


NRE² BUILDING RURAL CAPACITY IN THE NEW ECONOMY

A Rural Perspective on Linkages Among Communities

Bill Reimer
Concordia University
reimer@vax2.concordia.ca
2005/03/03



The slide features several logos at the bottom: on the left, the 'CJ Project' logo with a green tree and the characters '日' and '加'; in the center, the 'NRE²' logo; below it, the 'CPRN' and 'RCRPP' logos with the tagline 'Fresh Ideas for Canada's Future'; and on the right, the 'FCRR/CRRE' logo with a green field graphic.

Introduction

- Thanks
- Assume all of you have read the discussion paper: spend my time on key points
- Focus on:
 - Moving toward a framework that is inclusive of all types of communities and make some brief suggestions regarding promising research directions emerging from such a framework
-
- Acknowledgements:
 - Minister Godfrey and the CPRN
 - Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
 - The Rural Secretariat of Agriculture and Agri-food Canada
 - Statistics Canada
 - Etc.
 - Rural Citizens in our field sites

NRE² BUILDING RURAL CAPACITY IN THE NEW ECONOMY

A strong **rural** Canada is necessary for a strong Canada

- Rural sustains Urban
 - Provides natural resources
 - Maintains positive balance of trade
 - Minimizes negative externalities

2

A strong rural Canada is necessary for a strong urban Canada

- When I say 'rural' I'm referring to the small cities, towns, villages, and rural spaces in which about a quarter of Canadians live and work.
- (S) Rural sustains **urban**
 - (S) Provides natural resources for manufacturing and consumption
 - (S) Maintains a positive balance of trade (more than 80% of trade balance was from primary products)
 - (S) Minimizes the negative externalities of urbanization and agglomeration
 - Pollution management
 - Stress
 - Supports the ecological footprint of urban places
- Perhaps even more important is the point that ->

NRE² BUILDING RURAL CAPACITY IN THE NEW ECONOMY

Strengthening rural Canada is necessary for a strong Canada

- A strong rural economy:
 - Increases economic contribution
 - Maintains social inclusion and support
 - Contributes vitality and innovation
 - Contributes resiliency

3

- Strengthening rural people and organizations is necessary for a strong **Canada**
- (S) A strong rural economy means
 - (S) A greater contribution to the overall Canadian economy
 - Even with the growth of the Knowledge Economy, our basic competitive advantage remains with our natural resources
 - We may eventually lose the IT competition with India and China, but if we do it right, we will continue to have the advantage of our land, forests, water, minerals, and petroleum.
 - I don't mean continuing in the manner we have dealt with our natural resources in the past – our record in doing it right is not a good one.
 - We need to focus our knowledge, research, and innovation attention to making sure that this record improves considerably. We must reorganize ourselves for the stewardship and sustainable use of these resources.
 - (S) Strong rural society would mean a more inclusive and supportive Canadian society
 - Our history with Aboriginal peoples makes clear how destructive exclusion can be – for all involved
 - Rural people clearly want to take care of themselves, their young and their elderly – we need to facilitate this, not inhibit it.
 - (S) Canada would further benefit from the vitality and innovation already shown in rural places
 - Rural people and organizations show enormous innovation in governance, social support, and resiliency
 - Often not recognized because they are small, get glossed over by general statistical analysis, and they are not in the current frameworks that we use
 - Therefore go unnoticed as models and inspiration for larger centres.
 - (S) Strengthening these places and the links between them will support a more distributed network.
 - Distributed networks are more resilient and flexible than hierarchal ones or those that depend on one or two key nodes (as anyone stuck in the Toronto airport will tell you)
- Thus any framework we develop must be inclusive of linkages among all types of communities and places – even though urbanization and centralization processes keep drawing our attention to large centres
- One strategy to do this is to remember that these linkages are multiple and complex ->

