






NRE² BUILDING RURAL CAPACITY IN THE NEW ECONOMY

Changes for What? Strategic choices for the new rural conditions

Bill Reimer
reimer@vax2.concordia.ca
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www.crrf.ca
nre.concordia.ca

Changes for What? Strategic choices for the new rural conditions

- Thanks for invitation
- My comments rest on the experience and work of the CRRF
 - Network of researchers, policy-makers, practitioners, rural people
 - Meeting for 17 years – annual conferences and workshops
 - For last 7 years – the New Rural Economy Project
 - Macro analysis
 - Intensive case study research in 32 systematically selected rural sites
 - All across Canada
- Collaboration between researchers and policy-makers critical
 - Provide up-to-date insights and research results to people making policy
 - Provide reality-checks for researchers
- Thanks to supporters for our work
 - SSHRC – Strategic Grant on Social Cohesion
 - SSHRC – INE Grant – Building Rural Capacity
 - CRRF
 - Rural Secretariat
 - Rural people

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Leading Through Change

What kinds of changes are most appropriate for the new rural conditions?

- What are those new conditions?
- How can rural people, groups, and communities best position themselves for these conditions?

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Leading Through Change

- What kinds of changes are most appropriate for the new rural conditions?
 - What are those new conditions?
 - Over the past 7 years we have been conducting research on the first question – with the active participation of rural people
 - We can't predict the future, but we can anticipate some of the broad directions – even though uncertainty is a major feature
- Now we have turned our attention to the second question
 - How can rural people, groups, and communities best position themselves in the face of these conditions?
- I will rush through our main responses to the first question so that I can get on to
- Some of the strategies we are exploring related to the second

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The New Rural Conditions - 1

- Increasing diversity
- Primary industries shed labour
- Rural competitive in manufacturing
- Environment more important
- Knowledge-intensive industries
- Communication and transportation costs decreasing

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The New Rural Conditions - 1

- Increasing diversity
 - Different communities have different assets and live under different conditions
 - Therefore face different decisions and options
 - Even national programs impact individual communities differently
 - [health services – adjacent vs. non-adjacent]
- Primary industries shed labour
 - Agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining
 - These communities need to find something new to export or service if they expect to survive or grow
- Rural economies are competitive in manufacturing
 - Freshwater argues that successful rural communities in the future will have a manufacturing base
 - Apedaile argues that rural Canada is becoming an habitat economy
- Environment is becoming more important (quality of life concerns)
 - This means that a pristine environment will become a community asset
 - Environmental degradation means the undermining of this asset
- Knowledge playing a greater part in the economy
 - Attracting, building, training knowledge workers becomes an important strategy
 - A learning culture is a key asset for meeting an increasingly uncertain future
- Communication and transportation costs decreasing (relatively)
 - Works both ways
 - Fewer employees needed to provide banking and government services
 - Rural services can be marketed to urban people easier

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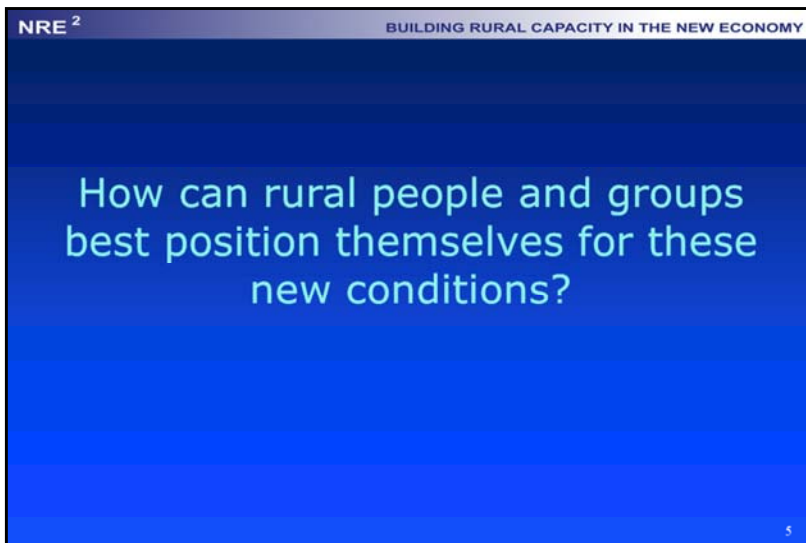
The New Rural Conditions - 2

