

Chapter 1

The Next Rural Economies

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The Next Rural Economies brings together rural and small-town scholars from seven OECD countries to present essays on the possible future of rural development. Past approaches to rural development have tended to focus on the “space economy,” implying attention to comparative advantages, natural-resource endowments, and development strategies that sought mainly to overcome the cost of distance. Through the cumulative efforts of rural development practitioners and researchers, this space-based approach is being challenged and complemented by a recognition of the growing importance of “place-based economies.” A place-based approach to rural development means that the unique attributes and assets of individual communities and regions now underscore their attractiveness for particular and contextually appropriate types of activities and investments.

The dynamics and functional attributes of place provided the purpose and substance of a workshop held in the spring of 2008 at the University of Northern British Columbia, “Space to Place: The Next Rural Economies.” The participants all shared a common focus in their work on rural community and regional development, and the workshop provided a framework for sharing and advancing our understanding of place-based approaches to rural development. The production of this volume was a key workshop objective from the outset, allowing us to identify core themes for participants to reference in their chapters (see below). This continuity of purpose and reflection facilitated a robust comparative treatment of the rural experience in each country setting.

The common themes that emerge in the following chapters do so despite the tremendous variety of rural places that are represented in the research. Defining “rural” is highly dependent on the variables one wishes to prioritize—population (Statistics Canada, 1999); density (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1994); economic features, ecological systems, or social characteristics (Hoggart and Buller, 1987). Given the diversity of rural places represented by the authors of this volume, we are drawn to the definitional continuum described by Cloke (1977) and its expression as “degrees of rurality,” conceptualized by du Plessis *et al.* (2002), as a way of uniting these stories under the rural banner. The degrees of rurality encompass a wide range of rural characteristics (and urban influences) and also allow for the self-expression and identification of rural peoples, whose communities may lie outside the narrow indicator parameters of a particular definition of rural, but who still consider themselves to be rural residents.

Regardless of how the specific communities and regions are defined, the stories in this text combine to inform us of the continued relevance of rural areas. This relevance comes in many forms, including the production of *food*; connection to *resources* as factors of production, sources of economic dependency, or sites for conservation; places of *cultural* importance, contributing to broader regional or national identities; and also as important

places for the overall trend toward *localization*, which is being driven by both cultural preference (e.g., local food production, buy-local campaigns, and resistance to the homogenization of globalization) and by factors of production (i.e., changes in the cost structures of distance as determined by the price of energy).

The authors of these chapters remind us that rural matters, but in ways that are in a state of almost constant flux. The 21st century is defined by fast-paced change. The implications for rural and small-town places are that any solution to current economic circumstances will soon need to be revisited or revitalized. In other words, if you create success today, you had better start planning for the next transition starting tomorrow. Attention in the global economy to flexibility and responsiveness requires continuous attention to our rural and small-town economic development processes. This attention signals a call for a return to intervention, albeit in different forms than in the past. New understandings of competitiveness and conceptualizations of a *new* rural economy have underlined the importance of making strategic investments in the physical and social infrastructure of a community—i.e., investments in *place*. These chapters teach us that doing things, at the local and regional level, matters and that not doing things has consequences. As a common theme, “place” has re-emerged as a fundamental ingredient within the rural economy, where territory matters more than sector and competitive advantage more than comparative advantage.

In the remainder of this chapter, we will expand upon our understanding of the differences between, and the significance of, space and place to rural development. We will identify and describe core themes and related issues that we use to bring conceptual coherence to the volume. Finally, we will provide brief chapter summaries to guide readers to specific articles of interest and also to provide a sense of the scope of the entire text.

Understanding Space and Place

Championing place over space is not new to research and analytical materials. It is a theme that has gained prominence in geography, sociology, and economics over the last few decades (Bradford, 2005; Harvey, 1990; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2006; Partridge and Rickman, 2008). What is relatively new, however, is an elaboration of the implications it may have for policy and local action. It is for this reason that we have grounded our discussion in rural futures and considered how a place-based focus will provide useful insights and suggestions for such action. Our first task, therefore, is to clarify the significance of a focus on place and its differentiation from a focus on space.

Space and place are largely metaphoric concepts. Places are located in space, and the tools we use for identifying spaces (height, width, breadth, latitude, and longitude) can also be used for identifying the characteristics of places. The differences emerge when we come to use them for analytical and policy objectives.

