

NRE² BUILDING RURAL CAPACITY IN THE NEW ECONOMY

The New Rural Economy Project

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2006/05/10
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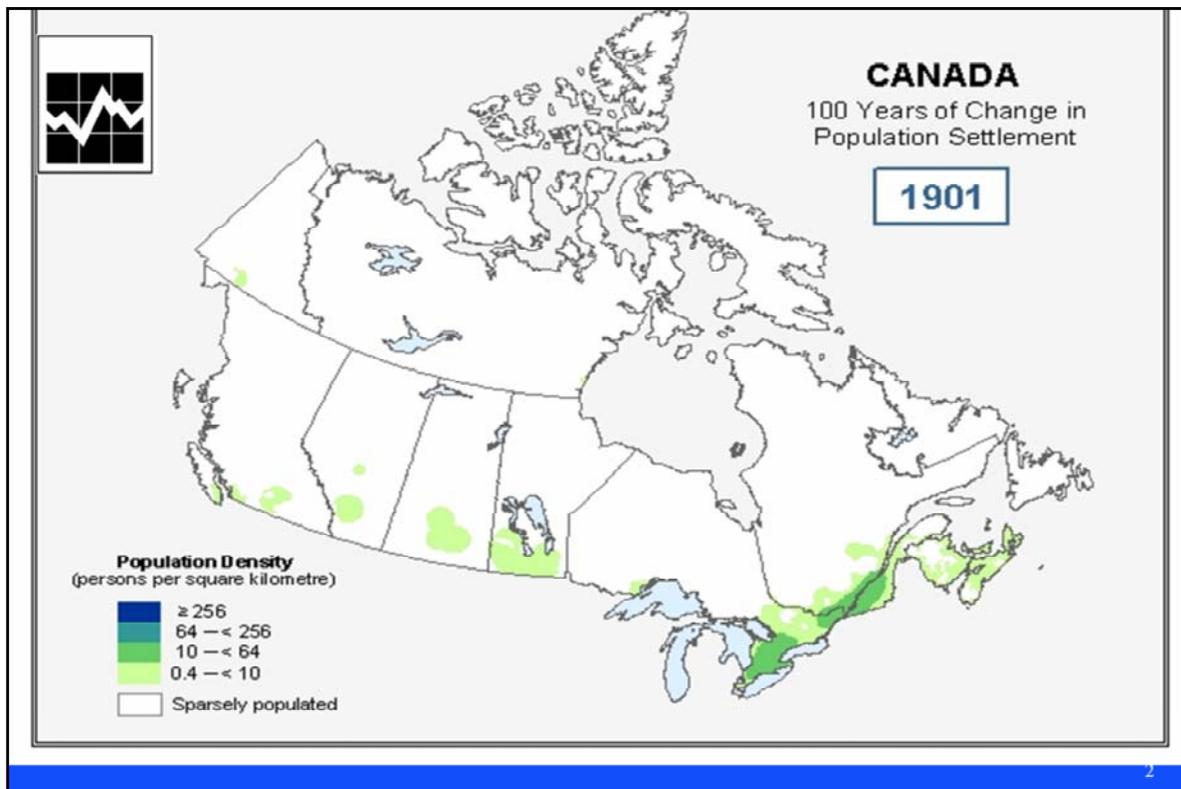




