



Acknowledgements:

- The Rural Secretariat – Western Rural Team
 - SSHRC, Health Canada
 - Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation
 - The NRE network of researchers and community members
- We encourage considerable independence – so the ideas here are not necessarily shared by all members of our group
- Exciting opportunity:
- To talk about rural issues
 - To meet with people from a wide variety of contexts with a common interest in rural Canada
- Useful exercise to consider agenda items and approaches
- Since we have just had our letter of intent accepted by SSHRC
 - This letter of intent is for a 4-year, national, collaborative project entitled “Building Capacity in Rural Canada” – substantial funding
 - Are now doing the brainstorming that will serve as the framework for the proposal
 - Let me know if you are interested (cf. our web page)



- This editorial appeared in the Montreal Gazette last week
- Written in response to the latest population figures released by Statistics Canada showing the continuing urbanization of Canadian society
- [C] The author sets his response in the context of pork-barrel politics
- [C] Argues that it calls for electoral reform, and
- [C] more resources to urban regions
- Reflection of demographic, political, economic, and social forces underway
- This is the context of our deliberations over a research agenda
- Not necessarily a nasty picture if we:
 - Seek to understand it
 - Look for the opportunities emerging
- But it does make clear that establishing a research agenda involves more than just compiling a list of the things we want to do or the questions we want answered. →

A Research Agenda Requires:

- Vision
 - Identify what could be
 - Avoid fads and shopping lists
- Reality Check
 - Identify where we are now
 - Identify basic processes
- Strategy
 - Identify realistic pathways

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A Research Agenda Requires:

- Vision
 - To identify the things that we desire
 - To avoid fads and shopping lists (coordinate our resources)
 - Critical Analysis (grounded)
 - To identify the way things are (avoid misplacing our energies)
 - Especially focus on underlying processes rather than just symptoms
 - Strategy
 - To identify realistic pathways to the vision
- I will discuss each of these 3 requirements – with an emphasis on the ‘Reality Check’
- I will identify 6 insights about rural Canada that should be considered when developing a rural research agenda
- First – what are the elements of a Vision that we might consider? →

A Vision for Rural Canada: The Government View

- Vibrant communities
- Sustainable resource base
- Contributing to national identity
- Contributing to national prosperity
- Citizens making informed decisions
- Sharing benefits of global knowledge-based economy
- Taking advantage of opportunities:
 - Personal ends
 - Sustainable community development

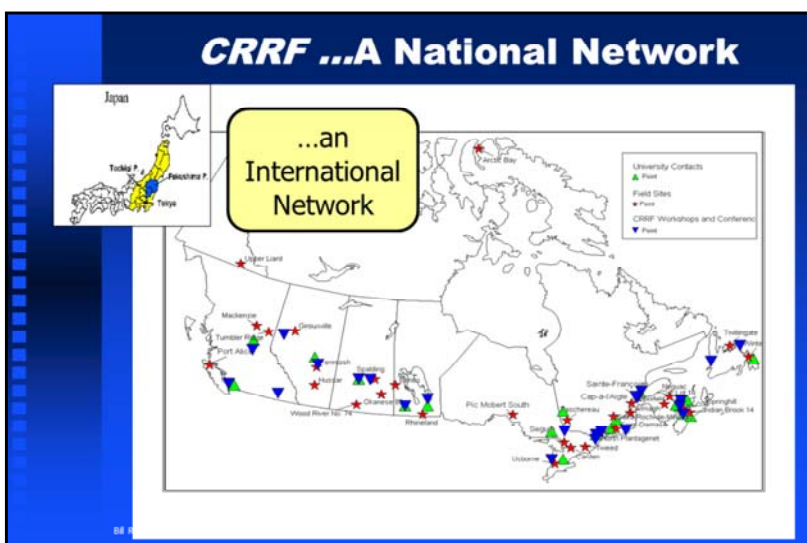
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•Rural Secretariat: As a result of the 1998 dialogue, the Government of Canada built its vision for rural Canada:

- [4C] “Vibrant communities and a sustainable resource base contributing to our national identity and prosperity
- [1C] Citizens making informed decisions about their own future
- [4C] Canadians sharing the benefits of the global knowledge-based economy and society, and taking full advantage of opportunities for personal and sustainable community development”

•Will not dwell on this aspect of the agenda since I have been asked to leave this up to all of you

•Instead will spend more time on the second requirement (the Reality Check) – since we have considerable experience in this regard.