- Youth leave, families return
- Continuing concentration of industries
- Services more centralized
- Aging populations
- Rural perceived as relatively safe
- Immigration growing
- Influence of rural declining

Distance and Density Matter

The New Rural Conditions - 2

- Youth leave, families return
 - Youth outmigration may be okay if they are replaced
- Continuing concentration of industries
 - Less economic value captured locally
 - Less influence over corporate decisions
- Services more centralized
 - Less sensitivity to local conditions
 - Need to search for new ways to provide these services
- Aging populations
 - Demographic composition and special needs of the population are changing
 - Need to reorganize the formal and volunteer activities to meet the new conditions
 - Requires key policy changes to make this possible
- Rural perceived as relatively safe
 - Being perceived as safe is a community asset
- Immigration growing and will remain strong
 - Wider diversity of people, activities, and values
 - Wider networks and connections
- Influence of rural declining
 - Can't rely on urban people to care about rural per se
 - Must find new ways to represent rural interests and influence policies
- Distance and density matter – and will continue to matter
 - Even with declining costs of communication, moving people is relatively expensive (economically, socially, and culturally)




- How can rural people and groups best position themselves for these new conditions?
- I have several suggestions
 - They are not exhaustive, but reflect our results and analysis of rural conditions

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Identify and reevaluate your assets

- Knowledge-based
- Environmental
- Locally unique
- Social and cultural



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Identify and reevaluate your assets

- Knowledge-based assets
 - Most farmers know how to use the Internet – many of these skills are transferrable
 - Young people are more at ease with new technology – can they get the older people on line?
 - My parents are now e-mail crazy after they discovered how they could use it to keep in touch with relatives
- Environmental
 - Quality of life is a strong attractor for families and knowledge-skilled people
- Locally unique
 - Niche marketing to regional, national, and global markets is a key growth area in manufacturing and services
 - What's special about your area that people like to see on their shirts, breakfast tables, or travel bags?
- Social and cultural
 - Too often assets are considered only in terms of economic assets
 - Our research shows that the traditional economic factors: economic and human capital (employment and education) only account for at most about half of the variation in local incomes
 - The social and institutional factors (intangible) are as important to consider
 - That is why we have been examining: social cohesion, social capital, capacity
- Cap à l'Aigle
 - Looking for an economic development opportunity
 - Turned to a lilac club
 - Used communal and associative skills to build bureaucratic and market relations
 - Used Internet and international travel (conferences)
 - Now – donation of a full garden, dealing with the maintenance in a way to build social cohesion
 - Anyone want to sponsor a type of lilac? \$100 for three years

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Build regional and urban alliances

- Identify urban demands

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Build regional and urban alliances

- Urban Canada won't step in to help out rural Canada per se
 - Too preoccupied with its own challenges – and increasingly so
 - Can't absorb any more labour
 - Infrastructure deteriorated
 - Pollution challenges
 - Therefore rural people and groups must take action
- Identify urban demands
 - Rural and urban interdependent (main point of our recent conference in Tweed)
 - Don't beat urban people to help, seduce them with the things they are already concerned about that have rural benefits
 - Food
 - Water
 - Environment
 - Ste-Paule and Matane (story)



