


The Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation

Sustainable Regional Development - IV


Bill Reimer
bill.reimer@concordia.ca
nre.concordia.ca
2009/12/10



 Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada  Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada

1

Japan Course: Sustainable Regional Development
2-day Intensive Lecture



The Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation

Outline

- Day 1:
 - What is Sustainable Regional Development (SRD)?
 - What are the challenges faced by SRD?
 - What are responses to these challenges?
- Day 2:
 - How can we enhance or support SRD?
 - Local responses
 - Regional responses
 - National responses
- Summary and Conclusions

The Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation

Interdependence

- All things are interdependent
- Sustainability requires this recognition

Our Objectives

- Discover the nature of interdependence
- Build it into our policies and practices

Today

- The structure of interdependence
 - Trade, institutions, environment, identity

Tomorrow

- The organization of interdependence
 - Social capital, social cohesion, governance

- The main theme of my presentations will be Interdependence
 - Reinforcing the message that all things are interdependent
 - If we do not recognize this in our social institutions, policies, and practice we will fail to ensure sustainability
- Our challenge, therefore, is:
 - To discover the nature of that interdependence and
 - Build it in to our policies and practices
- Today I will present material on the structure of interdependence
 - How it is manifested in our trading relationships, institutions, the environment, and identity
- Tomorrow I will present material on the organization of interdependence
 - How we can organize human in a co-ordinated fashion to reflect interdependence
 - Social capital and social cohesion
- How we can use this knowledge in facilitating and promoting sustainable regional development
 - governance

NRE ² BUILDING RURAL CAPACITY IN THE NEW ECONOMY

Strategies for revitalization

<p>Old Strategy - Economic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commodity-based resource exploitation • Community establishment in location • Major investments • Attract major industry • Economic outcomes • Space and comparative advantage 	<p>New Strategy - intangeables</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social capital focus • Entrepreneurship • Build local and regional capacity • Multiple outcomes: Economic, social, environmental • Place and competitive advantage • Build learning communities
---	--

4

- Space-based policy example with problems it creates:
 - Human capital: train more computer programmers or revise school curriculums to meet the demand.
 - Problem: they move out to jobs elsewhere and don't provide local development
 - Economic development: Focus on sectors with the comparative advantage
 - Problem: as global markets expand, those advantages shift; regions outside of those sectors are marginalized; local dependency on external whims grows

- Social capital focus (prepare for diversity)
 - Cap-a-l'Aigle
 - Inuvik – Boom and Bust
- Entrepreneurship
 - Matthews: Lax kw'alaams
- Build local and regional capacity
 - Tweed
- Economic, social, environmental outcomes
 - Carcross/Tiglish
- Place and competitive advantage
 - Inuvialuit Corporation
 - City of Nelson
 - Winkler region
- Build learning communities
 - Japan mayor

NRE ² BUILDING RURAL CAPACITY IN THE NEW ECONOMY

Strategies

- Look to urban demand
- Identify global niche markets
- Integrate strangers
- Build social infrastructure
- Build all capacities
- Make interdependencies visible
- Consider regional opportunities
- Create venues for collaboration

5

- I will start with 8 suggestions emerging from our research
- Several are addressed to the rural-based policy-makers among you, but as you will see, even these carry important implications for urban, provincial, and federal policy
- I don't assume that these are exhaustive



First, rural communities must look to urban centres when considering their options

- Ste-Paule in the Gaspé region of Quebec was faced with a school closure
 - First they turned inward in anger and frustration
 - Because they had a very good school
 - Good teachers
 - Good student-teacher ratio
 - Good record in grades and graduation
 - Very nice building and infrastructure
 - (S)They just didn't have enough students – so their children would now have to be bused to nearby urban schools
 - Someone pointed out that what they liked about their school was what was missing in some of the more urban schools
 - (S)Why not bus the urban children to their rural school?
 - Went to urban parents in Matane with the advantages of their school and were able to convince them to send their children to the Ste-Paule school
- This illustrates the elements of a strategy that generalizes to most other communities:
 - Community objectives can often be met by
 - Identifying the assets
 - Looking outside for a demand
 - Figuring out how to meet that demand with those assets
 - In the process, Ste-Paule maintained their education infrastructure and expanded the networks for the students in them – thus increasing their asset base