NRE² BUILDING RURAL CAPACITY IN THE NEW ECONOMY

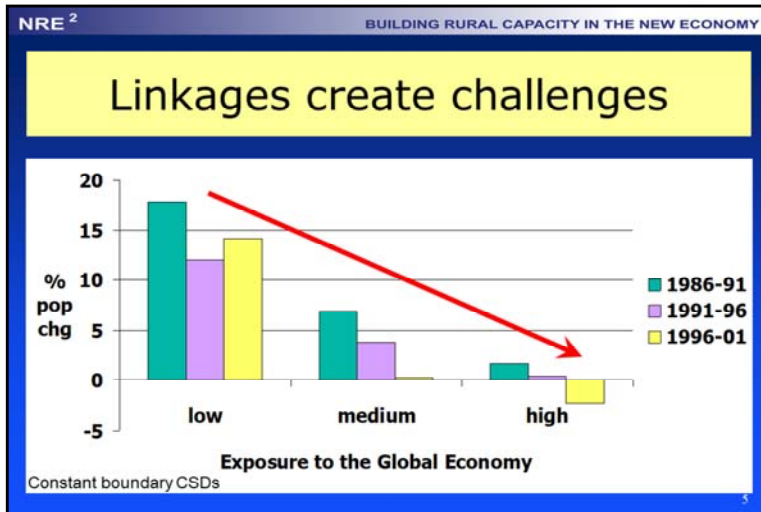
Linkages are multiple and complex

- Trade and commerce
 - Goods, Finance, Services, People, Information
- Functional integration
 - Carbon sequestration, water protection, recreation
- Institutional integration
 - Health, education, social economy, NGOs, family
- Common environments
 - Water, air, climate
- Common identities
 - Local, regional, national, international

4

Linkages among communities are multiple and complex

- We have identified the following types of linkages among communities
- They are not meant to be exhaustive, but to act as a point of reference to ensure a broader level of inclusion in our analysis
 - (S) Flows related to Trade and commerce
 - Goods
 - Finances
 - Services
 - People
 - Information
 - (S) New functions and complementarities of functions that bind us together.
 - Carbon sequestration, protection of water supplies, recreation, alternative life styles for those who find urban living difficult, resiliency for our social system in general are all provided by rural places.
 - (S) Formal and informal institutions
 - Health, education, link places in policy and action
 - Social economy, NGOs, social groups, and families
 - (S) Common environments
 - Water, air, climate – and related issues: food, bio-diversity, are emerging linkages
 - (S) Perceptions, values, identities, ideologies
 - Communities of place, virtual communities, region, national, international
- All of these must be considered when examining linkages
- We must also recognize that under certain conditions they reinforce one another, but under other circumstances they can work at cross-purposes.
 - The restructuring of linkages through larger centres, for example, undermines the development of local and regional relations that are so important to the development of identity in our children.
- In addition, there is a tendency in the discourse on linkages to assume that more and stronger linkages are beneficial at all levels and under all circumstances
- However, this is not always true – especially as we look at some of the social, political, and cultural impacts



Increased linkages can create significant challenges

- (Ss) Graph showing the relationship between integration into the global economy and population change for small rural locations
- (S) The linkages of commodity trade have been very beneficial for our balance of payments (80% of trade surplus contributed by primary products) but it has undermined the population of rural communities
- This decline in population has been exacerbated by the centralization of services and inflexible governance structures
- Cost-cutting actions have decimated social infrastructure as well as threatened physical infrastructure.
- This may be shortsighted.