Who are we? CRRF

Our perspective is based on collaborative rural research over the past 15 years

- (A) Researchers associated with more than 20 universities and institutes
- (A) 32 field sites chosen (5 dimensions of comparison)
- (A) Program of workshops and conferences – in our 15th year, about 28 locations (always select rural areas)
- International collaboration
 - 2 sites in Japan (Iitate, Awano)
 - Colleagues and centres in USA, UK, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Mexico
- We invite you to work with us
- What have we been learning that is relevant for Research Agenda discussions? →

What Have We Done?

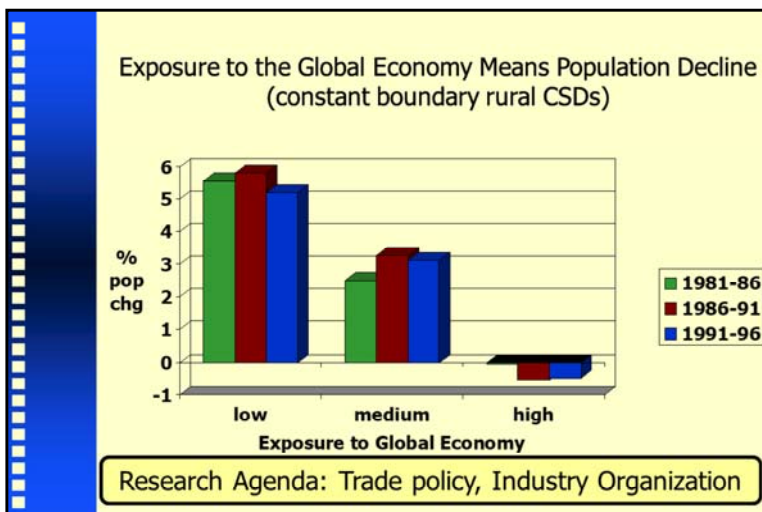
- Macro analysis using census and survey data
- 32 field sites – a 'Rural Observatory'
 - Meso analysis (SMEs, Coops, 3rd Sector, Governments)
 - Micro analysis (Households and Individuals)
- Workshops and Conferences
- Over 50 documents
- Web Site <http://nre.concordia.ca>

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What Have We 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, 3rd 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)

- What are we learning? →



What Are We Learning?

- Commodity trade has undermined community cohesion
- 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
- Illustrate by analysis of rural CSDs (discuss chart)
- Note:
 - Greater involvement with the global economy is encouraged by government policy and programs
 - This exposure is often beyond the control of local citizens
 - It also highlights the tradeoff we are making between wealth and identity or lifestyle
 - At present, wealth has got the upper hand under the pressures of globalization (commodity trade)
- Implications for Research Agenda? → Trade policy and effects**

Property rights need reorganization

- Common-property issues are more visible
 - Poorly coordinated with private markets
 - Joint-products not recognized
- Concentration has reduced local capacity
- Traditional social capital is undermined

Research Agenda: Governance, Environment

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Property rights are poorly organized

- Common-property issues are more visible
 - We are becoming more aware how our sea, land, air are limited and vulnerable
 - Poorly coordinated with private markets – therefore vulnerable to free riders and the tragedy of the commons
 - Joint-products not recognized
 - Farms and water
 - Forestry and amenities (clearcuts)
 - Research (knowledge creation) and Community Capacity
- Industrial concentration has reduced local capacity
 - Goods and services move from the land to national and international markets without passing through local communities and institutions
 - Removes fiscal resources for local development
- Increased external control of property rights undermines traditional bases for social capital and cohesion
 - Being a local supporter and volunteer is no longer as important as being able to work with markets and bureaucracies (coops are vulnerable to these effects)
- Research Agenda implications?:**
 - Governance – local, regional, national**
 - Environment**

Rural Canada is Multifunctional

- Production
- Food and water security
- Environmental security
- Lifestyle and amenity enhancement
- Stress buffer
- Identity and cohesion maintenance

Research Agenda: Rural Policy

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Rural Canada is Multifunctional

•Production

- Commodities production still key, but it has become reorganized (concentrated and centralized)

- Services and manufacturing increasing in importance

•Food and water security

- Food security: including water, becoming more important with the concentration of processing and wider trade on perishable food

•Environmental security

- Environmental security and sustainability: Urban ecological footprint is huge and probably growing. It is unremunerated for the most part

- Pollution processing

•Lifestyle and amenity enhancement

- Lifestyle and amenities: Amenities (landscapes, playgrounds, communities) are being challenged by increased urban-rural migration and seasonal migration.

