

**Space to Place: The Next Rural Economies Workshop,
May 15-16, 2008
UNBC Campus, Prince George, BC**

Background

Within all developed economies we find that rural and small town communities are experiencing considerable change. They are changing as a result of resource industry restructuring, demographic aging and youth out-migration, the restructuring of both public and private sector services, and the ongoing implications of urbanization. Within this context, communities and policy makers are working to meet challenges and take advantage of new opportunities. To be effective, both local and public policy decision makers need a clear understanding of the pressures driving change, the opportunities inherent in such changes, and the creative responses of similar rural and small town areas.

To this end, the Community Development Institute at the University of Northern BC (UNBC) and the Enterprise Program at Simon Fraser University (SFU) are co-hosting “Space to Place: The Next Rural Economies Workshop” to be held at UNBC in Prince George from May 15-16, 2008.

This workshop brings together twenty-three rural and small town scholars from eight OECD countries to discuss possibilities about what our next rural economies will look like. Older approaches to community and economic development focused upon a ‘space-economy’ with attention to comparative advantages and overcoming the cost of distances. This approach is being replaced by recognition of the growing importance of ‘place-based economies’ where the unique attributes and assets of individual places now determine its attractiveness for particular types of activities and investments.

Dissemination plan

Although the speakers are invited rural and small town development scholars, the workshop will be open to local government and economic development representatives from across northern BC so that the dialogue from this opportunity can have an immediate impact. The resulting book publication will highlight responses to challenges and opportunities for both rural communities and public policy makers so that they can positively engage with contemporary rural development challenges.

Each presenter will explore three topic areas. The first is to provide ***general background on rural community and economic restructuring*** by highlighting particular nuances and differences. The second will describe efforts at ***place-based policy or economic development***, and its implications/lessons for rural community development. The third will consider current trends and successes as they may ground ***possible ‘next rural economies’***.

In addition to detailing general trends affecting rural places and regions, and successful place-based adjustments to those trends, we are also interested in some specific topics.

These include the transformation of seasonal economies, renewed natural resource developments, the role of amenity migration, possibilities arising from information technology industries, sustainable/green energy developments, niche education, and alternative models of public service delivery, transportation development, multi-functionality, transitions supported by senior government adjustment programs, and others.

Workshop Structure

Thursday May 15 will include paper presentations and discussion. There will be an evening dinner reception. A keynote speaker, Professor Bill Reimer from Concordia University, will reflect on emerging issues in the workshop discussions and the experiences from rural and small town Canada.

Friday May 16 will involve another full day of paper presentations and discussion, and then a closing roundtable discussion to bring together key lessons, issues, and themes. The closing roundtable discussion will be led by Greg Halseth (UNBC) and the purpose will be to link general themes and issues as they were raised throughout the workshop.

Organizing Committee:

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Workshop Presenters:

Dr. Neil Argent	Australia
Dr. Chris Bryant	Canada
Dr. Mary Cawley	Ireland
Dr. Jean-Paul Charvet	France
Dr. Deborah Che	USA
Dr. Owen Furuseth	USA
Dr. Hugh Gayler	Canada
Dr. Lisa Harrington	USA
Dr. Bruno Jean	Canada
Dr. Salma Loudiyi	France
Dr. Nik Luka	Canada
Dr. Peter Nelson	USA
Dr. Kevin O'Toole	Australia
Dr. Masatochi Ouchi	Japan
Dr. Doug Ramsey	Canada
Dr. William Reimer	Canada
Dr. David Storey	England
Ms. Kelly Vodden	Canada
Dr. Nigel Walford	England
Dr. Mike Woods	Wales
Dr. Greg Halseth	Canada
Dr. Sean Markey	Canada
Mr. David Bruce	Canada