive" southern state, and yielded one of the most extensive networks of state maintained road systems in the nation (Escott 1991, 36), a system whose future was secured in 1989 by the enactment of the $9 billion Highway Trust Fund. Yet, it may be that this extraordinary emphasis in state support for land transportation has further encouraged the concentration of industrial and urban development in the Piedmont. Recently, this emphasis was further aided by a legislative yearly subsidy to improve passenger rail transportation between Charlotte and Raleigh, over the Urban Crescent. The move to redirect the geography of economic development by initiating the Global TransPark in the eastern Coastal Plains could then be viewed as an important regional development effort in the traditional spirit of "transportation improvement".

By contrast, the state's role in educational improvement does not have as glorious a history. And this in spite of the success in establishing a comprehensive 58-campus system of community and technical colleges, as well as the 16-campus university system. On the downside, the state lags considerably the national average in the percent of its population having completed high school. The problem is compounded by the relatively low state wages paid public school teachers, who then find the wealthier counties willing to provide a salary supplement. Considerable unevenness in the quality of public education develops as the better teachers are drawn to the wealthier counties.

State Defined Regions and Balanced Growth

It is clear that state initiatives have contributed to the centralization of economic development in the Urban Crescent, and to related regional disparities, a core-periphery condition hardly unusual in economically advanced countries. Having one hundred counties additionally caused an unwieldy passage of top-down central government support programs, whether they flowed from national or state government levels. Complicating the flow problem was the vast increase in such programs during the 1960s. By 1968 there were eight major federal programs that <u>required</u> multi-jurisdictional cooperation. To insure a smoother transition U.S. Congress passed the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act in 1968. Within a few years this led to the emergence of 670 regional organizations throughout the country. Seventeen were founded in North Carolina after the General Assembly's edict of 1969, that the Department of Administration work in developing "a system of multi county regional planning districts to cover the entire state" (Regionalism..., 1980, p. 3). This was not to be achieved in any haphazard way, but through administrative constellations. Thus regional boundaries were defined by careful evaluation of the following factors: "the economic and social interrelationships between urban centers and surrounding areas, existing cooperative programs between counties and municipalities, and the existence of physical boundaries, such as mountain ranges or rivers, that might separate one region from another; ... no region (was) to contain less that three counties, nor fewer than 100,000 people" (Regionalism...., 1980, p. 3). Local governments chose whether they supported a Council of Government (COG) or a Regional Planning and Economic Development Commission (RPEDC) form of regional organization. Only five organizations chose the latter. It merits noting that the RPEDCs, Regions A, B, C, Q, and R, are at the geographic opposite extremes in the state (Figure 4). Internal schisms in Region G, the Piedmont Triad, led in 1978 to a division comprising the present regions G and I. To complement its regional policy the state, in May of 1971, created the Lead Regional Organization (LRO) concept. The result was to assign all regional programs administered through the state and the federal governments to the COGs and the RPEDCs .

In spite of considerable criticism, especially from metro regions who thought of LROs as administrative devices that favored rural and peripheral areas at the expense of urban development, the LROs became the vehicle for funneling federally mandated and state resources to local governments. Other critics pointed to the absence of taxing powers, the inability to condemn property, and the absence of independent power to implement their own plans. In addition, the fact that local governments can renounce membership at any time, was suggested to be a critical factor weakening the organizations (Stuart, 1979). On the other hand, the LROs brought important benefits to the table. They had a strong state mandate, and developed considerable expertise in delivering federal funding to localities. They served increasingly well in articulating local needs to higher levels of government and provided mid-level support in attracting federal funds to areas in special need. But, they seemingly fell short in providing linkages for localities to attract economic investment capital, especially to regions lagging in economic development.



