

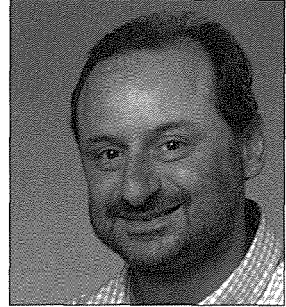


**Prince Edward Island as a
Sub-National Island Jurisdiction**

Godfrey Baldacchino

Godfrey Baldacchino

Godfrey Baldacchino is Canada Research Chair (Island Studies) at the University of Prince Edward Island and Visiting Professor of Sociology at the University of Malta, Malta. His research interests revolve around the study of islands and small jurisdictions, and deal with such policy issues as governance, economic development, tourism, education, migration and labour relations. Dr. Baldacchino is a member of the *Islands Commission of the International Geographical Union*, a Director of *Global Islands Network*, a Board member of the *International Small Island Studies Association* and the *Åland Institute for Comparative Island Studies*, and is on the editorial boards of five scholarly journals. He is also the founder and Executive Editor of the international peer-reviewed *Island Studies Journal*. Baldacchino's most recent edited works include: *Extreme Tourism: Lessons from the World's Cold-Water Islands* (2006); *A World of Islands: An Island Studies Reader* (2007) and *Bridging Islands: The Impact of Fixed Links* (2007). Godfrey lives in Charlottetown with his wife Anna and his son Luke, having moved to PEI from Malta in 2003.



The Power of Jurisdiction

“The identity and character of every political jurisdiction”, wrote former Professor of History at the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI), Frederick Driscoll, in 1988, “is created and shaped by size, location, population, resources, and history.” And so, while the history of Prince Edward Island is similar in many ways to that of other British North American colonies which eventually became part of the Dominion of Canada, PEI is also

Canada’s smallest province, both in size and population, and an Island with a history of land ownership unique in British North America. Smallness gives its political culture an intimacy unknown in most jurisdictions. The lack of large industrial centres gives its society a more rural character than is common elsewhere. For all these reasons, its political history and relations with the federal government are somewhat unique. ... No jurisdiction in Canada approaches more closely a direct democracy (Driscoll, 1988).

That PEI is a jurisdiction *at all* is itself an outcome of a quirk of history. The Island, formerly Île St. Jean, had been annexed to Nova Scotia by the British Government in 1763. The ownership of almost the entire colony was allocated via a ‘land lottery’ held in London, England, on a single day in 1767 to some one hundred absentee proprietors. The latter agitated for political control and successfully lobbied the British Government to revert the Island to its former autonomous standing: thus was born the separate colony of St. John’s in 1769. The granting of such separate status led, in the same year, to the creation of an Executive Council of twelve persons appointed by the Crown to advise and assist the Governor in the exercise of his functions. An elected Legislative Assembly on the Island followed in 1773. The islandness of the place, with its geographically defined borders, its relative remoteness from the colonial outpost of Halifax, and the logic of acceding to it being governed by endogenous (domestic) élites, no doubt swayed the British Government’s decision to grant autonomy as an expeditious measure.

Through the course of history, PEI and its Islanders have often referred to their small size as a source of pride and homeliness. This is a province that can be covered in a day's drive: a place which Wade MacLauchlan, UPEI President and Vice-Chancellor, is fond of saying "we can get our arms around". The unique rural-urban balance that is a function of its size is a major draw for the tourism industry of this "Garden Province", as well as for various immigrants and urban refugees. Its human and community centered way of life, combined with affordable housing, a 'small town' feel, job availability and a variety of natural resources, give Prince Edward Island a distinctive draw (Baldacchino, 2007: 7). The "positive virtues of landscape, family and community" (Bumsted, 1982: 32) – along with the not-so-positive traits of local gossip and a suspicion of outsiders – resonate in the 20th century works of what is perhaps the Island's most famous citizen, author Lucy Maud Montgomery. Such values remain surprisingly relevant to this day and age on PEI.

