

NRE² BUILDING RURAL CAPACITY IN THE NEW ECONOMY

The New Rural Economy Project

Tom Beckley
David Bruce
Omer Chouinard
Ivan Emke
Greg Halseth
Bruno Jean
Patrice LeBlanc
Dianne Looker

Bill Reimer
bill.reimer@concordia.ca
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http://nre.concordia.ca

Diane Martz
Solange Nadeau
John Parkins
Steve Plante
Doug Ramsey
Richard Stedman
Ellen Wall
Derek Wilkinson
Anna Woodrow



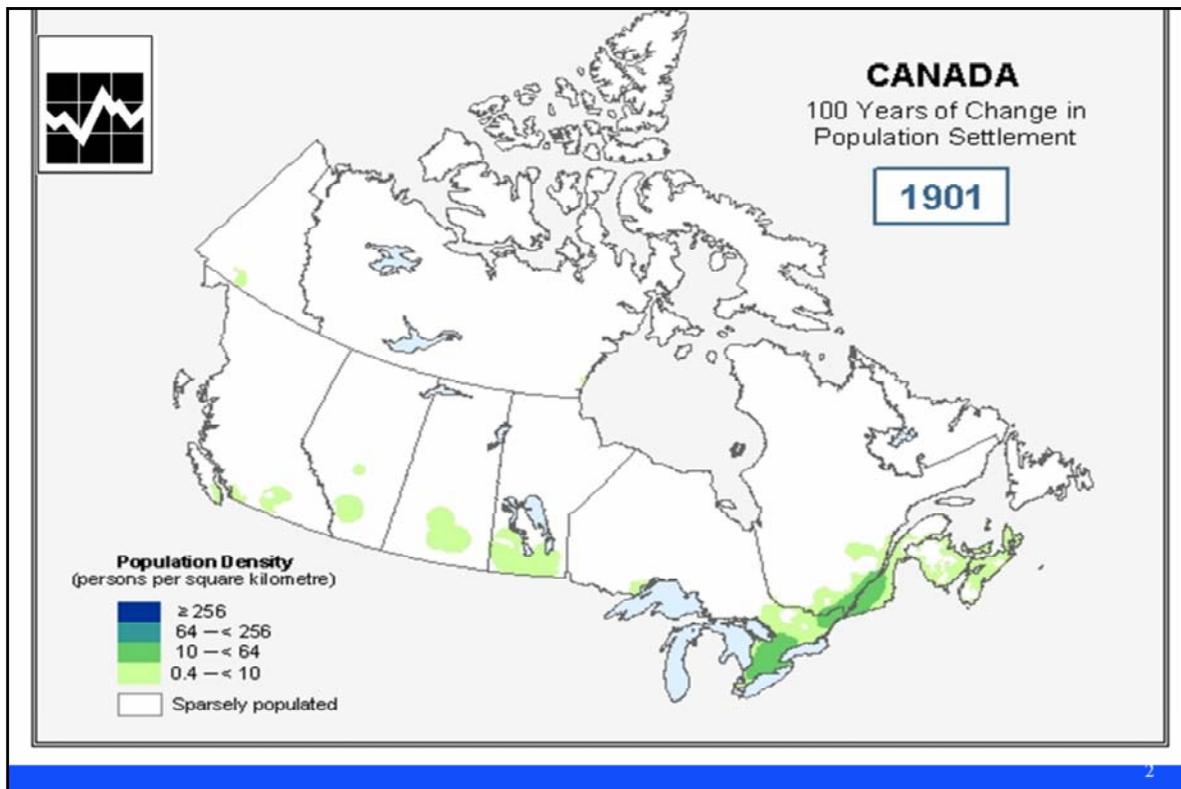




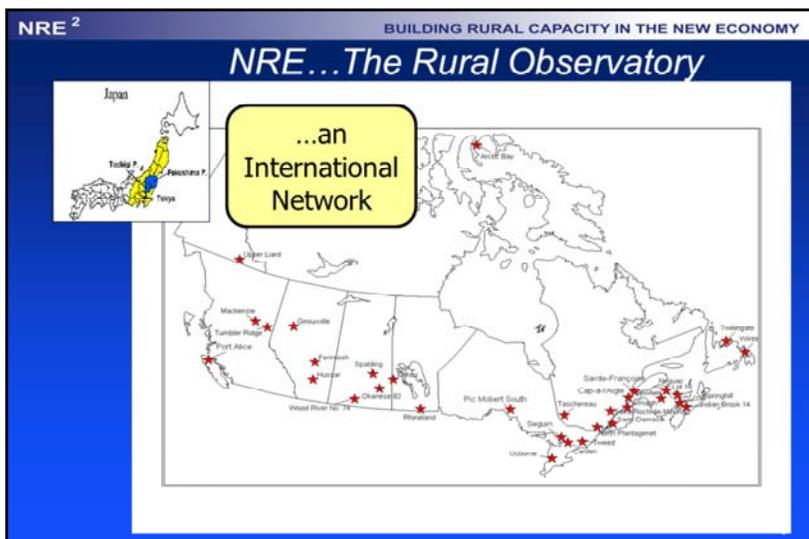


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- Acknowledgements:
- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
- Concordia University
- The Rural Secretariat of Agriculture and Agri-food Canada
- Statistics Canada
- CRRF
- NRE Research Team
- Rural Citizens in our field sites



- Jane Jacobs has argued strongly that cities are the drivers of the economy
- Big city politicians have used this to argue that more resources should be directed to cities for infrastructure, business development, housing, and crime control.
- Population trends appear to support both of these positions as people have steadily moved from the more remote to the more metropolitan centres of the country (cf. slide).
- It makes sense, therefore, to ask:
 - Does rural Canada matter any more?
 - What contributions do rural people and places make to the welfare of Canadians as a whole?
 - Should we spend any more energy or resources on them when there are so many urban-based needs and demands?
- For the past 19 years I have been working with a network of researchers, policy-makers, and rural people who have been addressing and at time agonizing over these questions.
- For the past 9 of those years I have been leading a National Research Project that has brought the tools and insights of social science research to bear on these and many related questions.
- In 15 minutes, I would like to tell you a bit about what we have done, what we have learned, and some of the key implications of our findings.



- Since 1987 we have met twice a year to bring together our research, policy, and practical concerns
- In 1997 we established a research project to overcome some of the problems we identified