NRE² BUILDING RURAL CAPACITY IN THE NEW ECONOMY

Strategy: Identify niche markets

<http://www3.sympatico.ca/remi.rioux/lacledeschamps/>

<http://www.ccare.ca/> <http://www.fibroconcept.com/> 7

- Our research has demonstrated how going the route of the commodity treadmill is not a long term solution for smaller communities – it will simply exacerbate the population decline and external dependency which has created so many of the problems in the first place
- Instead, look for new goods and services to market – in the process seek to diversify the regional economy.
 - I've mentioned the examples of the girls hockey school in Warner, AB, bowling pins from plywood cores in Mattawa, and the liliac festival in Cap-a-l'Aigle
 - I can add to that with many examples
 - (S) Saint-Cyprien established a Centre for handicapped children (<http://www3.sympatico.ca/remi.rioux/lacledeschamps/>)
 - (S) An entrepreneur in Taschereau, QC produces fibreglass trailers for motorcycles
 - (S) In Springhill, NS a group organizes correspondence and liaison for 3rd world child support. As a result, millions of dollars are channeled through the local bank (Christian Child Care International - <http://www.ccare.ca/>)
- In all of these cases some key elements to make it possible were the local knowledge, community networks, and social connections with people outside the community (bridging social capital)
 - This provides an important role for regional and provincial governments – as brokers for information about those external opportunities
 - It also hints at another opportunity emerging from our next suggestion

NRE² BUILDING RURAL CAPACITY IN THE NEW ECONOMY

Strategy: Integrate strangers

Cap-St-Ignace

- Historique
- Réseaux communautaires
- Ateliers techniques
- Actes de culture
- Services et facilités
- Éducation
- Développement de l'entrepreneuriat
- Repositionnement
- Produits des gens d'ici
- Tous nos projets

Seguin

South Central Settlement and Employment Services

<http://www.scses.winkleronline.com/>


- Migration and Immigration are a basic feature of Canadian society and will continue to be so into the future
 - Almost 70% of our population increase in Canada is due to immigration and in 25 years we expect immigration to be the sole source of population growth
- This means the introduction of people with different values, interests, and skills.
- The initial response is often uncertainty, suspicion, and stress
- (S) Cap-St-Ignace faced the problem of anxiety about newcomers with a brilliant initiative.
 - Identify 'Godparents' for newcomers and tasked them with making contact and conveying an invitation to a community dinner
 - At that event they introduced the newcomers to the community and established a basis for support and future support activities.
 - By learning about newcomers, reduce anxiety
 - By contacting newcomers, fast track capacity building
- (S) I've already mentioned how Seguin significantly improved its capacity by integrating seasonal residents into its administrative structures rather than circling the wagons
- (S) The communities around Winkler, MB have created conditions where the rate of immigration rivals Toronto
 - In seeking labour for their local industries they turned to their historical roots in the Mennonite migrations of the past
 - Contacting their religious and cultural cousins in Central and South America, negotiating special arrangements with the Manitoba and Federal governments, and setting up numerous local groups to facilitate information sharing, institutional support, language training, and personal integration into Canadian society of the numerous people who responded to their invitation
- These newcomers bring skills, motivation, and perhaps most overlooked – networks that can provide new assets for community and regional development

NRE² BUILDING RURAL CAPACITY IN THE NEW ECONOMY

Strategy: Build Social Infrastructure

Tumbler Ridge Examples

- Health
 - Public health nurses
 - Alcohol/Drug counseling
 - Safe House Project
 - Victim Assistance
 - Block parents
 - Al-Anon
 - Literacy Group
 - Take-Off-pounds
- Education
 - Books Lapsit Program
 - TR Children's Centre
 - Northern Lights College
- Recreation
 - Darts club
 - Minor hockey
 - TR Boards, Bikes
 - Curling club
 - Happy Hookers
 - Red Hat Society
 - Quilt Guild
 - Museum Foundation
 - Ornithology Group
 - Legion
 - Community Arts Council



