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# Communicative Tools and Communicative Action: Networking Rural Canada

Presentation at the ISA Meetings  
Brisbane, Australia  
Andrea Sharkey & Anna Woodrow  
Concordia University  
July 12, 2002



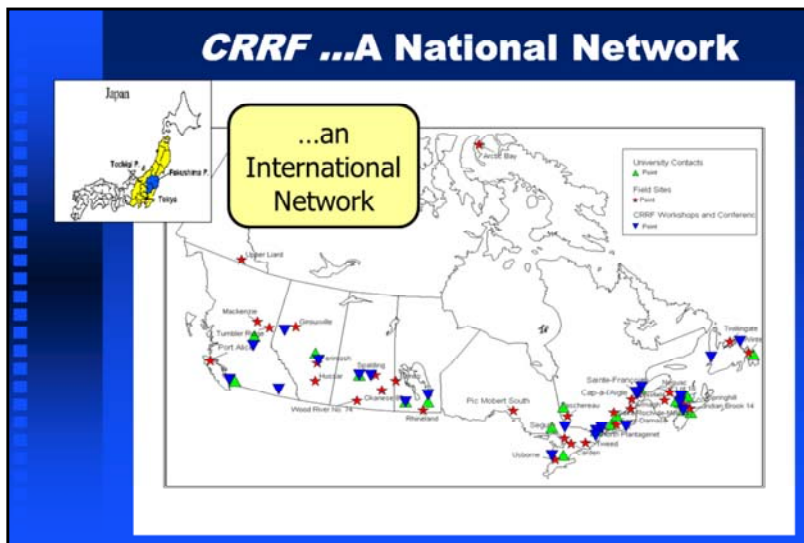
- Acknowledgements:
- Statistics Canada (Ray Bollman)
- The Rural Secretariat of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- Alfred College and Guelph University
- North Plantagenet
- Concordia University
- The Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation
- The many volunteers

## Outline

- Communication is essential for rural revitalization
- Capital, capacity and cohesion are necessary components for revitalization
- Communicative Action (Habermas)
- Local communication can help revitalize rural Canada



- What do we mean by rural revitalization? Rural revitalization means improving the economic and social conditions of rural Canadians in a sustainable fashion.
- Building Stronger, sustainable and cohesive communities.
- We are applying communicative action theory of Habermas to help understand how local radio helps revitalize rural Canada



- Researches associated with more than a dozen universities
- 32 field sites chosen (5 dimensions of comparison)
- Program of workshops and conferences
- International collaboration
  - 2 sites in Japan
  - Colleagues and centres in USA, UK, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Australia
- Invitation to work with us

## What Have We Done?

- Macro analysis using census and survey data
- 32 field sites – a ‘Rural Observatory’
  - Local economies (SMEs, Coops, Entrepreneurship)
  - Social capacity (governance, 3<sup>rd</sup> sector, services, communication)
  - Social exclusion (social cohesion)
  - 1995 Household Interviews (20 sites)
- Over 100 documents
- Web Site

[nre.concordia.ca](http://nre.concordia.ca)

### What We Have Done

- (A) Macro analysis using census and survey data
- (A) 32 field sites – a ‘Rural Observatory’
- We are learning about:
  - (A) Local economies (SMEs, Coops, Entrepreneurship)
  - (A) Social capacity (governance, 3<sup>rd</sup> sector, services, communications)
  - (A) Social exclusion (social cohesion)
  - (A) 1995 Household Interviews (20 sites)
- (A) Over 50 documents: books, papers, flyers, posters
- (A) Web Site ([nre.concordia.ca](http://nre.concordia.ca))

## How Can Rural Communities Revitalize?

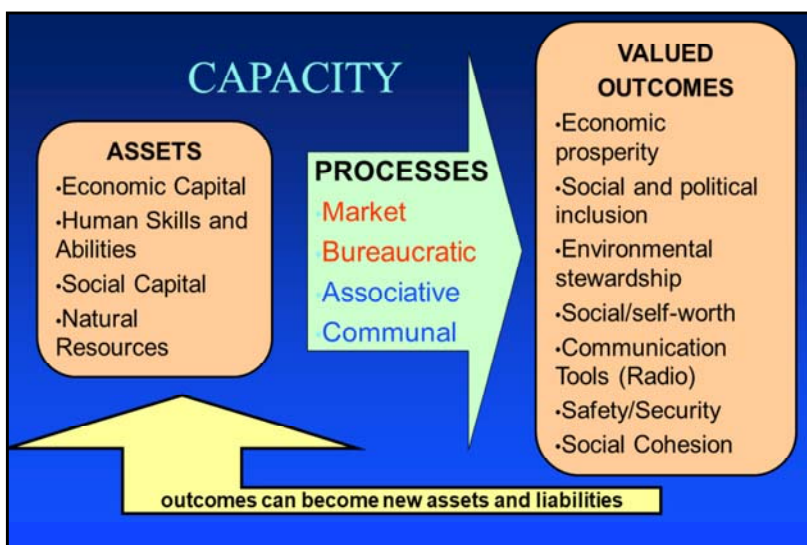
By organizing their assets, rights and entitlements to do things they consider important