An analysis based on *space* emphasizes the ways in which distance, density, and physical obstacles organize economic or social relationships and the ways in which we manage the world around us (Cairncross, 1997; O’Brien, 1992). Classic economic and geographic location models that represent settlements as dots on an isotropic plain, linked by transportation/communication corridors, are reductionist examples of space-based thinking and analysis. Researchers working from this perspective have tended to treat the units of analysis as relatively autonomous and then examined the relationships among their

characteristics and the spatial features in which they exist. Analytically, these “autonomous” characteristics then become the venue of policy and programmatic decision making focuses on particular variables, roles, or sectors. Specific individuals and the environments in which they live are represented by particular conjunctions of characteristics, and decisions about the future are made with respect to regularities identified in these relationships. Using this perspective, we have been able to effectively separate general patterns and trends from the idiosyncrasies of unique cases and identify the processes and drivers underlying them. Important insights about settlement patterns, service delivery, communication, institutional structures, and migration, for example, have emerged from this approach.

Our forecasts for the future are heavily dependent on space-based types of analysis. In order to anticipate future trends, we identify characteristics of individuals or groups, their physical, economic, and social spaces, and then trace the changing relationships among them over time. By projecting these relationships into the future, we can create scenarios for planning and action.

These insights about space have also driven many of our policies regarding rural areas. Settlement, health policies, development of transportation infrastructure, social service delivery, and even political boundaries have been established and modified according to the conditions of, and research into, population density, communication and transportation costs, and commuting flows. Even when it comes to community and regional planning, the focus on space has provided useful insights. Based on this research, for example, communities have been encouraged to identify the characteristics that give them a relative advantage in comparison to other communities and to reduce the space-related barriers that keep them outside the centres of economic or social power.

However, there are significant limits to the way in which an emphasis on space in general can be used to interpret our activities and empower rural people. The accelerating pace and transformation of the global economy in regards to such issues as mobility (of people, capital, information, etc.), the service/creative sectors, and others, highlight how the limits of a space-based approach are becoming more significant. Space-based analyses tend to be transformed from their descriptive roots to proscriptive objectives, and in the process they come to represent these trends and relationships as inexorable (Markey *et al.*, 2008), driving us to futures we all must share and over which we have limited influence. In practical terms, they have de-emphasized the ways in which particular places with unique constellations of characteristics and histories have reorganized themselves in surprising and innovate ways, sometimes bucking the general trends. These situations have become the stuff of a more place-based focus.

Place-based analyses follow Massey’s finding that general processes “never work themselves out in pure form. There are always specific circumstances, a particular history, a particular place or location. What is at issue is the articulation of the general and the local” (1984, p. 9). Such analyses also build from Bradford’s (2004, 2005) observations that it is in “places” that today’s major public policy issues play out, that “place” matters to both quality of life and economic prosperity, that spatially concentrated problems demand place-sensitive and holistic approaches, and thus today’s policy challenges are resistant to simple sectoral interventions. In other words, place-based analyses emphasize the uniqueness of individuals, locations, or regions as a way to discern possibilities and options otherwise discounted or invisible to a space-based analysis. As a result, such analyses are usually more locally descriptive in nature, focusing on the particular conjunction of general characteristics in time and space, and the historical processes leading to that conjunction. Historical and dispositional explanations predominate over demographic and functional

ones (Stinchcombe, 1968), and the significance of perception, identity, representations, and social construction are highlighted over the structural focus emphasized in a space-based approach. Place-based approaches emphasize the agency of individual or group actors over the structures in which they operate.

The importance of a place-based analysis is readily apparent when we consider the natural endowments of particular places. The physical location of a mountain, river, mineral deposit, microclimate, or soil type can determine the impact and implications for settlement, opportunities, and challenges of these places. This effect is made even more complex when we consider how these assets are understood, valued, and reconciled with local aspirations and visions of rural development. That these place-unique arrangements modify the impacts of general policies is a well-recognized feature, influencing economic policies and the application of a wide variety of programs—from capital and financial development to insurance and regional development.

The importance of place is not as well recognized, however, when it comes to individual and social behaviour. Policy makers tend to adopt the neo-liberal perspective that sees human beings as relatively autonomous units, able to make choices independent from those around them and free to move so long as transportation and housing costs are adequately managed. This view of human action has been challenged by researchers investigating the significance of social networks, cohesion, and social capital in supporting functional and resilient communities, industries, and economies. Rather than seeing individuals as autonomous units, they view human beings as centres of action, well integrated into a network of ties and guided by norms and constraints that significantly guide the options and opportunities of each person. Mobility, therefore, is not just a matter of overcoming the costs of physical relocation, but also entails considerable challenges in the reorganization of the social ties that are integral to our welfare and identity.