- The importance of social networks is also reflected in this next strategic suggestion from our research
- During this period of economic decline, the call for more spending on community and urban infrastructure is loud and clear
- However, our research indicates that the building of social infrastructure is as important as the roads, bridges, communication towers, and aqueducts of the physical infrastructure advocates
- This is especially the case in smaller communities and in those which experience the boom-bust economies of natural resource extraction
- The list of groups and activities in this overhead is an indication of the variety of social infrastructure that helped Tumbler Ridge weather the storm of a major mine closure in 2000
 - Much like Elliot Lake did here in Ontario
- These stories illustrates the importance of the well-established social infrastructure as a basis for surviving the bust period
 - By first of all building and then maintaining the services and venues for people to meet on a variety of bases (from formal to informal) conditions are created where social cohesion is fostered, commitments are formed, and people become motivated to continue those relations over time
 - The resiliency and growth of towns like Tumbler Ridge, Elliot Lake, Inuvik, Springhill, and Twillingate are all reflections of these dynamics: people devoting time and energy to seek ways to survive and thrive in the face of difficult conditions
 - It provides lessons which are relevant to large cities and even provinces or the country as a whole – there are just as many economic and social benefits to investing in social infrastructure as in physical infrastructure

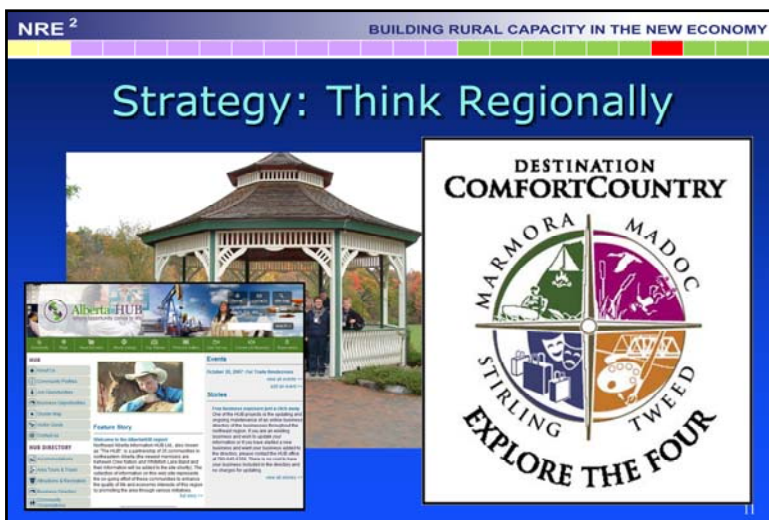
NRE² BUILDING RURAL CAPACITY IN THE NEW ECONOMY

Strategy: Make Interdependencies Visible

- Food
- Water
- Environment

10


- I have tried to elaborate the many ways in which the fate of rural and urban regions and people are strongly linked
- I have also argued that this is not always visible – in our perception, in our institutional organization, and in our sentiments
- In order to make more appropriate policies, programs, and actions, therefore – it is necessary to increase this visibility so that we can get our choices and organizations working appropriately
- One of the best ways is to start with our common interests
- Work from those things that both rural and urban people are already concerned about
 - (S) Food
 - Teach urban people about food production – as they are doing at the Prairie Swine Centre in SK
 - (S) Farm visits and vacations
 - (S) Direct marketing (St-Damas)
 - (S) We also share a concern about water
 - This means teaching about the link between rural development and the water running out of the taps in downtown Toronto
 - It can be done in our schools by visits, science programs, and mass media (Canadian Gov't – teacher kits)
 - (S) It can also be done by urban street art as shown in this example (sewerfish: <http://www.canadiandesignresource.ca/officialgallery/index.php?paged=2&s=symbols>)
 - It reinforces the connection between sewers and fish – urban and rural
 - (S) Environment
 - (S) We can teach our children how air, water, soils are shared issues (air pollution and acid rain; agricultural stress and chemical use)
 - We can establish centres of learning such as they have done in Springhill around geothermic energy
 - (S) We can invest in research and production of environmentally friendly goods and services – especially those that are distributed
 - (S) We can support green communities (www.gca.ca)
- All of these are strategic examples of what I mean by building social infrastructure and revising our vision of rural and urban interdependence