This is achieved through effective communication

The ability to organize is  
**CAPACITY**

### What Have We Learned?

- Commodity trade has undermined community cohesion
  - Forces tradeoff between wealth and identity
- Our commodity trade policy has been very successful in economic terms
  - 1999: Rural and Small Town contributed 15% to GDP and 17% to national employment
  - Primary and natural resource sectors account for about 40% of total national exports
- Competitive pressures, technological innovation, and market concentration have meant that rural community cohesion is undermined, however:
  - Outmigration
  - Depopulation
  - Outflow of capital and resources
- Policy implications:
  - Remedial action required in rural communities
  - Environmental protections required for common property



(Re)vitalization occurs when capital and resources are (re)organized to produce desired outcomes. The ability of rural communities to do this in an appropriate and successful fashion is what we refer to as the community's capacity.

### Capital

- Human-made assets used for productive purposes
- Economic Capital includes communication infrastructure Capital
  - Local Newspapers or Newsletters
  - Local Radio Stations
  - cable/high speed telephone lines
  - Community billboards
  - Market and Bureaucratic are usually linked externally to the community (I.e. Granovetter's Bridging)
  - Associative and Communal are usually linked internally to the community (I.e. Granovetter's Bonding)

## Market Relations

- Eg. Commodities, labour, housing
- Rights, and obligations determined by supply and demand
- Information, tradable assets important
- Contractual agreements
  - Communication can be used to broadcast prices, sales, and availability of goods and services



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## Bureaucratic (Legal) Relations

- Eg. Government, corporations, legal institutions
- Rights based on authority and status
- Universally applied rights and obligations by roles
  - ▣ Local media articulate and enforce objectives, strategies, and structures by broadcasting municipal decisions, bylaws and local crime and punishment



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## Associative Relations

- Eg. Religious, recreation, farm, environmental internet groups
- Rights based on shared interests
- Collective rights take precedence over individual
  - Local media can legitimize the importance of group efforts, give publicity to goals and achievements by offering recognition, and encourage future associative relations



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## Communal Relations

- Eg. Families, kinship, friends, gangs, tribes
- Rights based on reciprocity and favours
- Commitments form to groups or individuals
  - ▣ Local communications can support communal relations by publicizing personal celebrations and events, by broadcasting thanks for support, or by acting as a message service



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## What Have We Learned?

- The process for achieving valued outcomes (communicative tools) is changing:
  - Then: associative and communal
  - Now: market and bureaucratic

Building community capacity as important as individual capacity

### What Have We Learned?

- Traditional bases of community cohesion are undermined
- Bases of SoCo changing:
  - Then: associative and communal
  - Now: market and bureaucratic
- Policy Implications: Rural's traditional dependence on associative and communal relations for social support now places them at risk since access to those services now depends on market and bureaucratic competency.
  - New methods of distribution need to be considered
  - New competencies (capacities) need development

## Who Has Access?

- Communities with Stable Economies
- Communities with Strong Market Systems

Communication tends to be driven *by* and contribute *to* Market processes

### What Have We Learned?

- Community-level determinants of SoCo are stronger than individual-level
  - Analysis using 3 indicators from Buckner scale of Social Cohesion: cohesion, commitment, neighbourliness
  - Community-level characteristics:
    - global exposure
    - economic stability
    - metro adjacency
    - institutional capacity
- Policy implications:
  - Focusing on individual level characteristics alone is not sufficient
  - Structural-level policies have important influences on social cohesion
    - Trade policies
    - Corporate concentration
    - Fiscal stability
    - Transportation
    - Government services: schools, hospitals, welfare, 3<sup>rd</sup> sector support

## Market Systems

- Multidimensional approach which takes into account such elements as:
  - # of Businesses
  - Business Density
  - Commercial Shopping
  - # of Business and Market Services
  - # of Market and Business Services Within 30min