- (S) Ste-Paule in Gaspé was faced with a school closure
 - First they turned inward in anger and frustration
 - Increased their social cohesion but initially in a way that fed their sense of exclusion and mistreatment
 - 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 – (S) so their children would now have to be bused to nearby urban schools because of some urban-initiated regulation
 - Someone pointed out that what they liked about their school was what was missing in some of the more urban schools
 - 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
 - (S) Kept their school open by
 - Identifying their assets
 - Looking outside for a demand
 - Figuring out how to meet that demand
- Their social cohesion was a valuable asset – but...
- They didn't use it just to protect themselves from the challenges they faced
- They looked outside for opportunities to use it

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Build regional and urban alliances

- Identify urban demands
- Find new markets – globally
- Develop communications – learn how to use them
- Build bridging and linking social cohesion as well as bonding

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Build regional and urban alliances

- Find new markets – globally
 - Not all communities have an urban centre nearby
 - But opportunities also exist globally
 - Alberta farmer selling truck boxes to the southern USA (note – used farm skills and equipment)
 - Northern Ontario entrepreneur supplying bowling pins to USA using the cores from plywood production
- Develop communications – learn how to use it
 - E.g. youth teaching elders to use the Internet
 - Local radio at the Tweed conference – Tweed radio 101.3 FM
- Build bridging social cohesion

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Social Cohesion

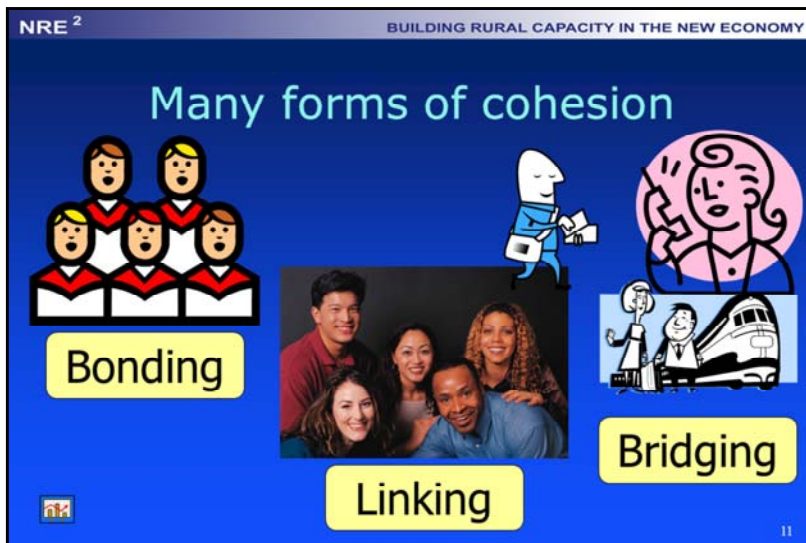
The extent to which people respond collectively to achieve their valued objectives

- SoCo is acting together
- SoCo is temporal – specific to activities
- SoCo scales – specific to groups
- SoCo requires evaluation – may be positive for some, negative for others

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(S) Social Cohesion: The extent to which people respond collectively to achieve their valued outcomes

- (S) SoCo is people acting together
 - Focus on behaviour, not belief
 - We have found that there is only a low level of correlation between the 2
- (S) SoCo is temporal – specific to activities
 - Community may be fragmented around where to put the garbage dump, or whether to build a new arena, but cohesive with respect to fighting a fire.
- (S) SoCo scales – specific to groups
 - Community may be divided into 2 or more cohesive groups – producing a lack of cohesion for the community in general
- (S) SoCo requires evaluation – may be positive for some, negative for others
 - Cohesion of biker gangs may be negative for the rest of society
 - Not equated with conformity or homogeneity
- Using this point of view, we have asked how the changes in rural Canada have affected the level and type of social cohesion
- Found some key distinctions important for understanding how social cohesion works for economic and social outcomes