Planning Agency

A Southwestern North Carolina Planning and Economic Development Commission
B Land-of-Sky Regional Council
C Isothermal Planning and Development Commission
D Region D Council of Governments
E Western Piedmont Council of Governments
F Centralina Council of Governments
G Piedmont Triad Council of Governments
H Pee Dee Council of Governments
I Northwest Piedmont Council of Governments
J Triangle J Council of Governments
K Kerr-Tar Regional Council of Governments
L Region L Council of Governments
M Region M Council of Governments
N Lumber River Council of Governments
O Cape Fear Council of Governments
P Neuse River Council of Governments
Q Mid-East Commission
R Albemarle Regional Planning and Development Commission

Figure 4. Multi-county Planning Regions
Source: North Carolina Department of Administration, Division of Policy Development, n.d.

Governor Hunt's first administration tried to ameliorate this situation when, in 1976, it initiated a balanced growth policy. The objective was to target federal resources to disadvantaged small towns and rural areas. A rather simple formula was devised to determine degree of regional disadvantage for each of the LROs, as follows:

% of total jobs in region/% of total state working population in region

That the formula masks some other critical conditions, such as comparative growth rates, labor market and wage conditions, and unemployment differences, appeared to either be of little significance or to unduly complicate the model. When applied to actual conditions the model yielded a range from .75 to 1.16, with the low ranked LROs included R (.75), A (.77), D and M (.84), and N (.87). The high ranked regions included E (1.16), F (1.08), J (1.07), and G (1.05) (Gade, 1989), thus reflecting core-periphery contrasts. Aided by President Carter's image of the virtue of nationally balanced growth, the state policy initially was successful in obtaining federal agency agreement to steer to the so defined disadvantaged regions $1.2 billion out of a total state annual federal allocation of $7.6 billion. Soon, however, the initiative lost out to a new federal administration.

For rural LROs the Executive Director of Region D COG noted:

> The ultimate effectiveness of the regional council in rural areas has to lie in their ability to meet locally perceived needs either through actually providing the needed services and resources or by being in a position to broker the services and resources of other governmental and private sources.... (Region D COG) has been more involved in building local capacity (Fender 1991, p. 99).

Certainly this is a much less ambitious objective for the rural disadvantaged areas than that envisaged by the Governor's Office, but perhaps more reasonable in the context of the already diminishing flow of federal dollars to the localities. Clearly, though, the focus of LRO activities has always been more social welfare than economic development in nature.

Regions Gone Astray?

New federal and state agendas of decentralized government, decreased public involvement in the affairs of individuals and their communities, and a greater expectation of local initiatives, developed in the 1980s, and has continued into the 1990s. This new vision of public responsibility is coupled with corporate restructuring and global investment initiatives, which seem to further the interests of those growth regions that possess the appropriate opportunity structure, while providing disincentives for positive change in the lagging regions. In concert is the not so subtle philosophic shift away from the social welfare to the economic development agenda.

The greater capacity of Piedmont counties to marshal and assert their cooperative spirit resulted in the founding of three economic development partnerships. For example, the Greater Charlotte Economic Development Corporation was the product of an early 1980s effort in joint promotion of the region's economic potential. It held a meeting in 1990 to discuss strategies for operating under its new name, the Carolina Partnership, Inc. While largely a chambers of commerce idea, it was soon broadened to include other citizen groups, but critically, it was a private enterprise venture! So were the two other Piedmont groupings, the Piedmont Triad Partnership, and the Research Triangle Partnership. And these 'partnerships' evolved without the counsel or direct support of the COGs. Business interests, for example, here fused the formerly disharmonious Regions I and G COGs. So a marked policy shift from public to private sector regional planning initiatives mirrored the new federal philosophy of the 1980s.

