

This is a pre-publication version. The final version should be referenced as:  
Reimer, Bill (2010) “Space to Place: Bridging the Gap” Pp 263-274 in Halseth, Greg,  
Sean Markey and David Bruce (editors). *The Next Rural Economies: Constructing  
Rural Place in a Global Economy*, CABI International: Oxfordshire, UK.  
Publisher link: <http://bookshop.cabi.org/?page=2633&pid=2164&site=191>

## Chapter 20

# Space to Place: Bridging the Gap

Bill Reimer

The title of this book not only identifies the characters in our story (space, place, and the future), but it gives away the plot as well. It indicates that we are giving precedence to “place” over “space” in our analysis of rural futures. The value of the story, therefore, is in the details—particularly the elaboration of the characters and their significance for the cases considered.

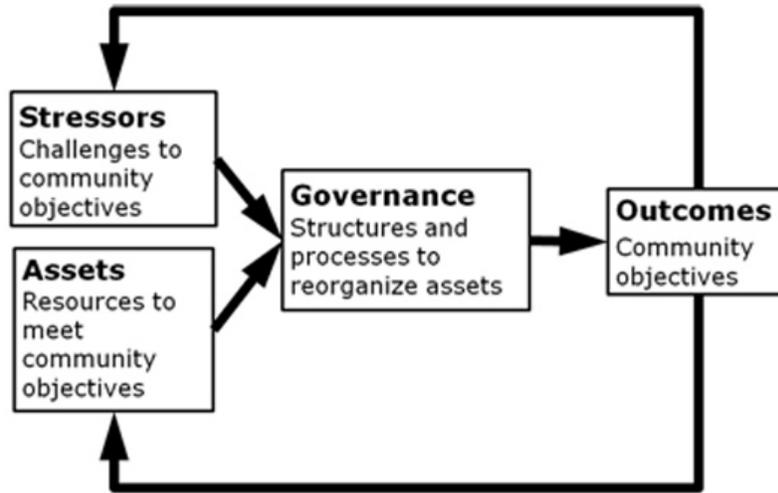
The value can also be measured in terms of the insights the story offers for policy and action at all levels: local, regional, national, and international. What can we learn from this research that will help us make more appropriate plans for the future and identify the actions which are most likely to produce the outcomes desired? These are demanding questions, especially in the complexity and change of current economic and social conditions, but they must be continually asked and answered since inaction is an answer in itself.

In this chapter I will attempt to answer them by focusing on the implications of a place-based approach for analysis, policy development, strategic action, and research. Drawing upon the discussions and insights of the other chapters, I will outline a framework for thinking about possible futures for rural areas, then use it to consider how policy makers and rural citizens might position themselves for these futures—starting from the places in which they live. Finally, I will identify several research directions that are suggested by the analysis and the rich descriptive and analytical material found throughout this book.

## A Framework for Community Change

We find it useful to think about community change processes and choices using a systems perspective that focuses on places, communities, regions, or networks as somewhat integrated systems. It is particularly attractive since it provides a way to integrate space and place-based perspectives, highlight the ways in which choices are made, and appropriately represent the complex ways in which all elements of the system interact. Outcomes of the choices are themselves part of the ongoing process of system adaptation and change, for

example (Figure 1). This framework can also be used for the analysis of multiple levels since individual, regional, or national levels can be substituted for communities in the figure.



**Figure 1.** Community and regional systems (adapted from Alasia *et al.*, 2008).

Using this framework, outcomes are considered to be the result of three sets of factors. The first set includes the stressors that affect the place, region, or other unit of analysis. These stressors can be a wide range of things, both “good” and “bad,” but they are generally the many events, crises, and trends that affect the fate of communities or regions. In the literature, they are often discussed from a space-based point of view, which emphasizes the general over the specific. In line with the objectives for this book, we will focus on the trends that are likely to significantly affect rural places into the future.

The second set of factors refers to the assets of the community, region, network, or system being considered. These can be the natural resources, amenities, and/or the financial, human, and social characteristics of the region or community—the things that can be mobilized to deal with the stressors. The difference between a stressor and an asset is not hard and fast. Stressors can become assets and vice versa. But as we shall see, we prefer to treat them as separate at this point and conceptualize this interdependence as part of the overall dynamic of the system. The location-specific nature and structure of assets mean that they are usually discussed in the context of place-based orientations.

