

# Actualizing the Regional Community

**Victor J. Poirier**

Whether your frame of reference is the neighborhood, the local community of a town or city, a metropolitan area, a state, a region, the nation, or the world, it is clear that we are all becoming more interdependent. This interdependence provides a challenge at all these various levels—the challenge of discovering how we can work together toward the common good without sacrificing individuality as a person, a community, a region, a state, or a nation. The regional community is the community that has successfully met this challenge.

Regionalism within our society is as old as American society itself. The regional challenge is the same challenge our founding fathers faced in colonial times. The difference today is that the interdependence has become much more intense and complicated.


It strikes me that regionalism is not so much a philosophical premise or set of principles as it is a set of *skills*. Consequently, actualizing the regional community is more an art than a science. Also, we must expand our concepts when we think about the regional approach. We need to think of regionalism not in the univocal sense as applying to a geographical area, but more in the analogous sense as applying to a *community of interests* or, to use the term currently in vogue, *partnerships*.

When the delegates from the thirteen original colonies met in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787 and drafted the American Constitution, they were not simply following a set of ideas and principles of self government. They were exercising a set of skills on how to function successfully within the context of interdependence. They accomplished their task of establishing a new frame of reference for their interdependence by employing skills that had been perfected through a century of experience.

Two hundred years later, communities all over this country are attempting to meet the challenge of working together toward the common good within the context of interdependence. Many of those attempts fall short of their mark or completely fail, but some efforts emerge as stellar examples of success. These pockets of success are where the art of actualizing the regional community is being perfected. Another important aspect of the skill of actualizing the regional community is that it does not necessarily reside in the existing local governments or regional councils of government. Many times, these skills are developed by the civic, business, and community-based leaders.

An important work of the Institute for the Regional Community is systematically sifting through American society

and discovering those instances of successful regional cooperation. Such a methodical process would produce a database of what works in terms of regional partnerships and why those partnerships work. Eventually, this information could be organized logically into a body of knowledge with understanding of cause-and-effect relationships. At that point, we would have a new discipline to use to successfully implement those partnerships that serve the common good within the context of intense and very complex interdependence. It is my hope that this new discipline will soon be a major ac-

complishment of the Institute for the Regional Community. 

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