At the same time, and almost paradoxically, the Island's small size in both physical and demographic terms – a land area of 568,439 hectares (5,660 km² or 2,184 square miles) and a current population of around 138,000 – is seen as a chronic and structural handicap towards its full development. The aspirations of the Island's people are often felt to be achievable only thanks to a sustained flow of revenue from external sources. Keen to emphasize its limited resources, the province has sought the benefit of federal programs and financial assistance, while fearful of external domination and warily resisting the homogenizing effects of national programs and standards. This stance has been, throughout the years, PEI's key defining role within the Canadian federation (Milne, 1992).

And yet, beyond Ottawa, there is another kind of resourcefulness, one that is PEI's to call upon. It speaks to the Island's own ability to generate and stamp its own signature on a globalizing world, via the resourcefulness of jurisdiction.

"Jurisdiction" is not a neutral, passive or static term. It does not simply suggest a space, a place or territoriality. It signifies a legitimate and constitutionally engrained political autonomy that is thus recognized and respected by other players. It suggests a repository of powers that political actors are entitled to use, and which they may misuse, abuse, or not use at all. It proffers a series of levers, drivers or tools that allow policy makers to tweak and craft the development trajectory of their land and its citizens in specific directions. In other words, *jurisdiction is a resource*. In recognizing PEI as a jurisdiction in this very active and strategic sense, the emphasis is not on being a *small* province, but on being a *Province*.

The shift may be subtle; but it is neither semantic nor academic. Prince Edward Island is so small that many, particularly in Central Canada, express frustration and question the Islanders' right to exist as one of the family of ten, a province with as much weight *de jure* as Alberta, Ontario or Quebec (Baglolle *et al.*, 1997: 2). Small size has been touted as the excuse for not treating PEI at all in scholarly discussions about certain provincial practices in Canada (e.g. Thompson *et al.*, 2003: 10). Others mutter, in private more than in public, about the perceived advantages (mainly cost savings) of Maritime Union, whereby PEI would be joined to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick as a single province, with a total population still smaller than that of any other province in Canada except Newfoundland & Labrador. The construction and opening of the 'fixed link' across the Northumberland Strait as from 1997 has added fuel to such arguments, now that PEI is – in a strictly geographical sense – no longer an island (Baldacchino & Spears, 2007: 63). Presumably, PEI would have most to lose from such a Maritime Union because it would certainly forfeit at least some of its current jurisdictional resourcefulness. No doubt, the prospects of such a loss would be aggressively contested by Prince Edward Islanders.

Islands on Their Own Terms

Since the early 1990s, an awareness of the powers of jurisdiction – which include legislative, executive and judicial prerogative – has come increasingly within the mindscape of Island-based academics and policy makers. New possibilities were glimpsed during the *Islands Living* International Conference held at Brackley Point, PEI, in September 1992. This meeting of minds, organized by the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) at UPEI (Baldacchino & Greenwood, 1998), explored patterns of autonomy and dependence in the North Atlantic and provided a catalyst for making further connections which were to become more evident through the *North Atlantic Islands Program* – now the *North Atlantic Forum* – a regional partnership that was spawned by the IIS and other partners after that pioneering 1992 conference.

As the turn of the Millennium approached and passed, Islanders became increasingly confronted by new external challenges. The precious resource of jurisdiction, just like the Island's distinct identity and culture, may have become more prominent in the minds and thoughts of Islanders with the ominous and contrapuntal presence of "the fixed link": the Confederation Bridge. Or perhaps, it has filtered through surreptitiously as a result of the federal government's support, matched by the provincial government interest, towards what has effectively become

a transformation of PEI into an alternative (wind) energy test site and showcase in North America. Of late, it may have been spurred by the ever clearer failure of federal strategies to prevent a ‘biodiversity meltdown’ of the sensitive Northumberland Strait ecosystem (e.g. Novaczek, 2006). Clearly, the Island’s fortunes and its future are not just an outcome of the perennial negotiations with those who lord over the federal treasury.

