

Chapter 10. Building Rural and Urban Common Interests

Bill Reimer and Mami Nagata

Introduction

Rural and urban regions have always had significant common interests, yet the awareness of this fact, the political articulation of it, and the forms it takes, change considerably with time and circumstance. The context of this change over the last 50 years is a strategic consideration for rural people and places in both Japan and Canada. Population redistribution, political representation, corporate reorganization, cultural preoccupations, and the ideological orientations that go with them have reduced the importance of rural places in the minds of most people and undermined our sensitivity to urban-rural interdependencies. This is a dangerous position for both policy and action.

Too often the issues of rural and urban relations are expressed as a matter of conflict or competition, where rural advocates bemoan the lack of recognition they engender while urban politicians rail against transfer payments to ‘failing’ communities and under-investment in urban economic drivers (Bergman, 2000). We feel that both positions are hazardous and assume a false dichotomy. Instead, our focus will be to highlight the many common interests shared by urban and rural people and places, develop the frameworks that make them visible, document the places where rural-urban relations are already well established, and suggest proposals for both policy and action.

A Framework for Understanding Rural-Urban Relations

Relations between geographical places are complicated, multi-level, and dynamic. For this reason, our first step will be to identify some of the key elements of those relations. Our classification rests on the many ways rural and urban people, institutions, needs, and objectives are inter-dependent, with particular emphasis on the ways this inter-dependence has changed in Canada and Japan. Interpreting rural-urban interdependence broadly by referring to circumstances where a change in one means a change in the other, we identify five aspects of rural-urban relationships:

- the transfers of resources, services, people, finances, and information between and among rural and urban places;
- the functional integration and complementarities of rural and urban-based activities;
- the institutions (both formal and informal) that condition relations between rural and urban places;
- the environments they share; and
- the perceptions, values, and ideologies predominant in rural and urban places.

These distinctions are not exhaustive, and they do not represent relationships that are complementary or desirable under all circumstances. Moreover, we can expect that policies and programs addressing them would have to vary.

The changing relations of exchange: goods, services, people, finance, and information

Traditionally, rural Canada has been structured around the exchange of resource commodities for international or national urban markets: fish, timber, fur, butter, grain, minerals, and petroleum products (Innis, 1995; Wallace, 2002). This process stimulated and supported rural populations and centres, but this has all changed over the last 50 years. The high demand for labour in agriculture, forestry, fishing, and mining gave way to extensive mechanization and technological developments. Primary industries underwent considerable concentration and integration, which undermined the livelihoods of people in these resource sectors (Reimer & Bollman, 2006). The government policies, which supported programs and strategies that provided basic commodities to the world, were highly successful program from the point of view of our balance of trade (Wallace, 2002), but they had severe consequences.

Many small towns and villages have lost their population as a result of declining labour demands for resource industries to the point that, combined with high levels of immigration, Canada's current urbanization rate ranks among the highest urbanized countries in the world (Hiller, 2005:4; United Nations, 2007). The rural has also become more isolated from the production and distribution chain and relegated to a smaller role in the policies and programs of provincial and federal governments. As private and public sector institutions were reorganized with less presence in small towns, urban markets, decisions, values, and perspectives have become more important than local activities and organizations. The current divide between rural and urban political representation highlights the continuing impact of these changes (Elections Canada, 2006).

Japan has undergone a very different transformation. Since it has had a more restricted trade policy (Odagiri, 1999; Goto & Imamura, 1993), rural resources are primarily oriented to national urban markets in Japan in contrast to the global markets dominating Canada's commodity production. This creates a different dynamic for regional or national rural-urban interaction in Japan, at least with respect to trade in resources. In Canada, global trade has veiled the link between rural and urban places, reinforcing the perception that the degree of interdependence is less than it really is.

This linkage is especially evident in the food system. Due to the globalization of the food system, most urban people are unaware of where or how food is produced. Only for selected products (e.g. dairy in Canada and rice in Japan) do urban people see direct evidence of their food being produced by rural people. In Japan, the distance between producer and consumer is mitigated somewhat by continuing family ties between rural and urban people, but in Canada, high levels of immigration and urbanization have meant that this phenomenon is likely to be short-lived as the generation of rural-based families disappears. The complexity of the food system exacerbates this situation, making the support of global foodstuffs an indirect and often invisible one within the commodity-orientation of Canadian agriculture.