- Recognizing this interdependence means building networks across communities (bridging)
 - There is often not sufficient critical mass within a single community – must look to the region.
 - When Tweed was interested in hosting our national conference, they realized they could not do it alone, so were forced to overlook years of animosity with three other local towns in order to make it work.
 - This success inspired them to establish a regional ‘brand’ (Comfort Country) which now attracts people to the region as a travel destination.
- Subsequently – I was pleased to discover – the Comfort Country initiative has become an inspiration for people in Walliston and Hastings counties
- (S) This type of regional view works well for larger centres as well – as demonstrated by the Edmonton-Northern Alberta Hub initiative in which the city partners with many of the small towns and regions surrounding it.

NRE ² BUILDING RURAL CAPACITY IN THE NEW ECONOMY

Bases of Understanding

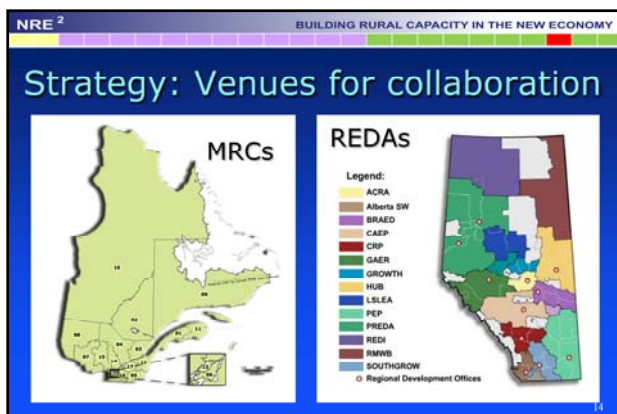
Narrative	Essentialist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born in Vancouver • Married to Fran Shaver in 1967 • Four grandchildren by our 2 children •  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sociologist • Professor • Father • Grandfather • White

12

- One of the most problematic collaborative relations in rural areas are the ones between bureaucratic organizations and the volunteer groups of our rural communities which run more on the associative and communal norms to which I referred.
- Chandler and his colleagues have conducted research that helps us to understand a major basis of this challenge – and thereby sets the stage for a more appropriate resolution
- In their research on adolescent suicide among Aboriginal youth, they identify two types of understanding which we use to make sense of the world, our place in it, the values we hold, and the relationships we form
 - The narrative form and the essentialist form
- Narrative is about understanding and deciding on the basis of stories, specific social relations, and unique historical circumstances – reminiscent of the ways in which we operate in associative and communal-based relations
 - From a narrative perspective, I am Bill Reimer, son of Lilian and Peter Reimer, born in Vancouver, moved to Quebec in 1972 and father of Daegan and JP
 - From a narrative point of view it is this type of information and story which gives me identity and meaning
- Essentialism is about understanding and deciding on the basis of underlying patterns and processes, general principles, and inferred trends – reminiscent of the ways in which we debate around our conferences and parliaments and met out justice in our courts*
 - From an essentialist point of view I am William Reimer, a university professor, father, husband, white, male.
- Both are critical ways of knowing and both are in a struggle for legitimacy – a struggle made most visible when it comes to our efforts for bottom-up governance, government-community partnerships, private-public partnerships, and (as Chandler points out) suicide, social cohesion, and collective action
- Bureaucracies – by virtue of their mandate and success operate primarily on essentialist principles
 - We are identified by our roles (teacher, student, administrator, janitor, senior citizen, client) and are easily replaceable within those roles
 - We make assessments and enforce accountability in terms of general products: publications, money, events, and membership
 - All of these are necessary in a complex society – and we ensure they are followed through a justice system built on the same principles
- However, local communities and (as Chandler points out) our personal identities operate more often on a narrative level
 - Our sense of self, our sense of community (and thereby our commitment to community), our most personal values, and our strongest attachments are formulated in terms of narrative – the stories by which we make sense of ourselves and our world
 - Newspapers and advertisers know the power of this – instructing their journalists and upcoming copy writers to look for the story and craft their material in terms of the story
 - Religious and ideological groups make use of it as well – constructing and reconstructing a history of their current position in terms of challenges overcome, special relationships (with one god or another), and destinies built on the stories of the past.
- From the point of view of governance, therefore, the recognition of these different ways of knowing and reorganizing our governance structures to respect them becomes a critical issue
- Without doing so, we will continually be faced with conflict and misunderstanding – usually rooted in discrediting one or the other rather than being able to build on their strengths
- I would like to illustrate this point by reference to a story – the story of the Carcross/Tinglit Nation in the Yukon