- Bonding
 - Lilac club in Cap à l'Aigle
 - Similar people – can be exclusive
 - Local people – can be ineffective or limited in perspective
- Bridging
 - Cohesion across spaces and places
 - Between communities, between individuals in different locations
 - Critical to operating effectively in the global economy
 - The power of weak ties
 - Use of the Internet by Lilac club to locate international interests and opportunities
- Linking
 - Across traditional social types of people
 - Ages, gender, ethnicity, social class
 - Has advantages for equality, inclusion, and innovation
- It's not always under the control of local communities, however
 - Reminded of this when attending a community barbecue near Goderidge at one of our CRRF conferences
 - Just after I had attended a similar event in rural Quebec
 - Both examples of social cohesion, but
 - In Quebec – all ages represented and participating
 - In Ontario – only adults
 - After discussion: the difference was the Ontario liquor laws – no-one under 18 at public events
 - Result:
 - Adults party together
 - Baby-sitters get rich
 - Adolescents drink behind the barn
 - Bonding without linking – community loses

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Look beyond your gates

- Learn about general trends
- Nurture local advantages
- Integrate strangers
- Develop regional, national, international networks



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Look beyond your gates

- Learn about general trends
 - Part of the learning culture
 - You don't have to do it all – look at those things that interest you
 - Matane demands in Ste Paule; Lilac conferences globally
 - Internet is key tool
- Nurture local advantages
 - Takes some imagination – some advantages may not be recognized
 - The value of comparison by you and by others
 - The network of Japanese women meeting to exchange herbs and recipes grew into a co-op restaurant in Awano – one of our field sites
 - Learning how to meet and mobilize is a key asset that is transferable to many other objectives
 - E.g. Cercle des fermiers
- Integrate strangers
 - New people are often perceived as a threat to local social cohesion
 - But they are often a valuable asset
 - Address the threat aspect with innovative new social organization
 - Cap St-Ignace example
- Develop regional, national, international networks
 - Doaktown example

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Maintain your Diaspora

Doaktown, NB
11 of 36 pages

- Atlantic: 15
- Central: 6
- West: 17
- USA: 6
- International: 2

OurLink Doaktown Community Newsletter September 2006

Location: Vancouver, BC

Comments: I love the newsletter... keeps me up with what is going on around home... been away for over 20 years and it will always be home... I miss the place and all the nice people.. keep up all the good work..

Location: Mackenzie, B.C.

Comments: Was watching Great Canadian Rivers and they showcased the Mirimachi. One thing led to another and I found myself searching out my Fathers () hometown of Doaktown. I spent a good amount of time visiting my grandparents there (1963-1980) and would love to make it back for a visit! Anyone interested in a road trip from B.C.??

Location: South Carolina

Comments: I just thought this was cool to find a site on Doaktown. I lived there all my life...and now I am married and living in Columbia, SC .
I agree with everyone that you need more pictures though, but I love the site.
Hope to hear from some old friends.

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- The other side of responding to increased mobility concerns the people who leave your communities
- Often treated as population lost (in the short term)
- But we also know that there are patterns to population movements that may be treated as opportunities by rural communities
- Young people leave, but people often return when they are starting families or retiring
- Some communities recognize this and therefore maintain contact with their diaspora
 - Keeping them up to date with local activities and people
 - Linking them through events and services (reunions, bulleting boards)
 - Internet makes this easy
 - As a grandparent with children and grandchildren around the world, I know how important this is
- E.g. Doaktown, NB (955 pop 2001)
 - (S) Monthly newsletter
 - (S+) Guestbook
 - (S+) Comments reflect the attachments (multi-generations)
- Potential
 - Economic and social benefits from
 - Visitors
 - Return populations (think long term)
 - Knowledge and experience gained (people leave for school and jobs)
 - Networks throughout the world (note the strength of weak ties)
 - Japanese communities have noticed this – so they encourage people to travel, but keep them linked as ambassadors, intelligence gathering agents, and potential returnees

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Recognize Limitations and Minimize Damage

- Identify vulnerable groups
- Build support networks and infrastructure
- Build useful social cohesion