 - *[High quality research*
 - *Extensive collaboration nationally and internationally*
 - *Comparative analysis]*
- (S) We established the Rural Observatory as a key component of this project
 - 32 systematically selected rural sites (5 key comparisons)
 - We entered into collaborative relations with those sites
 - (S) Japanese interest and formal alliance
- Over the 9 years of the project have conducted research on 4 themes:
 - Governance
 - Services
 - Communications
 - Natural resources and environmental management
- Prepared more than 6 databases:
 - *[Census data (4 cycles – 1986-2001)*
 - *Household survey (2000 rural households)*
 - *Surveys of rural media (newspapers, radio, bulletin boards, etc.)*
 - *National survey of rural and urban people re. environmental values*
 - *Capacity surveys*
 - *Extensive log and qualitative data from sites]*
- Produced wide variety of products for academics, policy-makers, and rural people.
 - Books, articles, pamphlets, brochures, booklets, web, and multimedia products
- Extensive connections with policy-makers at municipal, provincial, national levels
 - Through workshops, conferences, consultations, invited presentations
- Began with the question:
 - What are the major changes taking place in rural Canada? (NRE¹)

Observations - 1

- Rural Canada is diverse
- Primary industries are shedding labour
- Manufacturing and services competitive
- Industry has concentrated
- Environment more important
- Knowledge-intensive employment growing
- Price of communication and transportation is falling; moving people increasing

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Rural Canada is undergoing major changes – particularly since the 1940s

- We have identified 14 major changes as ‘observations’ – cf. posters
- These include the following:
 - Rural Canada is diverse
 - Primary industries are shedding labour
 - Manufacturing and services remain competitive
 - Industry has concentrated
 - Environment is becoming more important
 - Knowledge-intensive employment growing
 - Communication and transportation prices are falling, but the cost of moving people is increasing