### What Have We Learned?

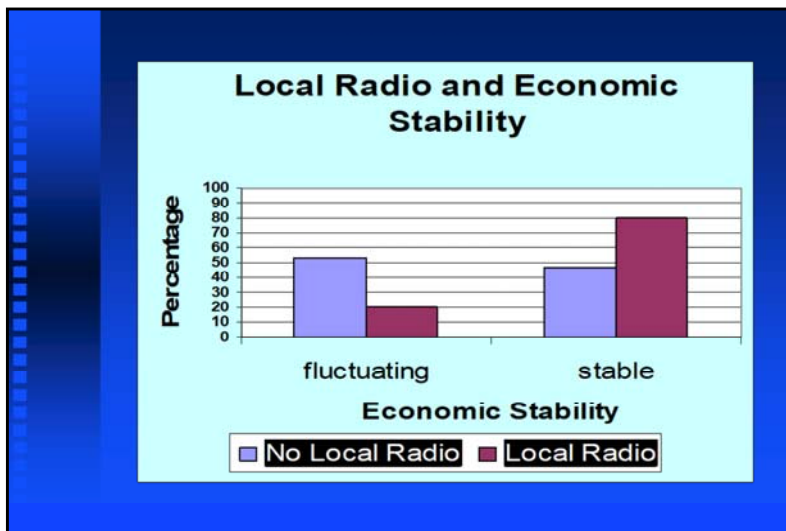
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## Fluctuating/Stable Economies

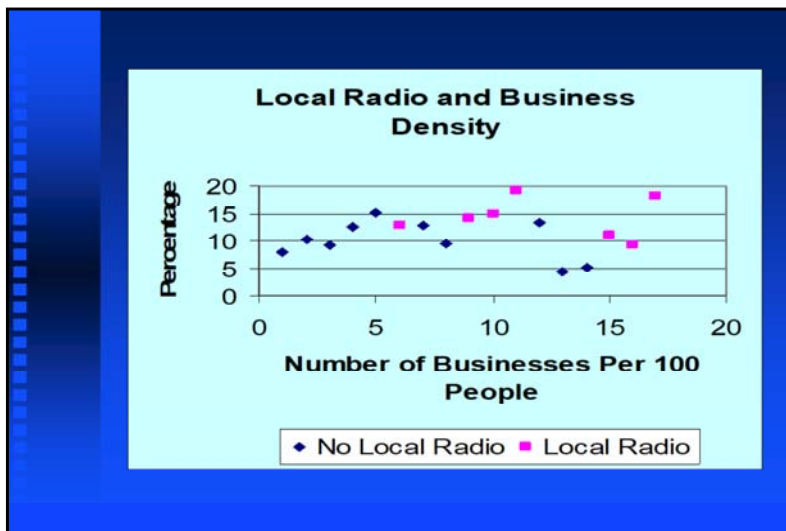
- Fluctuating Economies:
  - agriculture/related services
  - fishing and trapping
  - logging and forestry
  - mining (milling), quarrying and oil wells
  - construction
  - finance, real estate and insurance
- Stable Economies:
  - manufacturing
  - transportation and storage
  - communication and other utilities
  - wholesale and retail trade
  - business, government and education services
  - accommodation, food and beverage services

Fluctuating (Primary) vs stable (secondary)

\*note that stable has a greater chance to evolve its bureaucratic ties as this is a characteristic of such markets.



- Rural revitalization means improving the economic and social conditions of rural Canadians in a sustainable fashion.
- Rural revitalization is critical with respect to:
  - the levels of income and wealth in rural areas, and
  - the changing nature of identity for both individuals and communities.
- Income and wealth are important for:
  - the physical and social well being of rural Canadians, and
  - their ability to take control over their personal and collective lives.
- Identity is important for:
  - the ability for self-organization,
  - the reduction of problems associated with anomie and exclusion, and
  - the management of social conflict.



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## Local Media Can Reconnect the Four Processes :

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assets:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ builds positive forms of identity</li> <li>▪ supports the local market</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liabilities:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ builds defeatist forms of identity</li> <li>▪ supports external markets</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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Bridging/Bonding  
Encourage/Resist Change  
Builds/Reduces Capacity

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  - the management of social conflict.
  
- Assets and liabilities:
  - habermas (lifeworld, legitimacy), granovetter (b&B) (four processes)

## Conclusion

- Canadian rural communities are in need of revitalization
- Local media can build capacity by reconnecting the four processes
- More needs to be done to understand the impacts of communication on communities

•Rural revitalization means improving the economic and social conditions of rural Canadians in a sustainable fashion.

•Rural revitalization is critical with respect to:

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