The third set of factors affecting the outcomes is the governance arrangements and actions that facilitate the reorganization and mobilization of assets in new ways to meet the challenges of the stressors—with any luck producing the anticipated outcomes for the community. These factors are addressed by most of the chapters in this book, either in terms of the limitations of current governance arrangements (see Cawley, Harrington, Markey, Ramsey, Woods) or in terms of the innovations that have emerged in response to local challenges (see Bryant, Che, Loudiyi, Vodden).

This framework is relevant for analysing a wide variety of outcomes—economic, social, political, and cultural. Our focus on rural communities and regions means that our

primary concern is with outcomes of relevance to these places, but the framework can be used to consider outcomes at many other levels as well, from individual to national.

Since this is a dynamic system, outcomes can become stressors or assets in the future, either directly or indirectly. For example, reorganizing the Miramichi economy in New Brunswick as an animation cluster produced new entrepreneurial outcomes, but these in turn created demands for services to facilitate the integration of new employees (Bruce). Initiatives to encourage greater use of the countryside in the United Kingdom have often been successful, but in turn they have exacerbated stressful relations with local proprietors over land rights (Storey). In general, the organization of the Canadian and Australian economies for a global staples market has been successful for national balances of trade but has created new stresses on populations, local services, and the natural resources themselves (Argent *et al.*, Halseth, Ramsey).

The framework described here directs our attention to the following types of questions:

- What are the key stressors that rural places are likely to face in the near and distant future?
- What are the assets they can use to position themselves for those futures?
- How can rural places and people best organize themselves for the future?

Using the insights and examples from this book we will illustrate some of the answers that might be considered—to aid researchers, community activists, and policy makers as they face the challenges of their specific places.

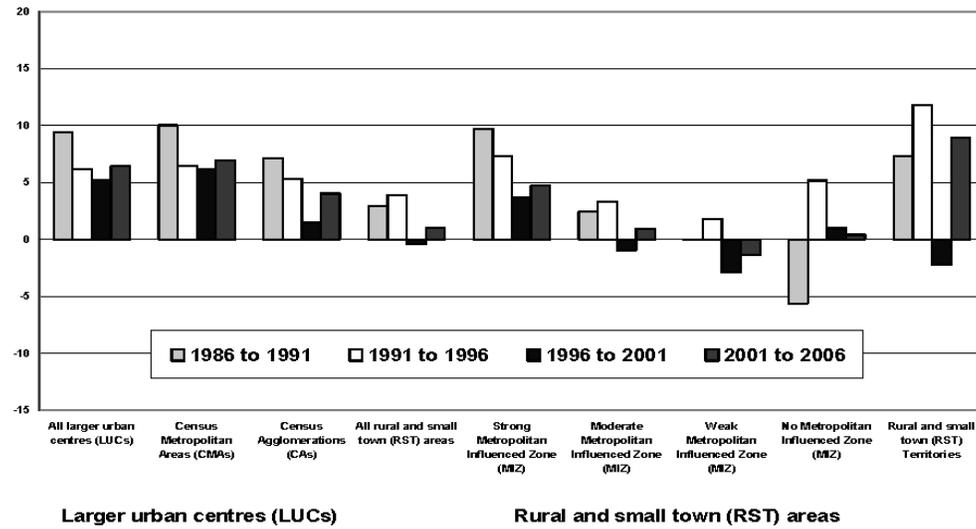
### **Key Stressors and Assets**

Our first question asks us to identify the key stressors that are likely to affect rural communities in the future. As discussed above, these stressors will be formulated in terms that are general and broad, with the analysis of future possibilities rooted in space-focused research. Urbanization, for example, is a stressor that appears explicitly or implicitly in all the chapters. It is assumed to affect all rural areas and is likely to continue into the future. In Canada, it has been a basic feature of society since the 1940s, and there are few signs that it will diminish.

Representations of urbanization have usually been articulated and developed within a discourse regarding the diminishing importance of rural areas in Canada and the sad tale of rural out-migration. This discourse is supported by general statistics confirming the rapid growth of urban centres in comparison to rural areas—a consistent, space-based form of analysis. By taking a place-based perspective, we can understand urbanization in a different way—one that highlights the dynamics of the framework we identified above.