From this point of view, place takes on an even more important role. For most people, the networks that influence our earliest socialization and identity are geographically close. As we age, these networks expand, but for the most part they remain most intense within our neighbourhood, city, or region (Wellman, 1999). From the viewpoint of an individual, therefore, a social network takes on the characteristics of a place. And like a river, mountain, or mineral deposit, it is difficult to take this social network with you when you move.

Our state agencies have recognized the importance of social networks—at least with respect to those required for health, education, justice, and welfare. By providing relatively standardized services in key institutions, we facilitate the movement of individuals in keeping with policies requiring labour mobility. To the extent that these policies are successful, we can expect that the support provided for educating our children, for example, is equivalent whether we live in one region of a country or another. In general terms this may be the case, but in fact we find that even these state services vary considerably, and once we include the many informal and personal ties required for health and vitality, we are again forced to recognize the unique characteristics of each person's social place. Place matters, therefore, not only for its physical characteristics, but also for the social and institutional characteristics it presents for those who are connected to it.

Both space and place approaches are useful for analysis and policy making. A space-based approach provides useful insights for identifying the general patterns of community change and separating the relative contributions of economic, social, and political factors to those changes. A place-based approach, on the other hand, helps us see and understand the local responses to those changes—emphasizing how the historically specific conjuncture of

key factors and the particular perceptions and identities of local people and groups create new conditions that can significantly modify the general trends they share. Place-based approaches highlight local conditions, the roles of local actors, and the agency of individuals and groups. They are, therefore, particularly useful for strategic planning at the local level. If the new rural economy demands that communities approach economic development and renewal by reimagining and rebundling their assets and matching opportunities with aspirations, then a place-based analysis and approach is key to both identifying local actions and grounding supportive public policy (Apedaile, 2004; Halseth *et al.*, 2007; Markey *et al.*, 2006).

This book emphasizes place-based approaches. Our choice is strategic—for both analytical and pragmatic objectives. Analytically, place-based approaches have been underdeveloped and are, therefore, in greater need of attention to complement those using a space-focused approach. Pragmatically, they help us avoid the tendencies to homogenization, commoditization, and resignation that have been so prominent in our rural policies (Fluharty, 2006).

Integrative Themes and Emerging Issues

We selected four themes to provide a conceptual framework to guide each author in the book: rural restructuring, the next rural economy, governance, and rural investment. These themes provide insights into the structural dynamics of change in rural areas. They also challenge each author to bridge the gap between theory and reality, to illustrate the processes and practices that are actively constructing (or deconstructing) the next rural economies. The following section provides a brief summary of these core themes and a sampling of the many divergent issues stemming from them that are contained in the volume.

Rural Restructuring

First, the chapters that follow relay varying experiences with the processes and impacts of rural restructuring. This provides an opportunity to synthesize common patterns and critical differences in how restructuring expresses itself in various industrial and cultural settings. Restructuring may be understood as changes in economy, government, and environment that shift established patterns of economic development and political responsibility. This volume presents cases of restructuring as both crisis events that force a rapid adaptation and also as general processes of more gradual industrial, demographic, and political change (Bradbury, 1989; Lovering, 1991).

What is clearly evident from our time together at the workshop is that central to a place-based approach to rural development is a reorientation of the relationships that govern and shape rural areas. This involves new roles for governments at all levels, a shift in the dynamic relationship between rural industries and the places they do business, and increasing responsibilities for communities and regions to shape their futures. The chapters in this volume present a tremendous diversity of experiences and trajectories in how these new relationships are being constructed and maintained. While this is to be expected as we replace our general space-based perspective of rural development with a more magnified lens that allows the specificities of place to emerge into view, there remain striking

commonalities in the “push” and “pull” forces that are driving change in the rural experience.

Push factors include the cumulative impacts of government and industry restructuring over the past three decades. Government withdrawal has been a steady trend under the influence of neo-liberalism and managerialism, dramatically reshaping the relationship between rural places and their traditional senior-government stewards. Similarly, the relationship between industry and the communities/regions where they operate, so prominent in the construction of rural places in the postwar period, has been all but severed down to the sinews of a flexible workforce—one that is sometimes not even local. The impacts of these restructuring processes have been severe for many rural areas, leading to population declines and a cascading effect of dwindling services. For other communities, however, the removal of these structural forces has allowed a blossoming of innovation and place-based identity, leading to highly variegated conditions across our rural examples.

Positive dimensions of place emergence represent the pull factors that are also driving rural change. Communities and regions are organizing themselves, constructing their own visions of development, and establishing innovative networks and responses to new economic opportunities. This form of place-based development, as we will see in the following chapters, is highly dependent on rural capacity (often aided by new forms and types of relationships with government and industry). Nevertheless, the localization and diversification of the rural economy, which are by-products of the place-based approach, present exciting possible futures and lessons for rural areas that are mired in the shock and decline of restructuring.

