

Resource Dependence And Community Well-being In Rural Canada

The relationship between resource dependence and community well-being is of great interest to Canadian policy makers and is directly linked to the sustainability of resource-reliant rural communities. There are many theories about how resource-reliance and well-being are related,

strategy for rural economic development, when, in fact, in many instances the opposite may be true.

Although “resource dependence” is often linked to negative outcomes for well-being, this relationship is not universal. For instance, studies done in the US

ence the relationship between resource dependence and well-being are regional variations, variations between resource industries, and the indicators chosen to measure well-being.

Recent studies have attempted to document the degree of variability across resource

industries and regions in order to better understand factors that affect the relationship between resource-dependence and well-being. In looking at resource-reliance within Canada, researchers have measured well-being using data available through the 1996 Statistics Canada Census. Rather than look

simply at economic poverty as the indicator of well-being, a variety of indicators were used, including individual unemployment, median family income, five year migration rates, and educational attainment, to gain a clearer picture of resource-reliance and well-being. Simple cor-



but few assessments of which theories might best fit which resource industries and in what circumstance. With little research done on Canadian resource industries, traditional policy has dictated that an increase in harvesting and processing of natural resources is a viable

found a negative correlation between forest dependence and economic indicators of well-being, but when considered in more depth, it was apparent that forestry requires analysis by sector to really understand its effects on well-being. Other factors that influ-

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relation analysis was used to illustrate the relationship between resource dependency and well being and how this relationship may be influenced by resource industry, region, and indicator(s) used.

What has emerged from these studies has been intriguing.

Fisheries appear to be mainly peripheral and associated with negative outcomes relative to other resource industries. Forestry, on the other hand, requires and in-depth analysis of sub-sectors to really understand its effects on well-being. It is also more variable depending on region. Mining dependence appears to be more associated with decreased well-being, but this greatly depends on the indicator that is used (mining seems to have a more positive effect when well-being is measured by income rather than poverty or



unemployment). Agriculture is also a highly variable industry and the different structures within the industry affect well-being in different ways. Like forestry, it requires sub-sector analysis to see the clearer picture and is variable depending on region.

The relationship between resource dependence and human well-being is neither definitively positive nor negative. Some industries and their sub-sectors are consistently associated with negative outcomes or positive outcomes and some

resource industries vary greatly by region. There is a real need to understand these interrelationships in a local context of what resource base is utilized, methods of evaluating well-being, and how region affects the equation. In depth analysis within regions and across sectors and

across time are needed in order for policy makers to clearly understand the implications of their decisions for rural Canadian communities.

Kim Edmondson
University of
New Brunswick



The New Rural Economy Project, Phase 2
Tel: (514) 848-2424 ext. 2323
Fax: (514) 848-2322
E-mail: reimer@vax2.concordia.ca
Website: nre.concordia.ca