From the perspective of place, urbanization is much more than just a negative stressor for rural places, especially if we see how the general trend (urbanization) manifests as different types of stressors in different types of places. Urbanization does not always mean rural decline, as demonstrated in the Canadian context by those rural areas in strong Metropolitan Influenced Zones (MIZ) and some of the boom towns in more remote locations (Figure 2). This means that urbanization-related stressors affecting growing places will be substantially different from those in areas that are declining or showing little growth. For growing rural areas, this is a story of in-migration, housing pressure, service pressure, and conflicting values about the relative importance of economic growth, the environment, and lifestyle, to name only a few issues (see Argent *et al.*, Bryant, Charvet, Gaylor, Loudiyi). For low- or no-growth areas, the stressors take the form of falling

incomes, a decreasing pool of volunteers, and often an aging population (see Argent *et al.*, Bruce, Cawley, Harrington, Markey, Walford).



**Figure 2.** Percentage change in total population by Metropolitan Influenced Zones and time periods (Bollman and Clemenson, 2008).<sup>1</sup>

In both cases, the assets and opportunities are different. Growth areas have access to markets, services, enterprises, and governance structures that are largely missing from low- or no-growth areas. If we are working from a place-based point of view, we should resist the typical desire to periodically redefine areas as rural or urban based on density or commuting flows and instead follow a fixed set of boundaries over time. If we take the 1991 Canadian census subdivision (CSD) as our identification of place, for example, and then view the process of urbanization from the perspective of someone in one of those rural places, we see the type of differentiation outlined above. From this perspective, 2,439 (43%) rural CSDs across Canada faced the stress of population growth over the period 1991 to 2001; about 3,271 (57%) faced steady or declining populations during the same time. Of course, many of them have lost their rural status in the process, according to Statistics Canada, but this is only indirectly relevant to us from a place-based point of view.

From that perspective—as Lovering (1999) implies—we see a very different set of rural stressors, assets, and opportunities. Metro-adjacent rural areas make a significant contribution to urban places through the supply of land, amenities, and lifestyle options. The massive suburban growth, which we point to as evidence of rural decline, now becomes a sign of the growth and significance of rural places. The challenge for rural-growth places is to manage that growth and ensure it does not result in the loss of the assets they contain—open spaces, relatively cheap land, natural amenities, and access to services (which are some of the reasons why people are moving there in the first place).

Several chapters provide examples of places where managed rural growth is occurring (Gayler in the rural countryside outside Toronto, Canada; Loudiyi in France; Markey in northern Canada; Walford in Wales), and we all know of additional examples where existing social and physical infrastructure are used to sustain a walking and cycling neighbourhood, green spaces are maintained, low-density housing is provided in an

environmentally and financially sustainable fashion, public transportation offers quick and cheap access to high-density areas, and commercial developments are established without billboards and neon signs. Growing places need to anticipate these stressors, consider the outcomes they want, and mobilize the necessary resources to ensure those outcomes—a governance issue to which we will return.

On the other hand, many rural communities and regions show little or negative growth in the face of urbanization. This usually occurs where access to a sizeable centre of growth is a major obstacle as a result of distance or lack of transportation infrastructure. Several chapters are clearly about these more isolated areas (Argent *et al.* in rural Australia; Bruce in Miramichi, New Brunswick; Cawley in several lagging regions in France and Ireland; Che in Michigan's fruit belt; Halseth in northern British Columbia; Harrington in the High Plains of the United States; Markey in fly-in/fly-out locations across northern Canada; Ouchi in Japan; and Vodden in rural Newfoundland). In these places, urbanization is most often seen as a liability that draws out populations, services, and capital. There often appears to be little that can or should be done in the face of these general stressors.

Taking a place-based approach, however, reveals options that are often overlooked. From this perspective, each place becomes unique in its history, assets, liabilities, and organization. Just as the constellation of general processes and trends has converged to contribute to this uniqueness, so may the place reorganize those assets in ways that modify the usual impacts of the general trends. Several chapters in this book highlight such examples (see Argent *et al.*, Loudiyi, Ouchi, Ramsey, Vodden), just as other examples can be found in the research literature (Halseth and Sullivan, 2009; Pierce and Dale, 1999; Rogers and Jones, 2006). By doing so, the authors and researchers challenge policy options that rely on space-based analysis alone.