•Stress buffer

- Employment drops less in recessions and increases less in expansions

- Housing costs lower, extensive informal economy, lifestyle options less expensive

•Identity and cohesion maintenance

- Rural images remain an important element of Canadian and regional identities

- Part of our national heritage and even the normative basis of the broader society

•As the demography shifts, many of these multiple functions are coming into conflict, however:

- Rural gentrification places additional demands on traditional industries (pig farms and SMEs)

- Traditional organization of production puts stresses on the environment (fish, water pollution, soil erosion)

- Population migration undermines traditional identities and bases of social cohesion

•Research agenda implications: Rural policy – regional, national and international

Extent of local control is declining

- Rural population growing absolutely, declining relatively
- Local governance relegated to caretaking functions
- Local entitlements weak
- Informal governance has been undermined
- Services threatened

Research Agenda: Governance, Social Capital

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Extent of local control is declining

- The rural population is growing absolutely, but declining relatively
- Formal institutions of governance have been relegated to caretaking functions
 - Unable to initiate projects
 - Unable to direct local economic development (often reduced to fighting over smokestacks)
- Local mechanisms of governance have little control over factors determining rural development
 - Industrial development
 - Finance
 - Entitlements
 - Policy
- Informal mechanisms of governance (associative, communal) have been undermined by migration, communication, changing identities
- Services threatened
 - Hospitals, schools, post offices, justice institutions, welfare
 - Formal and informal (home care problems with mobility)
- Research agenda implications:**
 - Governance changes and processes**
 - Social capital and services**

Local Capacity is Underestimated

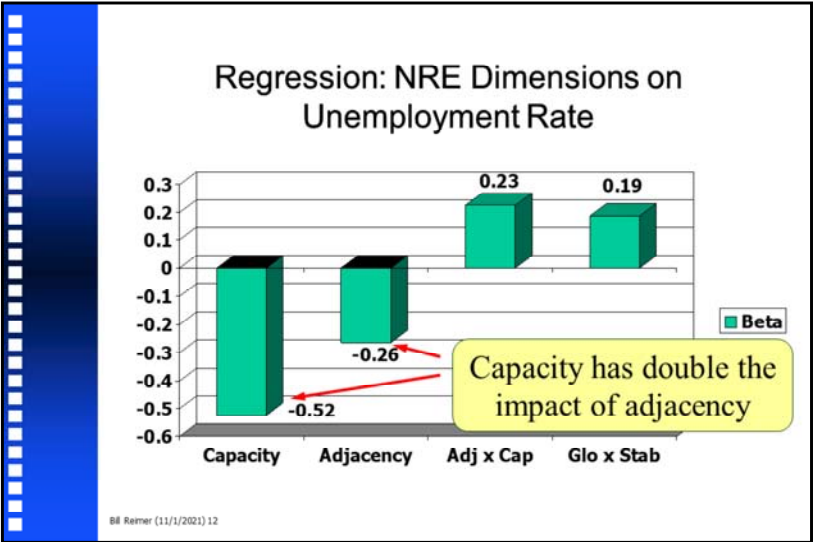
- Considerable variation in capacity
- Many pathways to local development
- Social capital has major impact on local economy
 - Unemployment rate
 - Median income
 - LICO
- Rural citizens responsive to learning

Research Agenda: Community Capacity

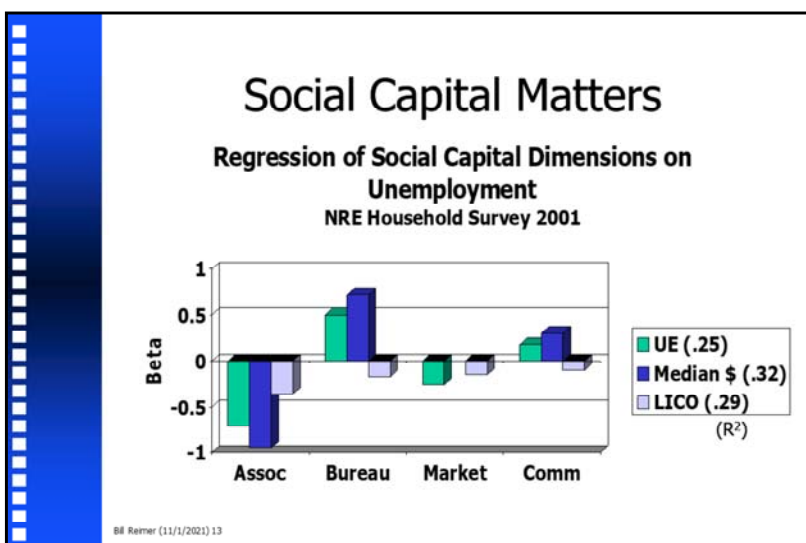
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Local Capacity is Underestimated