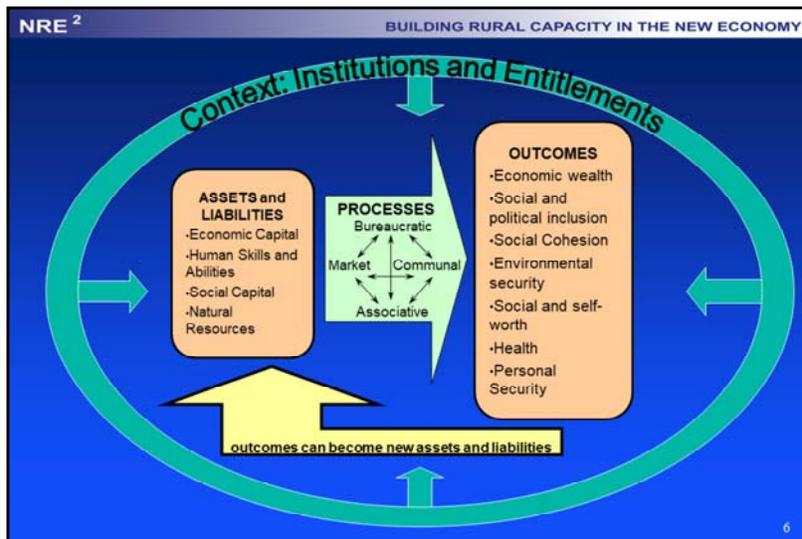
Observations - 2

- Youth leaving, families returning
- Government services more regional
- Rural aging fastest
- Rural perceived as safe
- Immigration strong
- Local capacity is critical
- Rural and urban Canada are interdependent

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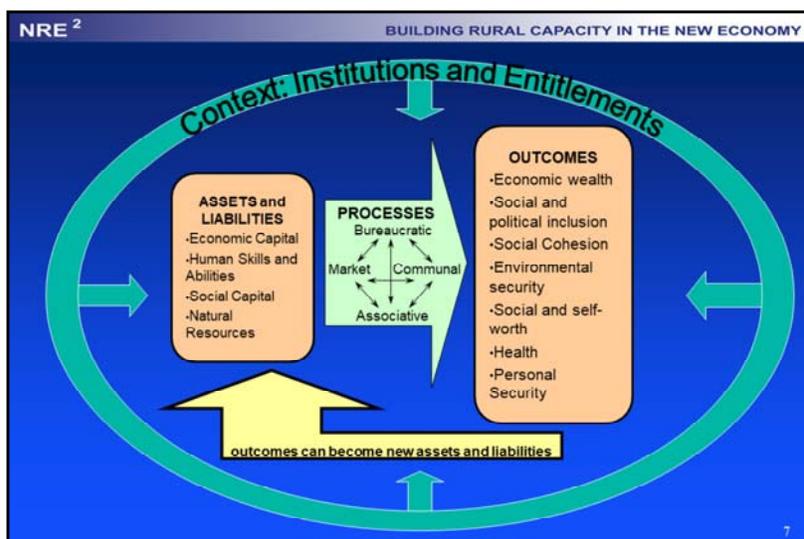
Further observations

- Youth leaving, families returning
- Government services more regional
- Canadian society is aging but rural places are aging faster than urban
- Rural perceived as safer than urban (provides opportunities and challenges)
- Immigration will remain strong – although cities are the destinations of choice
- Local community capacity and social capital are critical for rural revitalization
 - Our European colleagues have pointed out how the traditional focus on human capital only goes about halfway to explain the differential performance of rural places
 - They refer to the rest as the 'intangibles' – the characteristics and processes related to local capacity, social capital, networks, and governance
- Rural and urban Canada are interdependent
- These observations served as a background to the second major questions (NRE²):
 - How can capacity to respond to those changes be increased for rural people and communities?
 - What are the strategic options for rural people and communities?



NRE Capacity Framework

- Our research on capacity-building has been guided by this framework
- Capacity is the ability to transform assets and liabilities into valued outcomes



NRE Capacity Framework

- Four basic elements:
 - (S) Assets and Liabilities
 - (S) Processes of recognition, reorganization, and transformation
 - (S) To produce valued outcomes
 - (S) Outcomes can become new assets and liabilities
 - (S) All operating within institutions and entitlements from the broader context
 - Makes it scaleable – similar framework for individual, group, community, and societal capacities
- This dynamic framework has provided a useful point of reference to integrate the broad range of competences and experiences within the research and action network.