Trade in services has followed a similar path. In Canada, both private and public services have become centralized and concentrated in urban areas. The replacement of local financial, commercial, and government services with franchise outlets or 'big box' stores has required rural residents to travel further to get consumer goods, education, health services, or recreation (Halseth, 2003). This has placed considerable stress on local services and has challenged the identity and social cohesion small towns and villages. Key institutional

boundaries for schools, hospitals, fire services, and physical infrastructure no longer coincide well with the traditionally identified rural 'community'.

In Canada and Japan, rural infrastructure has followed the trend toward regionalization. Spur lines of major railways have been reduced and reliance on roads has increased (Stabler & Olfert, 1992). Under these conditions with people now traveling greater distances for employment and services, commuting on a daily, weekly, or even monthly basis plays a relatively large part in rural-urban relations (Partridge & Nolan, 2004; Aldrich, 1996). As commuters, people are more likely to include shopping, services, and even recreation activities in their travels, in effect turning many rural communities into habitat locations for urban workers.

The exchange of information between rural and urban places has also increased significantly. In Canada and Japan governments have given high priority to develop their telecommunications infrastructure, including the allocation of significant financial resources to broadband services and satellite communications in rural areas. In Canada, this goal is supported by initiatives such as Broadband for Rural and Northern Development (Industry Canada, 2002) the Community Access Program (Industry Canada, 2004), and Canada's Local Internet Creations (Government of Canada, 2004). Although a rural-urban digital divide with respect to infrastructure and ability remains, the gap is declining except in very isolated locations (Singh, 2003; McLaren, 2002; Thompson-James, 2000; Diamond, 1997; The Economist, 1995).

Small, relatively remote locations now have some access to information and cultural products from urban centres, yet this often results in stereotypical and inaccurate representations of rural issues and life since most cultural production takes place in urban centres. This urban media focus hinders rural people's access to this media for local interest purposes and reduces their ability to learn about and to use this technology to facilitate their objectives (Harper & Yantek, 2003; Compaine & Gomery, 2000; Beckley & Korber, 1995). The Japanese government has responded to this challenge through school exchanges and rural tourism programs that bring urban people to rural areas under a variety of activities (Nagata, 2000; Nagata, 2002).

New functions for rural places

As rural and urban conditions change, the relative importance of their traditional functions is altered as well. In Canada, the importance of rural areas for natural resources remains as in the past, but the functions of rural places as sources of urban food, water, and recreational opportunities have become a source of conflict as a result of growing concerns with food quality and environmental sustainability. The Kyoto Accord discussions, for instance, have highlighted the new role of rural areas for carbon sequestration and pollution sinks. Similarly, the function of rural areas as an important source of labour has become much less significant as industry became more mechanized, and urban places experienced growing unemployment (Freshwater, 2002). These types of interdependences require careful reflection, for while rural and urban economies may remain significantly different they can establish new forms of integration. Although the resiliency and innovations contributed by the bio and socio-diversity traditionally provided by rural areas have been challenged, the importance of rural areas as habitats, reserves, and manifestations of sovereignty particularly for Canada's native people appear to be increasing. Thus, as these functions change, it is necessary to

develop appropriate ways in which their implications can be identified and addressed. To some extent this task is one of research and analysis, but it is also necessitated by the changing structures of the institutions involved.

Institutional Interrelations

Institutions structure relationships, bring certain people together and keep them apart. They also direct many of the conditions under which those relations should operate through policies, regulations, and sanctions intended to increase the chances that these conditions will be met. Even so, the impacts of institutions for rural-urban relations are mixed. On the one hand, they can create conditions where rural and urban people may come together. Departments of agriculture, for example, have the resources and mandate to bring together agricultural producers, processors, transporters, marketers, and traders from both rural and urban contexts to deal with challenges in agricultural production and trade. Institutions may also identify and act upon common interests for both rural and urban people such as food safety, pollution, and environmental protection. On the other hand, in both policy and practice, these same institutions may work against the identification and sharing of common interests. By focusing on agriculture production and marketing alone, agricultural departments tend to exclude consumers, municipalities, foresters, and construction trades, but a few of the significant actors that have an interest in the identification and enactment of agricultural-related policies and programs. By excluding important concerns that cut across multiple sectors and groups, such institutions make it difficult for alliances to develop or weaken those already established.