NRE ² BUILDING RURAL CAPACITY IN THE NEW ECONOMY

Social infrastructure as important as physical infrastructure

- Social infrastructure:
 - Formal: schools, hospitals, clinics, religious organizations
 - Informal: clubs, voluntary groups, charities
- Social Economy, Social Capital, Governance
 - Slow to build
 - Resilient
- Invisible in dominant frameworks

6

Social infrastructure as important (more important?) than physical infrastructure

- (S) Social infrastructure
 - Formal institutions: schools, hospitals and clinics, social welfare, religious organizations
 - Informal institutions and networks:
 - Hockey and curling clubs, recreation centres, hobby groups, e-mail networks
- Social infrastructure is of primary importance in smaller areas
 - It was the lilac club in Cap-à-l'Aigle that served as the inspiration and basis for what is now an international network, annual festival, and public garden that makes a major economic contribution to the village (This is a good example of the functioning of the Social Economy)
 - (S) The social capital of Springhill was called upon to build a new arena after they lost the previous one in a fire (Social Capital)
 - Informal networks of Ste-Francoise provided a basis for negotiating the location of a pig farm when a local farmer wanted to expand too close to the village. No lawyers were involved in these negotiations. (New Governance)
- (S) Unlike physical infrastructure, social infrastructure takes a long time to build, supports considerable resilience, but once it has deteriorated, it accelerates the economic, social, and health decline of communities
- (S) Social infrastructure is largely invisible in current frameworks
 - We have few indicators for these intangible aspects of community
 - What few we have are viewed with suspicion among the dominant paradigms of our analysis and policy
 - Yet research indicates that it is these intangible features of communities and networks that are of equal importance to the traditional human capital or location-based ones – for both social and economic viability
- If we are to address them appropriately, our frameworks must make them visible.

NRE² BUILDING RURAL CAPACITY IN THE NEW ECONOMY

An Inclusive Framework

Guidelines	Research
• Include all communities	• Multiple linkages
• Adapt to various rural conditions	• Impacts by density and distance
• Support social infrastructure	• New governance, social capital, social economy
• Invest in rural Canada	• Risk and uncertainty, informal economy
• Build common interests	• Food, H ₂ O, Environment

7

- (S) Close with 5 guidelines or principles to guide our thinking about such frameworks
 - (S) With some research directions that flow from them
- (S) Recognize the variety of ways in which all communities are interdependent
 - This means that our 'urban system' analysis must include all sized settlements to understand how the system functions.
 - (S) Research: Identify and analyze multiple types of linkages – Where do they enhance or inhibit each other?
 - What types of networks contribute to resiliency in the face of an uncertain future?
- (S) Recognize how general policies and programs create local challenges for people and organizations.
 - This means developing programs and policies that are appropriate for local and regional idiosyncrasies.
 - More credibility must be given to the principle of subsidiarity (lowest competent authority) and more local control
 - (S) Research: What are the local impacts of policies and programs – by density and distance?
- (S) Provide support for social infrastructure as well as physical
 - (S) Research: What are the forms of 'New governance' emerging in various types of places?
 - Includes formal and informal groups – that build on local strengths
 - What are models of local governance that meet the challenges of accountability and representation?
 - What forms of social capital facilitate linkages? In what ways? Outcomes?
- (S) Inspire investment in rural Canada, its resources, people, and organizations (potential to be realized)
 - Conducting the research that will allow us to make our natural resources sustainable, add value to those resources, and market them in flexible and innovative ways.
 - Capture more of that value locally.
 - (S) Research: What makes rural investment high risk?
 - How can we better balance the distribution of risk?
 - What are the economic and social opportunities emerging under the new economy?
 - How can we best reorganize to meet them?
 - Our research has also highlighted the important role of the informal economy in support of the formal
- (S) Build on common interests between rural and urban places
 - Research: What are the common interests of rural and urban places?
 - (S) Food (variety and quality), Water, Environment
 - Where do the interests diverge?
 - What are the potential challenges and opportunities emerging from these shifting interests?
- These are some of the elements we need to include in our framework discussion
- We are convinced that an appropriate framework will permit us to build a vital economy and society that takes advantage of both urban and rural strengths rather than build one at the expense of the other.

A Rural Perspective on Linkages Among Communities

The New Rural Economy Project

<http://nre.concordia.ca>

<http://www.crrf.ca>

2005/03/03



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