With the beginning of the second Hunt Administration in 1992 came renewed support for state involvement in regional development favoring the disadvantaged counties. Hunt's regional development programs provided them extra advantages in attracting new industries. Most critically this was through the Governor's Industrial Recruitment Competitive Fund (IRCF), funded with an initial appropriation of $5 million in 1993. The Fund, which provides $1000 for each job created by a new or relocating industry, complemented other state industrial investment incentives. These include, (a) the Building Renovation Fund for counties declared economically distressed, (b) the Income Tax Credit of $2,500 for each new employee beyond nine that is hired by an industry located in a distressed county, and (c) the Department of Transportation Site Access Program for roads built to new industrial facilities; and others. It should be noted that of the $3.5 million IRCF monies dispensed in 1993-94, about one third went to the urbanized Piedmont Crescent counties, while only about one half of the new jobs generated went to economically distressed counties (Figure 3 locates the counties that received IRCF funds). The North Carolina's legislature's enthusiasm for the Fund clearly dampened as its allocation of $20 million for 1994 was scaled down to $5 million for 1995. Presently the constitutional legality of transferring public funds directly to new or relocating private businesses is being tested in the state courts, so the future of the IRCF is uncertain.

In 1993 a North Carolina Economic Development Board was convened to assess the state's annual $100 million economic development program. The total program was found to be quite inefficient in its delivery, an "octopus with many tentacles" (Tuttle, 1994, p. 4), and the Board recommended streamlining the delivery process by creating seven regions through which economic policy could be implemented and resources reallocated. In 1994 the General Assembly created five new economic development commissions (EDC), and provided a $2 million budget for their initiation to be shared with existing partnerships. It was expected that the EDCs would evolve into partnerships like the three in the Piedmont, and thereafter join the Partnership Board. Figure 5 labels and identifies the boundaries of the seven Partnerships, which, after some initial juggling of a few counties for most desired alliance, are now in place. In 1995, the North Carolina Partnership for Economic Development, chaired by the Secretary of the De-

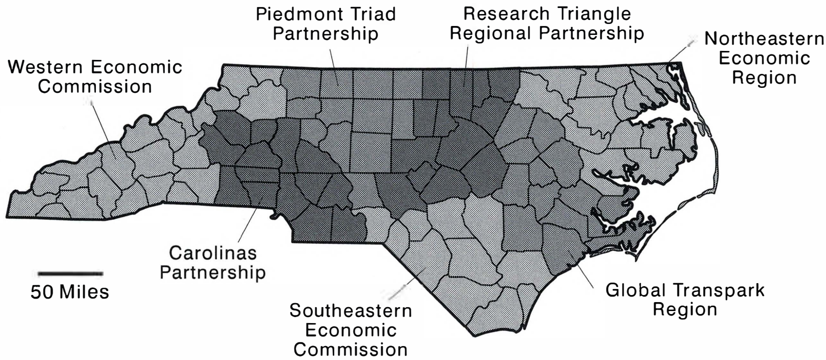


Figure 5. Partnership for Economic Development Regions
Source: North Carolina Department of Commerce, Public Affairs Office, n.d.

partment of Commerce, was founded as the state/private enterprise joint venture for planning and implementing the new state policy through the seven partnerships (Tuttle, 1995, p. 16).

Partnership boundaries are determined by local governments using the following criteria: primary economic linkages, principally through commuting patterns; existing development organizations and relationships; natural boundaries; principal economic centers or "engines" within the region; anticipated major projects; and other bases for cooperation (*Making North Carolina....* 1994, p. 16). This is not a set of criteria significantly different from those earlier used in defining the existing LRO boundaries. But there are 18 LROs and only eight Partnerships! Figure 6 shows the degree to which a coincidence exists between the two sets of regions. Seen here are the 14 counties that appear to have been maneuvered out of place, in the

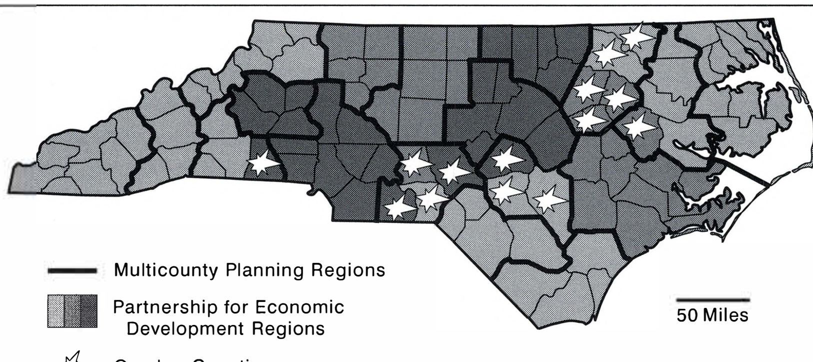


Figure 6. Regions Gone Astray?
Sources: North Carolina Department of Administration, Division of Policy Development, n.d.; North Carolina Department of Commerce, Public Affairs Office, n.d.