The Next Rural Economy

Second, while an economic imperative to rural development remains, there is now greater consideration of culture, environment, and community issues and implications. These additional issues are now well-recognized and sought-after assets in the new economy. The chapters in this volume provide valuable lessons and stories of rural development that draw from these and other place-based assets. Importantly, the view that emerges of the next rural economy remains grounded in many of the traditional assets of rural places—the resource sector, natural amenities, and small-town lifestyle—but involves thinking about and mobilizing these assets in different ways. This is important because it does not alienate the existing rural economy and its people in the process of transition. Other critical themes that emerge in the volume include the importance of connectivity, rural innovation, lifestyle, and quality of life—traditional rural strengths that now take on increased importance.

Connectivity

Rural and small-town places have thrived or withered depending on the availability of connected infrastructure. The re-equipping of rural and small-town places to be more competitive in the global economy means attention to “old economy” infrastructure, including roads, rail, airports, and other connecting infrastructure. In addition, places must be equipped to connect with the new economy through the communications tools of that economy, mainly advanced information and communications technologies. The ability to move information is a critical component of the knowledge economy, and if places are to mobilize local assets, they will need to be active in that economy. The “next labour force”

demands electronic connectivity to the global community at the same time as it values the quality of life that still defines rural and small town places. Finally, connectivity is identified in a number of chapters as being crucial to networking across communities with similar interests in order to establish a regional identity or scale-up successful community interventions.

Innovation

In a fast-paced global economy, places need to be flexible and responsive to new opportunities. Establishing place-based flexibility involves attention to, and support of, innovation. Innovation refers to strategic processes of area networking and investment that can stimulate inter-sector and inter-firm advancement. Such innovation grows from the density of local/regional connections and is further supported by a recursive commitment to learning and ongoing human-capacity development. Depending upon the assets and aspirations of individual places, several of the chapters identify ways to support innovation through the creative identification of opportunities and the implementation of supportive public policy and investments.

Quality of Life and Lifestyle

Quality of life and rural lifestyle have historically been important for holding businesses and residents in small-town places. Increasingly, however, the global economy also demonstrates that these assets are valuable economic commodities. Looking forward to the “next labour force,” many of the chapters in this book make it clear that quality of life and lifestyle assets will be key to attracting and holding creative people and the economic activities they generate. Lifestyle is also a critical force in retaining residents and influencing their willingness to participate in transition processes. Quality of life and lifestyle assets in rural and small-town places are critical ingredients for attracting and retaining mobile capital and attracting the next generations of workers.

Urban-Rural Ties

Many of the contributors highlight the importance of an old notion: that rural and urban places are intimately bound together in a single economic structure. Each has a different, but connected, role to play within integrated regional economies. The debate in many places over the last 20 years has become divorced from this recognition of connectedness, and the research stories that follow inform us that we must renovate this relationship. The importance of connectivity between rural and small-town places and metropolitan cores is important in practice, in policy, and in directing our investments. A reinforcing point on the need to renovate our understanding of rural and urban ties comes from those examples of rural places that are being “drowned by an urban tide.” Development pressures that are not well integrated into thoughtful rural and urban planning processes can generate terrific pressure on local property and housing markets, and may lead to negative outcomes for rural and small-town places that otherwise may have benefited from such an influx of development interest.

Not a Case of Either / Or Solutions

One of the prominent messages inculcated through the following chapters is that rural and small-town places must approach the latest economic development “fads” or trends with caution. Researchers raise concerns about the “next big idea” and “flavour of the month” solutions that have so often come to characterize rural development actions and investments. The need for a careful and balanced multi-faceted approach that is built upon local, place-based assets and aspirations means that we should consider opportunities that emerge based on how well they fit with those assets and aspirations. Attention to purposeful development and a common vision can assist with the coordination of policy support, local initiatives, and investment decisions. In the end, leaping from disjointed opportunity to disjointed opportunity will be a poor solution for the effective renewal of rural economies and a poor use of our limited community-development supports. Such reactive policies and projects also contribute little toward building more resilient, vibrant, and proactive rural and small-town places that are able to meet the challenges of the global economy over the long term.

Governance

Third, new governance regimes and creative policy prescriptions are central to the place-based economy. Governance implies a re-drawing of the lines of accountability and control, away from centralized state power, to be dispersed among a greater diversity of local and extra-local actors and institutions. The following chapters highlight new forms of governance, ranging from formal structures of regional government ministries and development offices to informal regional networks. Common to these governance reflections is a need to consider new roles for senior governments (often noted as a gap in research of localist approaches to development) and the challenges that governance mechanisms place on local institutions.