As with urbanization, most of the other stressors affecting rural communities can be reconsidered in the light of a place-based approach. Since these stressors are likely to continue into the future—at least in Canada, if not in most countries in the world—they serve as a background for the consideration of future options for both rural and urban regions. The following are some of the most important stressors:

- The substitution of machines for labour is likely to continue as the value of human time increases relative to the value of technology (Bollman, 2007). As industries become more productive and price-competitive, they will require fewer workers, so turning to commodity production alone is likely to undermine population growth.
- The economy will continue to be global. This means that both competitors and markets are worldwide. It also means that our economies will continue to be highly dependent on transportation of goods and people, so they will be vulnerable to the price of energy and significant changes in our transportation technology.
- Knowledge will continue to be critical. This includes knowledge of global markets, knowledge about using the new technologies, and generally learning how to understand and anticipate the future. As we learn more about the interdependencies of our economies, societies, and environment, and as we struggle to understand the complexity, the importance of knowledge will grow.
- The environment, climate, and sustainability will increase in importance. Rural areas are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change because of their heavy reliance on natural resources and the weather. Urban areas will feel those effects because of their dependence on rural areas.

- Immigration will continue to be a necessity for Canada into the future, as it has been in the past. Since we are no longer reproducing ourselves, we will depend on newcomers for much of our labour and innovation. Rural areas will be particularly affected as their traditional cultural homogeneity is challenged to integrate different customs and perspectives.

The challenge for rural places is to find or create the assets that will help them deal with these stressors and their varied manifestations at the local level. In some cases this means making use of assets that were overlooked in the past, in some cases it means redefining the traditional assets in new ways, and in other cases it means creating the necessary assets through innovation and imagination. All cases involve considerable effort with respect to the third element of our framework: governance processes at multiple levels.

## Governance

The issue of governance directly relates to our third question: How can rural places and people best organize themselves for the future? Several chapters in this book provide suggestions and examples in response to this question. Argent *et al.* and Vodden, for example, point out how focusing on the reorganization of local assets in innovative ways may be a more useful approach than trying to create new assets. Bruce explores how we might reorganize governance into regional clusters so we can redefine neighbouring communities as local assets for development rather than competitors and liabilities. Cawley reminds us that such reorganization should take place across sectors to maximize coordination and innovation opportunities. Bryant, Loudiyi, Markey, Ouchi, and Walford each provide additional examples of the ways in which this reorganization might take place.

But we are also warned that this regional approach is fraught with challenges. Storey shows us how relying on regional and local partnerships can produce new forms of social exclusion—either as a reflection of the partners’ commitments or as a result of local capacities. Gayler illustrates how the changing power relations inherent in regional reorganization may threaten traditional alliances and undermine the collaboration necessary to make regional management work. Ramsey points out how the local, regional, and sectoral histories of places can significantly modify efforts to diversify for greater sustainability, and Harrington highlights the importance of environmental conditions that can challenge regional vulnerability.

### *Example: Governing Across Communities*

Details of the challenges presented by regional approaches in the Canadian context can be found in a comparison of Alberta and Quebec. The governments of both provinces 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. However, the institutional contexts of these two provinces are considerably different, reinforcing Loudiyi’s point about the importance of institutions for defining “place.”

During the early 1990s, Quebec established 86 *municipalités régionales de comté* (MRCs or regional county municipalities) and 18 *territoires équivalents à une MRC* (TEs or “territories equivalent to an MRC”). These boards provide county-level and some city-level venues where municipal officials can meet to debate and decide issues including

social programs, territorial planning, economic development, and employment assistance. The emphasis is typically on regional development—across sectors and inclusive of social development. The MRCs and TEs are in turn grouped into 17 administrative regions responsible for the distribution of development funding and intra-level collaboration.

In Alberta, the approach was more *laissez-faire* in nature. As a result of several provincial initiatives, in 2000 the government established a mechanism by which municipalities could come together in regional economic development alliances (REDA). At present there are 14 REDAs throughout the province, in which over 250 communities are involved. These organizations are self-selected alliances of governments, businesses, and local institutions with the primary objective of economic development. The provincial government plays a supportive role, providing advice and financing based on proposals and business plans.