Even in the institutions where rural and urban interests coincide, the predominance of urban participants has meant that rural voices are weakly represented. For example, health policy through the training, financing, and evaluating of medical personnel is largely organized to take advantage of medical specializations that can emerge in large facilities. As a result, in smaller centres or regions, the population and infrastructure cannot support multiple specializations, leaving them without sufficient medical personnel to manage the multiple demands of general practice. Similar effects arise in education, social services, and business development and financing (Dever, 1991).

Canadian municipalities are also under pressure to amalgamate their institutional structures with nearby centres due to fiscal and policy pressures. Many provincial governments have introduced regional bodies for administrative, services, and development objectives. These new levels of government tend to integrate multiple functions, but not always consistently with local patterns of relations and historical alliances. Moreover, the division of government powers in Canada places few powers in the hands of municipalities. Although each province is responsible for organizing municipalities, their allocation of powers tends to be limited to local infrastructure and recreation, which means many municipalities are restricted when borrowing money for local development projects. Consequently, most municipalities are unable to respond quickly and effectively to local opportunities or crises and typically have difficulty building the social capital that would enhance such responses.

In Japan, by contrast, municipalities have considerable resources and power. Rural towns and villages have the responsibility and taxation power for primary education, health care, and social services as well as the usual infrastructure maintenance. Most have economic

development mandates allowing them to hire staff, borrow money, and initiate projects, so they are able to respond flexibly to local conditions and opportunities in ways impossible for Canadian towns. Nonetheless, Japanese municipalities are required to meet standards and regulations set by their regional and federal government institutions, and they remain heavily dependent on higher levels for financial and other resources. These institutional arrangements serve to condition the types of issues and the ways in which they might be addressed by local organizations.

Rural and Urban Perceptions and Values

Rural and urban people have values and beliefs that may integrate or divide them. In many cases these values bear an equivocal relationship with actions, particularly those related to economic and political choices. For this reason, an assessment of the shared and divergent values of rural and urban people is in order.

To date, research comparing rural and urban values and perceptions has primarily focused on marketing, environmental, and specific political issues. Japanese scholarship comparing rural and urban values is more advanced than Canadian, especially regarding marketing opportunities. In 2001, for instance, Japanese researchers in an examination of Green Tourism (GT) surveyed urban dwellers about their views and preferences regarding the reasons for their visits and their demands for rural services. The survey was distributed to 2440 workers in 37 enterprises and 1702 people responded (69.8 % of surveys distributed). They found, for example, that urban visitors spent time “bathing in hot spas”, “visiting sightseeing spots” and “strolling”, regardless of age. “Enjoying dining” and “shopping” were also identified as common pastimes. The survey results suggest that visitors spent most of their time in non-demanding activities; However, many rural villages developed programs oriented to more active visitors seeking new experiences. The survey showed how such exchanges vary in many ways. Older visitors preferred “shopping” regardless of gender, while family groups, elementary school children, and preschoolers often chose the “experience of farming”, “contact with small animals” and “field observation and bug hunting”. Family groups with older children or working people sought more intellectual interests such as experiencing “local traditional culture” and “learning history”.

The survey also asked questions regarding what urban people want from rural villages. The overwhelming answer was the “preservation of natural surroundings”. This percentage increased each year in subsequent surveys in 1993, 1999, and 2002, but local development did not reflect this desire. Rural Japanese villages are often crowded with billboards and buildings incompatible with the natural scenery. If urban people wish to visit natural or traditional “life spaces” in rural villages, this type of construction must be minimized. Similarly with respect to services, if urban visitors want local cuisine with local products, then urban-styled facilities and services must be avoided. By paying attention to these demands, rural communities can create opportunities for both business development and rural-urban exchanges.