Role for Senior Government

Most of the case studies highlighted in the following chapters illustrate a general neo-liberal-inspired policy withdrawal by senior government from rural and small-town development issues. However, also evident are stories of the key role that senior governments continue to play in supporting place-based development. Senior governments retain key policy levers that may enable particular local ideas to succeed, key fiscal powers to support needed investments in social and physical infrastructure, and a critical body of capacity and expertise that can assist locally generated development processes. Rather than simply critiquing government offloading of responsibility, these chapters highlight the need for a return to careful intervention by senior governments through partnerships with regions and communities that are now increasingly comfortable with identifying and collectively mobilizing toward their own imagined futures.

Challenge of Local Capacity

The burdens of restructuring and the challenges associated with assuming greater levels of development responsibility put considerable pressure on rural local governments and agencies. Given their comparatively smaller institutional size, rural organizations often

require assistance with building and maintaining capacity or with accessing specialized skills. Many of the chapters reinforce the need for continued attention to “continuous capacity renewal.” Place-based development demands that rural capacity-building programs exist as legitimate efforts to enable renewed forms of localized governance. In the absence of substantive capacity, rural development programs serve only to mask neglect. They also ultimately inhibit rural places from effectively and productively transitioning to the next rural economy, representing a waste of the original investment.

Rural Investment

Finally, a place-based economy requires active investment to construct and maintain place competitiveness. The dynamic nature of an economy driven by competitive advantage requires renewal and a reversal of recent rural development patterns that have largely ignored the importance of re-investment. In the 21st century, we must stop viewing rural areas as a “resource bank” from which to withdraw funds to support development in metropolitan cores. The future of both rural and urban areas depends upon a willingness to re-invest a larger portion of funds from the resource bank back into rural areas. The rural infrastructure platforms that have fuelled growth in all resource sectors are crumbling. The chapters in this volume speak to the opportunities that exist for rebuilding rural infrastructure using a place-based orientation, thereby enabling a foundation for development that benefits both rural and urban areas. Guiding concepts to ensure the efficacy of rural re-investment include the multi-functionality and coordination of public investments.

Multi-functionality

Multi-functionality refers to the potential flexibility of infrastructure investments to serve a variety of potential uses and users. In resource industry terms, this is the economic equivalent of moving away from monoculture forests or fields. Attention to multi-functionality can reduce vulnerability and enhance options for local economic diversification—even if those opportunities are not readily apparent at the time of construction. Multi-functionality also requires that we employ different legal, administrative, and even cultural processes in the design of these investments in order to accommodate different users and value systems. The pressure for rural landscapes to meet multi-functional needs/demands is widespread, and a failure to accommodate these needs/demands through a more constructive and inclusive approach will result in increasing levels of conflict.

Coordinated Public Sector Investments

While the need for rural re-investment is clear, many of the chapter authors indicate that there are limited funds available across all the national contexts for rural and small-town renewal. The core message is that if we are to invest our limited funds, we need to spend them wisely. This message is particularly prescient given recent attention to government stimulus initiatives that may free up investment dollars for rural infrastructure projects. We must ensure that we generate the greatest benefit for the largest number of communities for each dollar invested. The need for coordinated investments must also be built around a new understanding of competitiveness that recognizes the importance of community

transportation, communication, energy efficiency, quality of life, and related infrastructure. This includes the strategic value of building social infrastructure as well as physical infrastructure—an investment that reinforces local capacity and motivation to make communities sustainable. Here again, the place-based approach presents a framework for effectively integrating and contextualizing much-needed rural investment.

Chapter Guide

It is our hope that *The Next Rural Economies* provides a variety of contributions to the rural development discourse. First, the range of OECD nations represented in the volume provides an important lens through which to view and contrast both the similarities and differences emerging in rural development and policy. The book underscores the extent to which different nations are confronting common challenges associated with the structural forces of globalization, while at the same time highlighting and comparing the context-specific nature of local and regional responses to rural change. Second, the book provides a comprehensive look at the emergence of place-based development. Place-based development is often the focus of a single contribution in edited volumes of rural issues. By asking the contributors to this volume to prioritize place as *the* core theme of their rural research, the book offers a comprehensive and varied contribution to understanding the role of place in rural development and how it may be effectively mobilized to construct more competitive and resilient rural economies.

The Next Rural Economies is divided into five parts. Below we provide an introduction to each part as well as a brief summary of each chapter. We feel that the thematic consistency of the volume makes each contribution appealing to a wide variety of interests and audiences, allowing readers to see how different places confront common challenges of development. Nevertheless, the following abstracts may help readers find specific issues or community contexts that offer particular relevance to their areas of study, work, or community.