- Communal-based
 - Carcross/Tagish
- As the result of recent land and governance settlements, the Carcross/Tagish Nation – along with many Aboriginal groups in BC and Canada – are faced with the enormous challenge of reorganizing their economic, social, health, education, political, and welfare institutions
- They have responded with an innovative and promising approach – that bodes well for the future of place-based governance
 - Each of their policy documents begins with a study of stories – primarily oral stories in this culture, told to them by their elders and recorded with a view to particular policy objectives
 - They started with family policy – compiling the stories and working on the identification of principles and themes that inform them about the role, importance, and nature of family learning in their culture.
 - Out of these stories, they then develop the positions, programs, and criteria that are necessary to merge with the more essentialist approach of our government and judicial systems – producing a policy document to guide their institution-building and relations with other levels of government
 - Their final act is to design a dance – a dance which represents the policy and its roots in the history and culture of the nation which developed it
- So far, the territorial authorities have accepted this innovative approach to self-government – one which recognizes the stories, people, and places of Carcross, but which merges with the statutes and regulations of the broader government
- I put this example before you for two reasons
 - It illustrates some of the implications of our focus on place – implications that are likely to take us outside the comfort of our research and governance traditions and challenge us to entertain new forms of thinking and new forms of governance – better adapted to the idiosyncrasies of place, and
 - It inspires us to see how such exploration and transformation might be done – in this case learning from the people and cultures that we were so quick to discount and suppress. Many other experiments of this nature are taking place as we come to agreements with native peoples in BC, in Nunavut, and across the country.



- I have watched with considerable interest, the variations in approaches to rural development that are reflected by our provincial governments
- In many respects, most have articulated the principles of governance that I have outlined, but with very different programs and with very different results
- Perhaps the greatest contrast in my mind is between AB and QC
- Both of these governments champion a bottoms up approach and encourage local municipalities to engage in an expanded mandate over local decision-making – moving beyond the maintenance of roads and water to include economic development and environmental stewardship
- But the institutional contexts of the 2 provinces are considerably different
- (S) Under the Levesque government, Quebec established a number of regional boards (MRCs) (sometimes against substantial opposition) composed of mayors and municipal representatives with a mandate for regional development and resources to support it. The emphasis was on regional development – cross sectors and inclusive of social development.
- (S) In Alberta, the approach was more laissez-faire – where regional collaboration was encouraged, some resources were allocated to regional groups if they requested and justified it, but there was little consistent pressure for such collaboration (Regional Economic Development Alliances). The focus was clearly on economic development.
- The results have been dramatically different at the local level.
- In Quebec there are many examples of regional initiatives – tailored to local conditions and themselves providing a basis for second-order activities in small places
 - Over the 20 or so years of their operation within this new regime, local municipalities have learned how to use the regional structures to voice their concerns, debate, negotiate, compromise, and collaborate with other municipalities, and in turn, to negotiate with the provincial government on behalf of their region and village or town
 - In turn, the provincial government has discovered the value in subsidiarity – now allocating responsibility to the regional boards for a wide range of economic and social policy and programs, and (most importantly) showing confidence in the decisions and accountability of the MRCs – making the governance of the province both more efficient and effective
 - This system of consultation has even become more elaborated with the recent emergence of regional round tables – with more issue-focused objectives
- In Alberta the situation on the ground is very different
 - A few regions have taken initiative, formed their own corporate bodies, and moved ahead, largely on their own steam
 - Most municipalities, on the other hand, were unable to get beyond their protectionist traditions to reach agreements with their neighbours around the complex challenges they faced – either denying that conflicts of interests existed or refusing to discuss them in any but the most limited terms
 - In the end, the provincial government simply made the decisions for the municipalities, pointing to the failure of regional collaboration, lack of accountability, and the pressure of time as a justification for top-down management
- What are the lessons here?