The results have been dramatically different at the local level. In Quebec there are many examples of regional initiatives tailored to local conditions that in turn provide a basis for second-order activities in small places. The initiatives are frequently broad-based—including economic, social, health, environmental, and cultural elements in independent or coordinated activities. 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. As well, they have learned 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. It now allocates responsibility to the regional boards for a wide range of economic and social policy and programs, and (most importantly) it shows its confidence in the decisions and accountability of the MRCs. This makes the governance of the province more efficient and more effective. This system of consultation has become even more elaborate with the recent emergence of regional roundtables, which are adapted to more issue-focused and regional-specific objectives.

In Alberta, the situation is different. The 14 REDAs involve about 75% of the province's municipalities. Many of them have ongoing projects, primarily focusing on growth, retaining businesses, marketing, identifying opportunities, and attracting investment (Government of Alberta, 2009a). Even the discussion of community development has a distinct focus on economic issues over social or environmental concerns (Government of Alberta, 2009b). Many municipalities, on the other hand, were unable to move beyond their protectionist traditions and reach agreements with their neighbours concerning the complex challenges they faced. They either denied that conflicts of interest existed or refused to discuss them in any but the most limited terms. In the end, the provincial government simply made decisions for these municipalities, pointing to the failure of regional collaboration, lack of accountability, and the pressure of time as a justification for top-down management.

Two lessons emerge from this comparison. First, the rhetoric of subsidiarity and collaboration must be critically assessed in terms of the results. Both provinces have remarkably similar articulations of their regional policy, but the implementation of those principles is very different. Second, a policy of bottom-up development can only work within a more general institutional context that supports it. Quebec established the regional boards with a broad mandate and sufficient resources to make them successful. Alberta created the opportunity for regional alliances to form, but granted them a relatively narrow focus and resources with conditions that matched that narrow focus.

It took Quebec's municipal representatives more than 20 years to learn how to use the MRCs—a period that was marked by conflict, mistrust, and failures. However, now we find that the MRCs and the regional roundtables offer critical assets for the municipalities, regions, and province. They provide venues in which the municipalities can express and negotiate their interests. These venues function well since the province has taken care to ensure that representatives of even the smallest places in the process are included, with little additional demand on local finances. For the regions, the MRCs and roundtables provide a forum where conflicts can be expressed, common interests identified, and collective action taken. Since the provincial government has come to respect those decisions and trust the accountability of the regional organizations, the MRCs and roundtables have also established a record of successfully acquiring the additional resources needed to implement their decisions. For the province, the MRCs and roundtables have taken on a considerable burden that formerly fell on the provincial government. Decisions emerging from the MRCs have proven to reflect the views of regional constituents in a reasonable manner, so the central government has felt comfortable leaving certain matters up to them. In addition, the regional bodies provide a convenient and sensitive source of information and intelligence for the province.

The particular form of regional government found in Quebec may not be satisfactory for all provinces, but the value of the principles remains. Local participation and influence are critical to reflect the unique circumstances of each location. At the same time, such bottom-up development needs an institutional context of strong regional governance to make it work. The inevitable conflicts of interest that emerge among municipalities require multiple venues for the expression, negotiation, and compromise that must take place before action is possible. Accountability and representation are necessary ingredients for establishing an adequate level of trust that will allow the system to work. All of this requires the development of a common language and understanding for collaboration.