Part One

In the first part, “Demographics, Migration, and Immigration,” five chapters raise and discuss issues concerning population change. In- and out-migration, together with in-situ demographic changes, flow from and link to the changing economies of rural and small-town places.

The chapter by Argent, Walmsley, and Sorensen follows the story of two rural communities in Australia that serve as examples for understanding the broader restructuring that has taken place in Australia under the guise of neo-liberalization. The main themes of the chapter cover the persistence of traditional industries in rural areas and their continued importance as contributors within the overall economy. While these industries remain economically important, they also continue to bind local places to forces of instability linked with industrial and political restructuring. The authors illustrate the burden of responsibility that is placed on local actors (i.e., government officials, mayor, and councillors) when dealing with issues of economic transition. Diversification efforts are being grounded in a reframing of traditional comparative advantages toward more place-based opportunities for valued-added production and agriculture. The chapter illustrates the

persistence or continued importance of traditional factors of economic advantage, but reframed from the perspective of place-based development.

The chapter by Harrington examines changing settlement patterns across the Great Plains region of the United States. These small settlement places are set within a larger, rather more ubiquitous, space. Harrington reviews changing relations between agricultural intensification and the application of irrigation. While supporting economic diversification in the short term, the intensive reliance on declining water sources creates long-term vulnerability. Despite knowledge of this vulnerability, there has been a lack of diversification from agricultural investments across most Plains communities, often due to a lack of local leadership. Harrington's chapter makes an important contribution to the challenge of identifying place-based assets across broadly similar resource-development regions.

Furuseth investigates the impact of Latino immigration into a rural and small-town region of the southern United States and the extent to which it creates differentiated restructuring impacts on urban and rural settlements. Latino immigration into rural areas is creating new opportunities and a new community-development paradigm for the rural south. The author follows the development of immigrant businesses in rural areas that begin as unstructured, low-capital investments, but which over time build local capacity by creating important business and training opportunities. The study also shows that as the immigrant businesses diversify and become more complex over time, they integrate with non-immigrant communities, leading to overall rural revitalization. Furuseth shows how attention to immigration reform and immigrant settlement by both local and senior governments may affect economic opportunities for rural revitalization linked to these different business communities.

The chapter by Walford explores the connections between rural and urban places through an examination of migration flows over time. Following a long period of population decline, the Welsh study areas in Walford's research experience significant immigration after the 1960s. The author explores the source and destination ends of the migration chain and asserts the importance of local amenity features, economic development investments, and lifestyle choices as driving different migration streams. The net result is an uneven spatial process of population change that highlights place-based development across this rural Welsh region. The study illustrates the important role of place-based investments and assets in supporting demographic change and creating new rural economies.

Gayler studies the tensions and contradictions that exist between urban and rural planning in southern Ontario, Canada. Specifically, the author focuses on the challenges associated with urban growth and containment, and the conservation of the rural resource base. His core theme traces the importance of top-down senior-government planning and authority in directing place-based development. Senior governments are seen to have the necessary power and authority to protect and nurture such place-based development. Local and regional governance institutions, which have had quality land-use plans, do not necessarily have the authority or the jurisdiction to implement them effectively. Gayler discusses how the protection of the agricultural resource base in the region creates an inherent tension between the greater public good of regional land-use planning and the private interests of the farmers, who view selling out to urban expansion as an opportunity to escape the price-cost squeeze and an overall decline in farm competitiveness.

Part Two

The second part of the book comprises four chapters that examine “emerging economies.” In each case, place-based attributes play key roles in supporting new activities, but it is the creative action of residents, decision makers, and entrepreneurs that mobilize the opportunities.

Cawley examines the changing scale of tourism in the rural and small-town places of County Galway, Western Ireland. Galway has a long history of tourism activity but is currently seeking to grow the local benefits derived from tourism via an integrated rural tourism model. The core of this approach is to protect and nurture essential social and environmental characteristics in the area, rather than allowing additional economic activity to threaten or destroy them. The author identifies the significant supplementary economic role that small scale tourism activities can generate in rural and small-town places. Such supplements include both income and employment opportunities. However, growth in tourism activity is creating management challenges that may ultimately degrade the place-based competitive advantages of Western Ireland. Participants in Cawley’s study called for a more supportive and coordinated policy approach so as to mitigate negative externalities from tourism growth.