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Capacity Findings

- Capacity-building is complex and dynamic
- Some policies don't scale
- Innovations abound
- Context modifies effects
- Challenges remain



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Capacity-Building Findings

- What have we found?
- (S) Capacity process is complex and dynamical
 - We have focused on four normative systems within which it operates – sometimes mutually enhancing and sometimes in tension
 - Processes cut across levels (local, regional, national, international)
- (S) Some policies and programs designed for large centres create challenges for small places where the human resources are weaker.
 - E.g. Water treatment and environmental regulations in resource-poor locations often create extra demands on overloaded and under-skilled personnel
 - E.g. Regionalized services place extra demands on the young, poor, elderly who have less access to transportation.
- (S) Nevertheless, We have found considerable innovation in the reorganization of assets in rural places
 - Niche markets in manufacturing and tradable services provide economic options
 - E.g. Made to order truck boxes from rural Alberta to Texas
 - E.g. Bowling pins from discarded plywood cores
 - E.g. Computer software for farm animal husbandry
 - New governance arrangements are emerging with partnerships among public, private, civic, family sectors
 - E.g. Cap a l'Aigle: Lilac hobbyists formed the core for an economic development scheme
 - E.g. Family and friendship relations provided a successful resolution to a conflict between the town and a local pig farmer in Ste-Francoise
 - E.g. Alliances with urban centres for secondment and loaning of planning and financial expertise (Edmonton and local counties)
- (S) Context modifies the outcomes of community responses
 - E.g. In non-adjacent places, increased social capital use increases incomes, but in those places close to metro centres increased social capital use has the opposite effect.
 - E.g. We found a similar effect within those sites which were well connected to the global economy: increased social capital use was associated with lower incomes.
- (S) Challenges remain
 - Distance and low density
 - Aboriginal people – legacy of cultural and social exclusion
 - Economic stresses from commodity production policies (cheap food and global markets)

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Implications

- Rural-urban alliances are strategic
- Concordia is well placed
 - Rural-urban intersection
 - Record of high quality research
 - Record of community and policy relevance
 - Resources for economic and community development
 - Funders with rural links

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Implications for Policy and Concordia

- (S) Rural-urban alliances are more strategic than ever
 - Jane Jenson may be right regarding urban regions as drivers of the economy
 - But – when we consider what urban places need to make it possible, we see the critical importance of rural areas
 - Natural resources: Our balance of trade continues to depend on the export of primary goods
 - Food
 - Water
 - Environmental amenities for recreation and pollution control
 - Legitimacy – still 20% of the population
 - That is why we are so encouraged by rural-urban alliances as found in:
 - New York City and Catskills
 - Japan and water surtax
 - France and food surtax
- (S) Concordia is well placed within this context
 - Urban centre with rural network
 - Researchers with rural, community development, environmental interests
 - Provides mentoring and credibility
 - Commitment to community and policy relevance that fits with our concern for practical outcomes
 - Significant resources for economic, social, and community development
 - Student opportunities – both for recruitment and learning of current students
 - Donors with rural links
 - Molsons, McAuslan, Abitibi-Consolidated, Bell Canada, Bombardier
- What it will take is vision and initiative
 - To establish conditions where the interdependence between rural and urban places is recognized, investigated, and well represented in our strategies for the future.

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Impacts

•Federal

- Instrumental in the establishment of a Cabinet Role during the Liberal government: Secretary of State for Rural Affairs
- Continue to be consulted on policy issues:
 - Hon John Godfrey: Minister of State for Cities and Communities (municipal gas tax)
 - Prime Minister's Special Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities (Mike Harcourt) – Rural Caucus
 - Alliance: CRRF, FCM

•Provincial

- Invited for consultation on rural-related issues
 - QC – Minister invited us for special meeting during deliberations on a rural policy
 - NF – Consultation regarding regional zone boards
 - NS – Consultations re. Halifax development corridor
 - ON – Invitations to Ontario Rural Council; Foundation for Rural Philanthropy
 - MB – Invitation – Manitoba Rural Forum

•Municipal

- Research contributions
 - North Bay; West Prince County, PE; St-Donat; Nelson, BC; Newtown, NL; Trois-Pistoles; Nanaimo; Alfred; Sackville; Meunster; Altona; Miramischi; Ferintosh; Ste-Damas; Prince George (Mackenzie, Tumbler Ridge); Tweed; Benito; Twillingate; Taschereau – Workshop and conference sites
 - 32 field sites: give-backs and connections
- Other
 - Inspiration for newsletter in Lot 16, library in Benito, run for mayor in Benito, communication project in Hussar

•International

- CJ Project in Japan
- DORA project in Europe
- Victoria towns project in Australia
- Sentinel communities project in Kansas (RUPRI)

Canadian Balance of Trade, 2004