*Example: Governing Across Understandings*

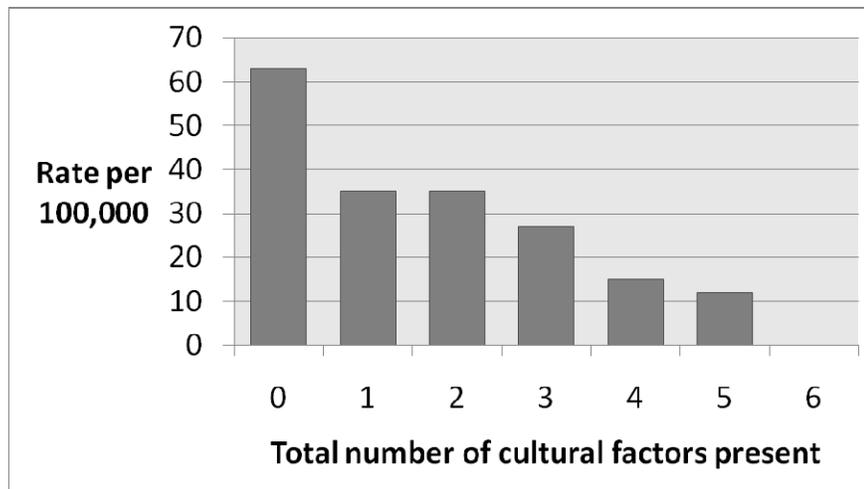
It is especially challenging to find a common understanding for collaboration between formal government institutions and more informal community agencies and groups. Our formal systems of governance are primarily organized on the basis of generalized principles, policies, and regulations—essential ingredients of bureaucracies. To communicate effectively with such organizations, and to access the resources they control, it is necessary to represent oneself, one's community, or one's concerns in a manner that conforms to those principles and policies. In most cases, this means identifying oneself in terms of the appropriate role or objective that the organization will recognize. To access employment insurance, for example, I must have a social insurance number, be registered as a worker, and have suffered the loss of my job. Similarly, for a community to access funds for improvements to its sewage system, it must represent itself in terms of the criteria appropriate to the relevant provincial regulations.

Such representations of individuals and communities are consistent with a space-based approach. Principles, policies, and regulations are formulated in terms of general characteristics; these characteristics are applicable to many different places and provide a common basis for comparison that is relatively ahistorical and generalizable. Expressing and negotiating unique local circumstances and needs, therefore, requires the capacity to reformulate those specific needs in terms of these general policies and regulations—a

capacity most often reflected in the work of community development officers, lobbyists, and lawyers.

Place-based approaches, however, are more often reflected in a narrative style of representation and discourse. This approach emphasizes understanding and decision making on the basis of stories, unique social relations, and specific historical circumstances. From a narrative point of view, we cannot represent ourselves without including the story of our parents, our unique history, our friends, and our associates. In contrast, the bureaucratic or essentialist approach is about representing ourselves on the basis of roles, skills, or generalized characteristics. 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.

Narrative ways of knowing and representation are closely related to an emphasis on “place.” A dramatic illustration of this comes to us via the extensive work of Chandler and his colleagues in British Columbia (2003). In their work on adolescent suicide among aboriginal peoples, they discovered a strong relationship between suicide and the failure to recognize aboriginal culture. In those communities where the history and culture were celebrated, the suicide rate dropped dramatically (Fig. 3).



**Fig. 3.** Youth suicide rates by the number of cultural factors in the community, 1993–2000 (Chandler *et al.*, 2003, p. 43).

Their subsequent work has led them to argue the following case. First, a strong sense of identity and continuity is essential for healthy personal and social resiliency (and is an important mitigating factor against suicide). Second, identity and continuity are rooted in local events, relationships, and history—especially among narrative-based cultures. Third, undermining the legitimacy and credibility of local history and relationships has significant negative effects on the identity of those closely connected with it.

This research, and supporting work among rural Quebec adolescents (Dagenais, 2007), suggest that place-based perspectives are important as more than simply a special focus of analysis for designing policy and research. They touch on a critical feature of our sense of self and humanity along with our ability to function in confidence and sympathy with others. The research also suggests that we need to aggressively seek to understand the nature of, and relationship between, narrative and essentialist approaches to the world. The

disastrous policies of the Canadian federal government directed to the eradication of aboriginal culture, the elimination of cultural and ethnic traditions, and the relocation of communities make clear that the eradication of narrative for essentialist approaches is a questionable policy. Instead, we are much better off searching for new ways to integrate the strengths of narrative understandings with those of essentialist approaches in order to build new forms of governance that respect local places.

The Carcross/Tagish Nation in the Yukon provides an excellent example of one way this might occur. As a result of recent land and governance settlements, the Carcross/Tagish Nation—along with many aboriginal groups in British Columbia and other parts of Canada—are faced with the enormous challenge of organizing their economic, social, health, educational, political, and welfare institutions. They have responded with an innovative and promising approach that bodes well for the future of place-based governance (Carcross/Tagish First Nation, 2008).