context of their continuing membership in an LRO where boundaries do not coincide with the particular county's position in a new partnership. These "overlap" counties take on a regional pattern of their own, especially in identifying a kind of intermediate region positioned between the wealthier Piedmont Crescent counties and disadvantaged eastern counties. Note also the comparison here to the location of low level socioeconomic counties in figure 3. The vast majority of the state's more disadvantaged counties are gathered into in the larger and more peripherally located Northeast Economic Region, Southeastern Economic Commission, and the Western Economic Commission. In the latter only Cleveland County, which chose to switch out of the Western Economic Commission, exists as an "overlap" case. Otherwise, a clearly disjunct western region of 22 relatively disparate counties comprises its own partnership.

So, an interesting regionalizing system has evolved where internal geographic harmony seems to come natural to only the three Piedmont Crescent partnerships, and possibly also to the Global TransPark Region. These four partnerships clearly have their "economic engines" in place, but what about the largely non-urban peripheral partnerships? The Northeastern Economic Region is totally without a dominant central place; the influence of Asheville in the Western Economic Commission reaches not much beyond the counties adjacent to Buncombe, and in the Southeastern Economic Commission, the two medium sized cities of Fayetteville and Wilmington may find that they have too little in common to profitably provide the leadership needed for the Partnership.

And what now for the future role of the LROs? A traditional problem for the state in regional politics is the general absence of regional alignment among state agency geographical divisions. As recently as in 1992 this was seen by the North Carolina General Assembly, Government Performance Audit Committee as a situation conducive to inefficiencies and lack of cooperation among agencies charged with furthering the interests of the citizens (GPAC, 1992, p. 4.3). LROs are assigned the task of supporting local governments and of channeling, if not administering, the revenue flow of federally mandated programs to localities. In postfederal times their situation appears to have weakened considerably. The worst case scenario, perhaps, is realized by Region H, whose five counties have been absorbed into no less than four different economic development partnerships. Whose interests are being served here?

So, Who is Being Served? Glocalization - North Carolina Style

The idea behind the somewhat awkward term, glocalization, is that global competition makes regional/local cooperation necessary for expanding existing internationally competitive industries and in attracting new regional investment. It being the avowed purpose of the Governor's Office

'Partnership Regions' may deepen traditional rural-urban economic development contrasts, and rob the LROs of some of their effectiveness in supporting local government

to provide direct state support for the localization of new plants, the question then focuses on the extent to which the new state measures may succeed. Will the new regional delimitations for economic development help localities define their place in the world, or will it deepen their struggle for maintaining some measure of community identity? Will the place wars (Haider, 1992), which deepened in North Carolina through the 1980s diffusion of county based economic/ industrial development committees/boards, be intensified where independence of action appears to be usurped by (a) a new powerful urban presence, or (b) the inability of a more peripheral region, without a competitive urban center, to remain investment attractive? Some of the evolved "Partnership Regions" may have difficulties in identifying their "core competencies" due to their much larger and diffuse territories. Certainly the state is hoping that this new approach will realize a long sought North Carolina goal, providing an even playing field for its varied regions in their search for equal socioeconomic development opportunity and cultural sustainability. For county residents of the non-urban periphery, there may be less appreciation for the sentiment recently expressed in a *Charlotte Observer* editorial piece, "regionalism provides an avenue for communities to avoid being lost in the world, if they can overcome their fear of being lost in the region," (Bradbury, 1994, 18A). Their newly formalized Partnership regions, absent in 'internal economic engines' may provide for them a straitjacket within which they will have even less assurance of needed state support for economic development initiatives.

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