She examines a fruit-growing region in northwestern Michigan. She describes how the unique coincidence of environmental and settlement features have created a viable and valuable fruit belt. Recent changes associated with international markets and the global economy have exerted various forms of cost-price and market pressures on mid-sized fruit growers. To maintain viable communities and local economies, these fruit farms have turned to farm tourism as a significant additional opportunity for raising income and maintaining the viability of farm households. The conversion of agricultural land to urban and residential uses places a particular urgency on the need to find solutions for farm viability in this northern area of the United States. The chapter highlights how grassroots innovation, coupled with place branding and regional agricultural cooperation among producers, still needs supportive public policy in order to maintain a viable response to more generalized new rural economy pressures. By building upon place-based experiences and assets, northwest Michigan fruit farmers have been able to diversify local interests both within the agricultural sector and across new sectors such as tourism and “agritainment.”

Ramsey looks at rural restructuring in the new economy, providing case examples in Germany and Canada. He illustrates how restructuring forces are affecting areas of both countries in similar ways, particularly concerning efforts to diversify in settings with limited land availability. There are a variety of thematic dimensions to the chapter, including the influence of policy at different scales (local, regional, county, provincial, federal, and international) and the way in which local conflicts arise as a result of broader restructuring forces. Ultimately, these local conflicts are about differing views and approaches to redefining place within the context of changing local production.

Bruce’s chapter examines the application of a cluster development strategy to foster the creative economy in a rural and small-town context. He uses the animation sector, an emergent sector in Miramichi, New Brunswick, as his case study and looks at the overall impact of restructuring taking place in the region and the extent to which the Miramichi town and region have been attempting to revitalize themselves through a variety of development strategies. The chapter examines how the setting of place provides opportunities to attract members of the creative class and develop a creative industry that may merge into some form of a cluster through supportive frameworks of education and

associated economic development. The chapter also highlights many of the challenges associated with attracting and maintaining creative industries and creative class employees in a rural setting.

Part Three

The third part of the book contains three chapters that draw out specific issues related to “rural policy and governance.” A key finding in all three contributions is that the “recipe” for rural and small-town development success involves both strong local actors and supportive senior-government investments and policies.

The chapter by Bryant draws upon the challenges identified in a broad survey of rural and small-town settings ranging from the peri-urban fringe to peripheral places. Bryant links the heterogeneous experiences of these places to the themes of place-based development in a new rural economy. The central argument in the chapter is that assessing changes requires attention to the roles and impacts of governance and government structures. Bryant asks, “What are the most appropriate and effective forms of governance for transforming rural communities?” The key message is that while the ability to manage change is within the grasp of local and regional actors, senior governments continue to play an important role in facilitating processes. Drawing upon the specific case of agriculture in the peri-urban fringe, the chapter explores these governance issues in concert with the roles of researchers in nurturing and supporting local processes and action. The chapter finishes with a guide to co-creating conditions for supporting place-based rural and small-town transition into the new rural economy.

The purpose of Storey’s chapter is to challenge the presumed idealism of the “local turn” in rural planning and development. While recognizing the inherent values of a local approach, in terms of community empowerment and contextual specificity, the chapter raises a series of questions as to the overall authenticity of local development, using cases of “town branding” from rural England. Here, place-based development is seen to promote a homogenized presentation of rural heritage rather than an authentic representation of rural distinctiveness. Other barriers to attaining the local ideal include the professionalization of rural development as an industry, which further removes it from place ownership. The chapter stresses that many of these strategies may prove to be authentic or successful; however, the lack of a regulatory and facilitative framework leaves local development as vulnerable to manipulation as it is to achieving real empowerment.

Drawing upon the example of rural Wales, Woods argues that both space and place continue to be central to the futures of transforming rural and small-town communities and that distance still requires investments in infrastructure by senior governments to help offset the costs of space. Rural researchers and developers must consider the multi-dimensional roles of both space and place as they combine into unique and shifting assemblages of spatial relations. By understanding space and place in this way, policy makers and practitioners will be able to grapple with the complexities of heterogeneous rural and small-town encounters with the pressures of global economic change. The attention to place making requires attention to partnerships. Such partnerships, as illustrated in the Welsh rural examples, extend across public, private, and community sectors. The uneven implications of new rural economies need to be at the centre of our responses to cope with the uneven capacities and amenity attributes of individual rural localities.

Part Four

The three chapters that make up the fourth part of the book each directly address the issue of rural-urban relationships. In this “rural-urban exchange,” the opportunities and challenges of spatial relationships are explored through their impacts on place-based rural and small-town development.

Aragau and Charvet examine a rural and small-town region around the peri-urban fringe of Paris, France, that has been affected by the development of a new expressway connecting urban Paris and coastal Brittany. They examine how changes in the accessibility of the region have had several interacting implications for local communities, and they adopt a systemic approach for examining “life basins.” Their results indicate that while urban influences continue, there has been a more important shift in local trading areas and networking, which has resulted in more vibrant and resilient services and commercial foundations across the rural and small-town places of this peri-urban region.