Each of their policy documents begins with a study of stories—primarily oral stories told by their elders and recorded with a view to particular policy objectives. They started with family policy, compiling the stories and studying them in order to identify principles and themes that inform the Carcross/Tagish people’s view of the role, importance, and nature of family in their culture. Out of these stories, they developed the positions, programs, and criteria that are necessary to merge with the more essentialist approach of Canada’s government and judicial systems, producing a policy document to guide their institution building and their relations with other levels of government. The final act was to design a dance that 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 that recognizes the people and places of Carcross, but which merges with the statutes and regulations of the broader government.

We include this example for two reasons. First, 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 that are better adapted to the idiosyncrasies of place. Second, 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 British Columbia, in Nunavut, and across Canada.

## **Implications for Policy and Action**

This brief survey identifies many questions that require further investigation. We can begin with those posed at the beginning of this chapter: What are the major stressors that rural places are likely to face in the future? In this book and elsewhere, we have answered this question with a relatively long list: urbanization, global competition, increasing importance of knowledge, climate change, and immigration, to name a few. But these chapters also illustrate how the characteristics of the place in which one lives will significantly alter the nature of those stressors—in some cases minimizing their impact; in others, increasing them significantly. Policies and programs must take those local conditions into account through research and the reorganization of governance.

Our second question asked: What are the assets that can be used to position local communities for the future? Our answers to this question reinforce the importance of “place” in the identification of assets (and liabilities). Each place will have its particular

constellation of assets that may serve to mitigate or build upon the stressors. But we also have something to say about the things to consider when exploring potential local assets. Look broadly in that exploration. Consider social, natural, cultural, historical, formal, and informal assets as well as the usual economic, financial, land, and leadership ones. Remember as well that the successful use of assets is usually about recombining ones that are already in place rather than creating new ones. This is the message of Argent *et al.*, Bruce, Gayler, Markey, Ouchi, and Vodden.

Our third question—How can rural communities best position themselves for the future?—is intimately linked to the second and is also, of course, directly linked to identifying where people in each community would like to be in the future. In many ways, this question is the most difficult to answer—as reflected in the amount of attention devoted to it by the authors in this book. However, they provide some important insights regarding the potential directions to follow. First, they illustrate how good governance is inclusive, involving formal and informal organizations, local and regional groups, all relevant parties, and all relevant levels. Second, they show how good governance can be difficult. Story, Ramsey, Loudiyi, and Gayler remind us that with multiple parties, there will be many conflicting interests, so we need to provide the venues for these differences of opinion to emerge, be debated, and be decided. Third, good governance needs imagination and flexibility. There are many ways to understand and manage the challenges we face, but the best responses often come from a new blending of them in place-appropriate ways (Argent *et al.*, Bruce, Gayler, Markey, Ouchi, and Vodden). Fourth, good governance needs a long-term vision. The example from Quebec provides an example of this principle, as does the Carcross approach. They both exemplify planning for generations, not just months or even years.

Finally, the chapters in this book reinforce the value of research as a tool for both space- and place-based approaches. Research has provided us with the ability to identify underlying processes of social change and the long-term trends associated with space-focused analysis of those changes. Research can also demonstrate the value of a place-based focus. This book shows how research can identify and interpret the anomalies in the general processes and trends, the many ways in which local communities and regions can reverse their fortunes, overcome deep-rooted trends and patterns, and create new opportunities for themselves and others through a focus on the special circumstances of their place. Redirecting our attention to the importance of place not only promises to advance our understanding of its role in rural change but also provides a more optimistic and inspiring view of rural communities. That optimism and inspiration are bound to produce the local action required for rural revitalization.

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## Chapter 20 Notes

1. For each five-year period, the data are tabulated within the (constant) boundaries applicable to the census year at the end of the five-year period. In 2006, Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) have a total population of 100,000 or more (with 50,000 or more in the urban core) and include all neighbouring towns and municipalities where 50% or more of the workforce commutes to the urban core. Census Agglomerations (CAs) have 10,000 or more in the urban core and include all neighbouring towns and municipalities where 50% or more of the workforce commutes to the urban core. Metropolitan Influenced Zones (MIZ) are assigned on the basis of the share of the workforce that commutes to any CMA or CA. In a strong MIZ, 30% or more commute; moderate MIZ, 5% to 29%; weak MIZ, 1% to 5%; no MIZ, no commuters.

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