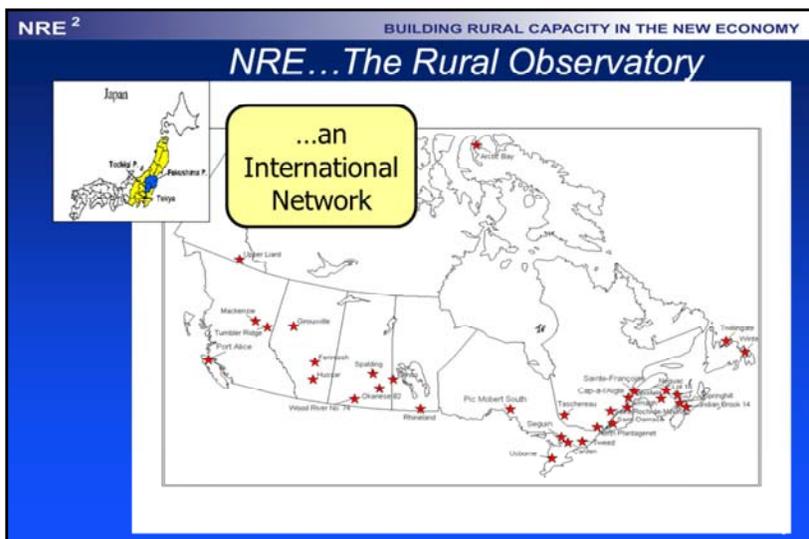


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- Acknowledgements:
- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
- Concordia University
- The Rural Secretariat of Agriculture and Agri-food Canada
- Statistics Canada
- CRRF
- NRE Research Team
- Rural Citizens in our field sites



- 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)

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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

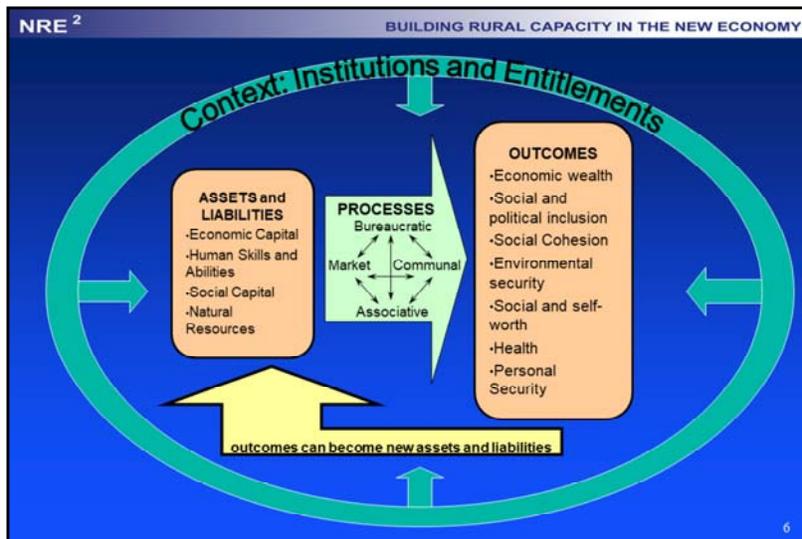
Observations - 2

- 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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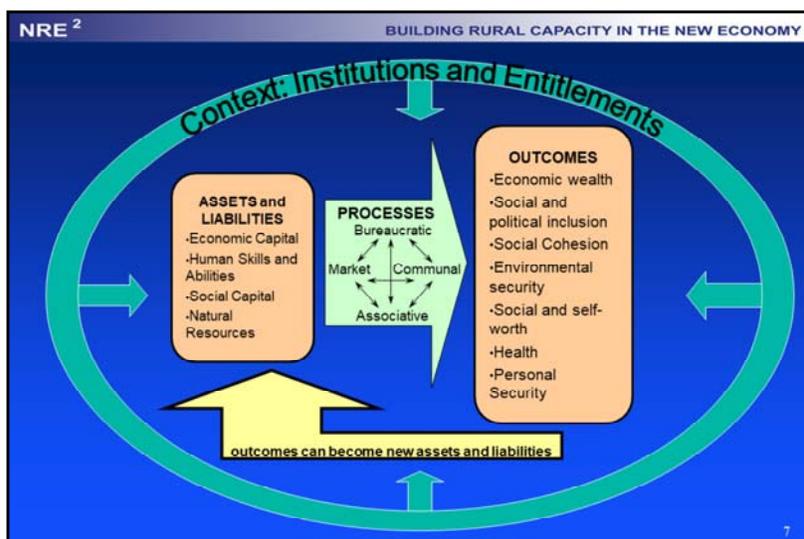
Further observations

- 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