Indeed, the province’s proactive identification of niches of competitive advantage and its positioning to exploit these is one of the hallmarks of recent provincial governments’ economic development strategies. Such local initiatives typically find favour with Ottawa, keen to support (via such units as the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency) the generation of wealth and employment that are based on the Island. The successful transformation of a former Canadian Air Force base into an aerospace industrial facility, the development of an industrial and knowledge-based nutraceuticals cluster, and the more recent opportunities for consolidating a financial services industry, are all practical developments that reflect an ability to use jurisdictional powers creatively. These measures seek to exploit ‘the island advantage’, reaping results that promote sustainability, while promoting a strategy of economic diversification that compensates for the Island’s inherent economic openness (e.g. Milne, 2000a: 88). If PEI is Canada’s ‘Garden Province’, and the garden metaphor remains useful and powerful both as descriptive agent and prescriptive standard of how the Island ought to be (Milne, 1982: 41), then the Island’s policy makers are the gardeners tasked to make and keep the place in bloom.

The study of islands on their own terms is one other area that Prince Edward Island has acknowledged as a strategically appropriate niche for itself to pursue. At the University of Prince Edward Island, there is now a long-established Institute of Island Studies for policy and advocacy work, a Canada Research Chair in Island Studies, a scholarly *Island Studies Journal*, and both undergraduate and graduate level academic programs dedicated to island studies. It makes perfect sense for UPEI to develop and invest in this trans-disciplinary pursuit of island studies, just as it makes sense for PEI to appreciate the insights that emerge out of a critical comparison between what it is doing, or not doing, with the performance of similar jurisdictions.

Of course, every territory is uniquely crafted by history, culture and geography. And yet, the unique traits of territories can be patterned, leading to legitimate comparison and critique. In this respect, PEI can take solace in the fact that it is not alone. One fall-out from the North Atlantic Islands Program has been the discovery of that neighbouring small island

state, Iceland, as a model for appropriate resource management practices. But there are other examples of island jurisdictions around the world that are, like PEI but unlike Iceland, sub-national and non-sovereign. They must, like PEI, navigate their own development, manage their autonomy, while also sharing rule-making with larger sovereign states of which they form part.

The Jurisdiction Project

At UPEI, a major study into the characteristics of sub-national island jurisdiction was launched in 2004 with the generous financial support of two back-to-back Strategic Research Grants made available by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC): ‘Patterns of Sub-National Autonomy amongst the World’s Islands’, followed by ‘Offshoring Strategies from Sub-national Island Jurisdictions’. Collectively dubbed “The Jurisdiction Project”, this research has enabled a detailed, comprehensive and global profiling exercise of the economic and political capacities of over 100 sub-national islands and archipelagos around the world. The dossiers were painstakingly built up over time, mainly with the research support of graduate students following the Master of Arts in Island Studies (MAIS) at UPEI. The ‘jurisdiction database’ is now in the public domain (www.islandstudies.ca/jurisdiction-project/). This is nested in an island studies website developed with assistance from the Canada Fund for Innovation; analysis of the rich information it contains is proceeding apace in scholarly publications and journal articles (e.g. Baldacchino 2004, 2006; Baldacchino and Milne, 2006, 2008; Groome Wynne, 2007).

The collection of articles presented here represents the most local output of this major research endeavour of international scope. The contributors were guided to look specifically at what lessons PEI may care to scrutinize from a global review of islands that enjoy similar measures of policy autonomy, but without sovereignty. Detailed case reports were prepared which explored how sub-national island jurisdictions around the world – from Bermuda to the Balearics, from the Cook Islands to the Faroes – responded to specific policy challenges, what PEI may have done so far about similar challenges, and what PEI might consider doing in the future about the same. (Amongst all sub-national jurisdictions showcased and explored in this collection, the one that is referred to over and over again is Tasmania – very far away from PEI geographically, but apparently much closer than we think when it comes to policy comparisons.) In addition to discerning and distilling the lessons made

available by other comparable jurisdictions, the researchers had to be mindful that any lessons learned would always need to be rooted in Prince Edward Island's own particular context. Finally, a format was chosen that hopefully communicates well any lessons that can be drawn for PEI today.