The chapter by Loudiyi adopts a spatial perspective of the Volcans rural-urban fringe region in France and describes the consequences of economic restructuring as two rural areas focus on internationally known place-based assets. The concept of rural “place marketing” is a theme connecting the two cases. A key theme in the chapter concerns the importance of local identity and how a regional agglomeration copes with and constructs a new sense of identity. The chapter shows how local resources are shaped and appropriated by local actors to define a new local identity and provide for local, economic, and social opportunities.

From the perspective of a rural-urban fringe area in southern Japan, the chapter by Ouchi explores a suite of strategies being employed by a set of small towns. While urban development pressures may be ubiquitous, each of these small towns is pursuing specific development directions rooted in place-based assets and fitting with place-based aspirations.

Part Five

The final part of the book includes three chapters that explore place-based development issues in the context of “renewal in resource peripheries.” All three chapters focus on Canadian settings, and each describes how economies built on comparative advantages are being modified as competitive advantages become paramount, shifting from space-based development to place-based development.

Vodden uses stories of rural restructuring in Newfoundland and Labrador to elaborate on the tensions between top-down control and development versus bottom-up organization and initiative. The top-down/bottom-up nexus takes on a particularly dramatic style in Newfoundland and Labrador, given the history of strong personalities in positions of authority. The chapter explores two contradictions. First, the tension between “hero” dependency and strong local initiative is evident in Newfoundlanders’ struggle between acquiescing to senior leadership while also being committed to their communities and local action. Second, Vodden outlines the tension between the pattern of resettlement of Newfoundland outports and the overall centralization of the population over time versus a strong attachment to place, even if that sense of place persists only in the form of a recreational amenity.

Markey isolates the rising phenomenon of the use of fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) workcamps for resource extraction as a particularly dramatic example of rapid rural restructuring. At

first glance, FIFO appears to be the pinnacle of “place-less” development—completely flexible, isolated, and temporary. However, on closer review, it is clear these operations have significant direct and indirect impacts at local, regional, national, and even international levels in terms of economic contribution or opportunity costs, social and cultural impacts, and environmental implications. A new regionalist perspective provides both theoretical and practical tools for assessing impacts and for reconciling the place-less dimensions of FIFO with the place-based realities of rural and small-town economies in northern British Columbia.

The chapter by Halseth explores the case of northern British Columbia and the transformation of its forest-dependent economy. Examples from rural and small-town communities highlight the value of mobilizing place-based assets that fit with global economic opportunities and local aspirations respecting the future of the community. Critical to mobilizing place-based initiatives is the need for senior governments’ strategic involvement through infrastructure investments and supportive public policy.

Reimer’s chapter closes the book and provides a conceptual synthesis for the entire volume, using a framework consisting of the stressors, assets, governance, and outcomes of rural development. Reimer shows how rural areas responding to stressors and planning for the future must accommodate place-based perspectives. Particular challenges facing place-based development are the generality of policy and the policy process, as well as the difficulty of effectively and efficiently incorporating contextual specificity. Reimer draws from a variety of themes, suggesting mechanisms and points of inspiration that will allow a place-based perspective to assert itself, both in terms of local and regional development processes and at a broader level of implementing place-based policy.

Conclusion

Place has emerged as a fundamental ingredient for rural and small-town development planning. We must pay deliberate attention to equipping places to be flexible and responsive in pursuing their economic futures. Where territory matters more than sector, and competitive advantage more than comparative advantage, purposeful actions are needed—whether these are supporting public policy or local actions. Recurrent throughout the chapters, however, is a warning that our actions must be grounded in the assets of place and the aspirations of local residents. Assets refer to those potential characteristics that may support one or a number of economic futures. Aspirations are the visions that residents have for their place in the future.

The collective message voiced in these chapters is that place-based development offers a trajectory of hope for rural areas that have long been under the siege of restructuring. Importantly, this message is not offered naïvely, with a lack of awareness of the challenges associated with place-based rural futures. The stories told in the following chapters highlight the benefits of place development, including local ownership fostered by participatory engagement, efficiencies achieved through collaboration, and innovations in the rural economic enterprise revealed by truly understanding the competitive appeal of place. Equally, however, the authors warn of the pitfalls associated with false leadership, inauthentic place branding, and overburdened local capacity. It is the job of rural researchers, community leaders, and government officials to “co-construct” the re-mapping of rural futures that finds an appropriate balance between the contextual specificity of place

and the structural generalities of policies and programs that will help to foster the next rural economies.

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