Many urban-dwellers who participated in Japanese rural-urban exchanges indicated that they received benefits other than monetary. Expressed as a “communion of heart with heart”, this perspective reflects many visitors’ desire to get to know farmers personally. This more personal rapport encourages farmers to maintain their future production and creates pride in their work and lives. These values have stimulated a number of exchange programs integrating urban people with farm families. Further, some Japanese farmers make use of

direct marketing approaches that both contribute to their bottom line and provide more direct communication with urban people. Their aim is to give greater credibility to farming and recognition of farmers' "identity."

Comparable studies to the Japanese ones have not been conducted in Canada. Instead, Canadian researchers have focused on comparing rural and urban people with respect to environmental values and practice. One such survey was carried out in 2003 using a mailed survey to 4800 Canadians. Thirty five percent (1664) of the delivered surveys were returned (Huddart, 2005). Analysis of the data indicates surprising similarity between rural and urban respondents with respect to a wide range of general values, although support for environmentalism stands out as much lower among most rural dwellers. These results may identify important bases for common interests between rural and urban people even as they highlight key issues where sentiments may diverge.

Building Rural-Urban Interrelations – selected examples

Exchange relations

By focusing on exchanges, we can identify several directions for building interrelations between rural and urban people and groups. The development of niche products for urban markets has become an important objective for many rural places, whether those markets are regional, national, or international in scope. The developments of high-speed communications and reductions in transportation costs have facilitated the exchange of resources, services, and even people to meet these special urban demands.

Japan has used green tourism as one approach for creating employment opportunities and for developing regional resources of foods, natural environment, and other local products (Nagata, 2000; Nagata, 2002). Defined as a "vacation that includes staying in agricultural, mountainous, or fishing villages rich in lush vegetation and enjoying the nature, culture, and exchange of people," green tourism emerged in 1992 as a government program in the context of the liberalization of agricultural imports and increased international competition. A project promoting "Relaxed Vacations in Agricultural, Mountainous and Fishing Villages" started the next year (1993) followed by a "Law Promoting the Preparation of Infrastructure for Vacation Activity in Agricultural, Mountainous, and Fishing Villages" in 1994. Soon, green tourism activities appeared all over Japan.

The program faced significant challenges at the outset. Accustomed to applying supply-side approaches to new developments, farmers relied on infrastructure projects promoted by administrative offices. When preparing their plans, they changed the infrastructure but without addressing the life style habits, travel, and vacation patterns of urban people. This conventional approach for "cheap, near, and short-term" mass tourism often had undesirable consequences. By allowing local innovations, however, the program has produced several illustrations of ways these exchanges can stimulate the reorganization of assets and social relations of all participants.

A good example is the working holiday program developed in Nishimera, a small mountainous village of 1,600 on the border between Kumamoto and Miyazaki Prefectures. Unlike many other such programs, in Nishimera the farm host families pay expenses for the visitors' labour as the focus is on the farmers' agricultural needs.

“We pay the visitors not for their pleasure but for their labour, on condition that they combine labour and holiday. They labour for half a week, for instance, and holiday for the remaining days of the week. We provide visitors with an experience of relaxed daily life of the village in natural surroundings.” (Chief of Planning, Commerce, and Industry, Nishimera)

The program is only available when the farmers’ schedule allows and the farmers do not comply with all the visitors’ requests. Participants in this working holiday are engaged mostly in simple labour and unskilled work. Their primary asset is their sense of purpose and willingness to work. A host farm family that produces *yuzu*, an aromatic citrus fruit, said “The visitors’ ability is inferior in general to that of skilled workers but they can perform 80% of the tasks. A few of them are so able and work so efficiently that they can finish 120% of the job.” One of the most worthwhile outcomes for farmers is that they receive “value that couldn’t be estimated in money”: the personal exchanges with their visitors. Many visitors so enjoy this experience of ordinary village life some even wish to participate in the village’s meetings and events. The relationship often grows to reflect an “association of relatives” with many participants repeating visits to the same host families. Recently other groups have initiated similar projects using the “association of relatives” approach, but with greater consideration on their visitors’ ability to pay. Their concern is more with the satisfaction of the visitors so long as cover basic expenses are covered and the projects increase purpose in farmers’ lives.