Objectives of this Collection

It is our aim to communicate the lessons of the Jurisdiction Project not just to students and academics but also to policy makers and others engaged in governance on Prince Edward Island. In the lead-up to this publication, two events were organized at UPEI and carried out to further the Project. First, a workshop was held on October 13, 2006 with a view to analyzing the dynamics of public policy and change mobilization on PEI (Simpson, 2007). Attendees included some 25 researchers, students and representatives of social economy organizations. The second event was a half-day seminar, held on June 8, 2007. This event was chaired by a most distinguished Islander in the form of John Eldon Green, and concluded by another engaged local educator, Professor Jean Mitchell. Drafts of four of the five core papers in this volume (those by Hans Connor, Crystal Fall, Barbara Groome Wynne and Kathleen Stuart) were presented to seminar participants in a manner that was intended to be visually appealing, informative and provocative. (The fifth piece, dealing with the environment, was expertly written by UPEI biology professor Lawrence Liao and completed in early November 2007.) The approximately 35 participants who attended the June 2007 seminar had been drawn from a list of carefully selected invitees which included politicians and community leaders, apart from members of the student and academic body at UPEI. We were fortuitous in this task by having the seminar event coincide with a recent election of a new PEI provincial government. The timing couldn't have been better: the situation called for some imaginative and fresh yet serious ideas.

Thus, the core of this book is a collation of the policy papers dealing with the policy issues that emerge as particularly salient in the development strategies of most sub-national island jurisdictions today: political capacity; access and transportation; migration and human resourcing; environmental stewardship; and social capital and the social economy. These areas of political economy concern are most likely to fall within the remit of self-rule; they are looked upon by many sub-national island authorities and spokespersons as areas of competence which they would most prefer to have under local control; and no wonder, since

they could be critical ingredients in shaping economic prosperity (e.g. Milne, 2000b). A broadly similar set had been identified as one of the outcomes of the North Atlantic Islands Program (Baldacchino & Milne, 2000: 231-236). This is not to discount other policy spheres; but these five come across as spaces where small sub-national island jurisdictions feel an especially strong obligation to involve themselves, and where they avidly seek results that can translate into ‘win-win’ social development and economic prosperity.

This publication may just serve to broaden the appreciation of the nature, and number, of strings that may be pulled by an intelligent island jurisdiction. Some strings may be tenuous, others may be strong; but, in any case, islanders are well aware of how important is the pulling of strings within their province (as in getting specific local things done) and beyond (as in inter-governmental relations). It is hoped that *Pulling Strings* can serve as a handbook or manual for those engaged or concerned with appropriate public policy on Prince Edward Island and who may be shopping around for ideas that have actually been tried and tested in comparable locations. It continues in the tradition of such grounded scholarship that has been pioneered by the Institute of Island Studies at UPEI, and which reflects an ongoing university-community partnership which we see as delivering useful, mutual benefits. The compilation proposes a dossier of lessons that can be reviewed and critiqued for their own sake; but they could also prove inspiring, serving as examples of comparative ‘best practice’ for long-term policy initiatives that can be championed by a slate of provincial leaders, and supported by the public at large. These are measures that could be entertained on, for, and by a jurisdictionally resourceful Prince Edward Island.