- Considerable variation in capacity from one location to another
- Many pathways to local development
 - Growth, reorganization, maintenance
 - Not always economic growth
 - Bridging or bonding SC are both important (Flora)
- Social capital has a major impact on the local economy
 - Associational and bureaucratic capacity has greater impact than market capacity on:
 - Unemployment
 - Median household income
 - % below LICO
- Rural citizens are responsive to learning
 - Coaticook – market themselves as conference centre after hosting our national conference
 - NRE field sites – many stories of insights, new networks, and returning to sites with new ideas
 - Cross-community support
- **Research agenda implications: Processes of community capacity**



•Data – 1991 CSDs



Local Capacity is Untapped

- Considerable variation in capacity
 - Leading/lagging
- Many pathways to local development
 - Growth, reorganization, maintenance
 - Not always economic
 - Bridging or bonding SC are both important (Flora)
- Positive responses to our information and approach
 - Cross-community support

Rural Research is Disadvantaged

- Faces competition for researchers' time
- Institutional demands: publish or perish
 - Undervalue partnerships and collaboration
 - Career-stage related
- Small size disadvantage:
 - Increased teaching pressure
 - Multiple demands
 - Fewer local supports
- Unsupported accountability undermines research objectives

Research
Agenda:
Targeted, New
Approaches

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What Are We Learning about Research Activities?

- Faces competition for researchers' time
 - Rural issues have a lower level of interest among funders and researchers
- Institutional demands: publish or perish
 - Don't support partnership approach
 - Among researchers (single authorship counts more than joint authorship)
 - Between researchers, gov't, private sector, and citizens
 - Career-stage related (young researchers especially pressured)
 - Don't support long time frames
- Small size disadvantage:
 - Increased teaching pressure
 - Multiple demands (like rural doctors)
 - Fewer local supports
- Accountability creates obstacles if unsupported
 - Theoretical research – draws energy from the research to administration
 - Applied research – evaluation is often not built in because of additional time or money involved
- Research agenda implications:**
 - Targeted support**
 - New models**
- Take a closer look at what CRRF has been doing – the experiments we have been conducting in this regard

The Context of Rural Research

- Commodity trade and concentration have undermined community capacity
- The rural economy is diverse and multifunctional
- Property rights need reorganization
- Extent of local control is declining
- Local capital is underestimated
- Rural Research is disadvantaged

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- Summary: These elements provide the context for rural research
- We use these insights to frame and direct our research in the CRRF/NRE
- They also provide a basis for some **strategic** considerations when framing a research agenda →

•CRRF/NRE:

- Capacity Building focus*
 - Not just local*
 - includes consideration of regional, national, international conditions and processes affecting, limiting, and enhancing capacity*
 - Capacity building at local, regional, national, international levels*
- Themes*
 - Governance*
 - Broadly defined: formal and informal*
 - Services*
 - Health*
 - Education*
 - Welfare*
 - Justice*
 - Formal and informal provision*
 - Environment*
 - Communication*
- Integration*
 - Conceptual: Capacity Building*
 - Methodological: sample frame (links local to global)*
 - Pragmatic*
 - Field sites*
 - Conferences and workshops*
 - Web*
 - Strategic*
 - Collaboration*



Strategy for a Research Agenda

- Urban interests will increasingly dominate Canadian economic, policy, and research considerations
- Therefore Rural-Urban Alliance is essential to future research initiatives
 - Food quality and safety
 - Rural amenities
 - Ecological footprints
- Build national research capacity
 - Essential to understanding contextual conditions and processes for local communities
 - Most of the most critical processes are beyond the control of local communities
 - We must deal with these basic processes, not just symptoms
 - Unfair to lay on a simple Community Economic Development model as if it will solve their problems – this essentially ‘blames the victim’
- Build local research capacity
 - At same time we seek strategic alliances outside rural areas, we must build local capacity
 - Requires flexibility to local conditions
 - Requires local involvement in the research process
 - Local access to information
 - Local training to use that information
 - Local influence on the research agenda
- Match research resources to rural conditions
 - Higher communication and transaction costs
 - Smaller institutions
 - Greater variety of institutional demands
- Plan for flexibility, openness, and (short-term) failure
 - Issues are complex and rapidly changing
 - New approaches are critical
 - Resist pressures on private control of intellectual property – many of these issues can only be dealt with when the fruits are in the public domain
 - We will make mistakes but:
 - They are basic to learning (scientific method)
 - In the long run, they have often proven to be the basis for new insights



A Rural Research Agenda:

Make it –

- Inspiring
- Realistic
- Strategic

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In summary, we we are thinking about a rural research agenda:

Make it –

- Inspiring
- Realistic
- Strategic

- We would like to join you in doing this.

Building Capacity in Rural Canada

The Canadian Rural Revitalization
Foundation

<http://nre.concordia.ca>

<http://www.crrf.ca>

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