NRE ² BUILDING RURAL CAPACITY IN THE NEW ECONOMY

Collaboration lessons

- Strong regional institutions
- Multiple venues of interaction
- Clear rules of accountability and representation
- Common language and understanding
- Patience and tolerance

Budget for Breakage

15

- First: Bottom-up development needs an institutional context of strong regional governance to make it work
- Second: The inevitable conflicts of interest that emerge require multiple venues for expression, negotiation, and the compromise that are necessary for action
- Third: Relations of accountability and representation are necessary ingredients for establishing an adequate level of trust for the system to work
- Fourth: This requires the development of a common language and understanding for collaboration
- Finally: all of this requires a spirit of patience and tolerance by people and institutions that are not favourably disposed to either of these
 - It took Quebec 20 years of stressful and sometimes acrimonious work to get to the point they are today
 - When I spoke to the Carcross/Tagish elders about their plans for the reorganization of their people in the Yukon, they reminded me that it took 7 generations to get into the mess we are today – so they felt that 7 generations was not an unreasonable time frame to think about getting out of it
 - From an institutional point of view this means (S) ‘budgeting for breakage’

NRE ² BUILDING RURAL CAPACITY IN THE NEW ECONOMY

Conclusions

- All things are interdependent
- Commodity economics are a rural burden
- Agglomeration economies are trump
- Look for local assets and competitive advantage
- Facilitate regional collaboration
- Build local capacities (including social infrastructure)



16



- In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the following points
- (S) All things are interdependent
 - Must understand the nature of that interdependence and find the opportunities it provides
 - Both are necessary for a strong economy and society
- (S) Commodity economics – although essential to our national wealth, this approach is a rural community millstone
- (S) Agglomeration economies and population migration place urban areas at an advantage – at least for now
 - Our urban centres have more access to the mechanisms of power and influence
- (S) Rural areas must, therefore, take initiative and build their capacities under the new conditions
 - Urban areas are preoccupied with their own challenges
 - This means focusing on local assets and the competitive advantages they provide
 - Local citizens and groups are in the best position to know this – and are most committed to it
 - But they need to know about external opportunities
- (S) Regional collaboration is essential to improve critical mass and increase competitive advantage
- (S) Provincial governments are in a strong position to facilitate this capacity-building
 - Serious approach to local involvement
 - Strategic use of regional bodies
 - Multi-sectoral and multi-institutional approaches
 - Place-based/sensitive approaches
 - Support for social infrastructure as much as physical infrastructure

The Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation

Sustainable Regional Development - IV

Bill Reimer
bill.reimer@concordia.ca
 nre.concordia.ca
 2009/12/10

 Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada  Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada

17

Japan Course: Sustainable Regional Development
 2-day Intensive Lecture

- UN: Our Common Future “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts:
 - the concept of 'needs', in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and
 - the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs.”
- We would like to ask you to have two days intensive lecture on “Sustainable Regional Development” for graduate students. Each day you will teach us for three hours with 10 minutes break. The students are Master course graduate students and its number will be less than ten.
- If you can teach us new theories, study methods and useful examples related to the regional development, we would appreciate it. In particular, we are interesting in Canadian regional policies concerning sustainable development.
- Thank you for your cooperation.
- Best regards,
- Mitsuhiro,
- Consider:
 - What the students wish to learn
 - To understand what SRD means
 - To see what it implies about policy
 - To see what it implies about action