References

- Baldacchino, G. (2004) 'Autonomous but Not Sovereign? A Review of Island Sub-Nationalism', *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*, 31: 1-2, 77-90.
- Baldacchino, G. (2006) 'Innovative Development Strategies from Non-Sovereign Island Jurisdictions: A Global Review of Economic Policy and Governance Practices', *World Development*, 34: 5, 852-867.
- Baldacchino, G. (2007) *Recent Settlers to Prince Edward Island Speak: Positive Selling Points Regarding PEI*. Charlottetown: Population Secretariat, Government of Prince Edward Island with the kind support of the University of Prince Edward Island.
- Baldacchino, G. & Greenwood, R. (eds.) (1998) *Competing Strategies of Socio-Economic Development for Small Islands*. Charlottetown, Canada: Institute of Island Studies, University of Prince Edward Island.
- Baldacchino, G. & Milne, D. (2000) 'Conclusion' in G. Baldacchino & D. Milne (eds.) *Lessons from the Political Economy of Small Islands: The Resourcefulness of Jurisdiction*. New York: St. Martin's Press in association with Institute of Island Studies, University of Prince Edward Island, pp. 230-241.
- Baldacchino, G. & Milne, D. (eds.) (2006) Thematic issue of *The Round Table: Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, 95: 386, September, 487-627.
- Baldacchino, G. & Milne, D. (eds.) (2008) *The Case for Non-Sovereignty: Lessons from Sub-National Island Jurisdictions*. London: Routledge.
- Baldacchino, G. & Spears, A. (2007) 'The Bridge Effect: A Tentative Score Sheet for Prince Edward Island' in G. Baldacchino (ed.) *Bridging Islands: The Impact of Fixed Links*. Charlottetown, Canada: Acorn Press, pp. 47-66.
- Baglole, H., Bartmann, B., Bulger, D. & Srebrnik, H.F. (1997) *Prince Edward Island and the Canadian Constitution: A Brief to the Standing Committee on the Constitution*. Charlottetown: Institute of Island Studies, University of Prince Edward Island, 20 pp.
- Bumsted, J.M. (1982) "'The Only Island there is': The Writing of Prince Edward Island History' in V. Smitheram, D. Milne & S. Dasgupta (eds.) *The Garden Transformed: Prince Edward Island, 1945-1980*. Charlottetown, Canada: Ragweed Press, pp. 11-38.
- Driscoll, F. (1988) 'History and Politics of Prince Edward Island', *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, 11: 2. www.parl.gc.ca/Infoparl/english/issue.htm?param=125&art=765.
- Groome Wynne, B. (2007) 'Social Capital and Social Economy in Sub-National Island Jurisdictions', *Island Studies Journal*, 2:1, 115-132.
- Milne, D. (1982) 'Politics in a Beleaguered Garden' in V. Smitheram, D. Milne & S. Dasgupta (eds.) *The Garden Transformed: Prince Edward Island, 1945-1980*. Charlottetown, Canada: Ragweed Press, pp. 39-72.
- Milne, D. (1992) 'Challenging Constitutional Dependency: A Revisionist View of Atlantic Canada' in J.N. McCrorie & M.L. MacDonald (eds.) *The Constitutional Future of the Prairie and Atlantic Regions of Canada*. University of Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, pp. 208-217.
- Milne, D. (2000a) 'The Federal Model: Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island' in G. Baldacchino & D. Milne (eds.) *Lessons from the Political Economy of Small Islands: The Resourcefulness of Jurisdiction*. New York: St. Martin's Press in association with Institute of Island Studies, University of Prince Edward Island, pp. 75-90.
- Milne, D. (2000b) *Ten Lessons for Economic Development in Small Jurisdictions: The European Perspective*, Charlottetown: University of Prince Edward Island, Institute of Island Studies.

- Novaczek, I. (2006) 'Haunted by our Development Choices', *EA Reporter*, 12: Spring, Environmental Assessment & Planning Caucus, 4-5. www.cenrce.org/eng/caucuses/assessment/docs/2006_Spring_EA_ReporterIssue12.pdf.
- Simpson, A. (2007) 'Political Culture and Policy Practice in Prince Edward Island', *Optimum Online*, 37: 1, 35-42. www.optimumonline.ca/article.phtml?id=274.
- Thompson, M., Rose J.B. & Smith, A.E. (2003) *Beyond the National Divide: Regional Differences in Industrial Relations*. Kingston, Ontario: School of Policy Studies, Queen's University.