Context Matters

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Minimize Damage

- Identify vulnerable groups
 - Winners and losers in the new economy
 - As usual – young and old, women and volunteers
 - Transportation a key issue – to services
- Build support networks and infrastructure
 - Very small places can't survive alone
 - Look to regional collaboration
 - Small places can't survive as tourist destinations but regions can
 - Tweed – to 'Comfort Country' – in spite of initial competition and conflicts
- Build useful social cohesion
 - Bridging and linking as well as bonding
 - Market and bureaucratic as well as associative and communal
 - Context matters
 - Build from strengths

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Building Rural Capacity in the New Economy

A Project of the Canadian Rural
Revitalization Foundation

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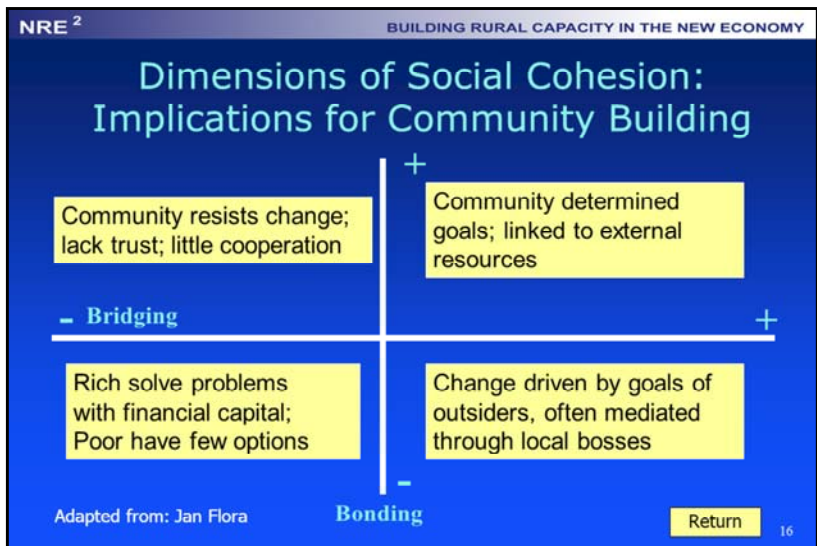
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- I am looking forward to continuing collaboration between TORC and CRRF



- From presentation to CRRF by Jan Flora
- He spoke of it in terms of social capital

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Context Matters					Return
Level of Social Cohesion by Site Characteristics					
	Market	Bureau.	Assoc.	Comm.	Variety
Global Economy	High	High		High	
Stable Economy	High		High	High	High
Metro Adjacent			Low		
High Inst. Capacity	Low			Low	Low

NRE Household Survey, 2001; N=1991; significant differences only (p < .05); behaviour-based social cohesion 17

The importance of context is also shown in our research results

- Variations in social cohesion are often due to factors beyond the control of local people
- Were looking at the level of different types of social cohesion under different contexts of the field sites
 - Exposure to the global economy (High exposure: high in Market, Bureaucratic, Communal)
 - Stability of the economy (Relatively stable economy: High in M, A, C, and multiple types of social cohesion)
 - Adjacency to metro centres (Metro adjacent: Low; not much difference in others)
 - Institutional capacity (High institutional capacity: low in M, C, Variety; where institutional capacity is LOW, social cohesion in these types of relations is relatively high)
- Effects vary by the type of social relations involved.
- Two main points:
 - We shouldn't treat social cohesion as a single phenomenon – it has roots in a variety of social relations
 - The type of 'glue' that binds people in rural areas varies by characteristics that are beyond their control
 - Often the result of more general policies and programs
 - Or responses to those more general policies and programs
- Use this knowledge in developing strategies
 - Local Economy – need special attention to build Market, Bureaucratic, and Communal
 - Fluctuating Economy – special attention to Market, Associative, Communal
 - Isolated economy – build the others on the strength of Associative
 - Low institutional capacity – strengthen and support Market and Communal