Food has become an important basis for establishing rural-urban exchange. In Kushibiki Town, Yamagata Prefecture, for example, they established a rural restaurant, showcased facilities for processing agricultural products, organized farms for tourists, set up direct sales shops, and integrated businesses so visitors coming for vegetables are drawn into other facilities. One of the key target groups is “the baby-boomers” who, in their sixties, have “time, money and energy” for these activities. Many are starting a new lifestyle, including new hobbies and regional activities. As a major target for consumption, these people remember traditional Japanese rural scenery and have some attachment to its foods and environment.

Food security

Both rural and urban people share a concern with food safety and security especially now in the new economy when food production, processing, marketing, and retailing has become more concentrated, integrated, and global. The establishment and monitoring of standards at each point in the food chain have become increasingly complex and even minor failures in the system have had major impacts. Such concerns are reflected in the greater pressure on governments for regulation, but they also drive many of the direct marketing, bio-food, and food labelling initiatives that have emerged.

In Canada, some of these initiatives, such as the direct marketing strategies, Community Supported Agriculture, Farmer’s Markets, Farmer-Chef Alliance, Cooperatives, and Good Food Boxes, are having a significant impact on rural-urban relations. These institutions create a more direct and explicit link between the transfer of resources and services between rural and urban, while complementing rural interests in revitalization and urban interests in food quality, food access and environmental protection. Most importantly, they offer opportunities for both rural-urban interests to understand and share each other’s

perceptions, values, and ideologies. Also, institutions engaged in direct marketing allow farmers the option of regaining a degree of control over food production by not having to rely on the concentrated, integrated, and powerful corporate sector. This control is exercised when they are operated by a wide variety of bodies, including agricultural cooperatives, municipal offices, joint public-private ventures, farmers' groups and individual farmers. Direct sales marketing has become very popular in Japan through the 'slow food movement' where urban people travel by sightseeing bus to buy fresh and cheap farm products. Groups of direct marketing outlets have even collaborated with joint sales events where many direct sales shops are located in some regions. Some outlets are so popular that supermarkets and department stores request them to open branch shops. Direct sales shops in Japan are expected to go over six hundred billion yen total sales and the industry may breach the trillion yen mark if branch shops in supermarkets and department stores are included.

The direct marketing approach is not without challenges, however. Price competition has driven the prices down, making more demands on the management skills of the operators and organizers. Municipal offices involved have come to expect continuing subsidies and groups of volunteer farmers tend to place an emphasis on personal relations over business ones. Many initiatives are now faced with a quandary of reconciling the two.

Ensuring the water supply

Closely associated with the issue of safe food is a concern with a safe and adequate water supply. In Canada, this issue was brought into national headlines when people in Walkerton, Ontario began getting sick and dying as a result of water contamination from nearby farms. The subsequent inquiry and report was ground-breaking in its proposals, suggesting the development of watershed-based source protection plans (Pierre, 2000).

Other examples of plans in which urban and rural people come together in common concern over water quality are evident. The Miramichi Watershed Management Committee Inc. in New Brunswick provides an example of a non-government approach. This group emerged when a number of organizations and citizens recognized that a broad approach was needed to deal with the river's entire watershed and the health of its Atlantic salmon fishing stock. Now including representations from major forest and agricultural enterprises along the river, tourism groups, municipalities, and environmental groups, the committee works as a forum for examining the interdependencies between the environment and society for all stakeholders. Another approach is the agreement established between New York City and the residents of the Catskills Mountain region. Their Watershed Protection Program brings together citizens, businesses, and municipalities in a package of regulations that mediates their various interests. Japan has taken these examples even further. In recognition of the importance of rural economic health to water quality, a general water surtax has been established that goes directly to rural development. By ensuring that the rural economic and social infrastructure is strong, they argue, the environment and water supply are well protected.

Securing the environment

The environment is another issue that binds urban and rural people, for both share the air, water, vistas, and the land as well as the impacts of urban and rural activities. Urban sulphur and carbon-dioxide emissions weaken rural vegetation, and rural fertilizers and

biological wastes endanger rural and urban citizens alike. Both urban and rural activities have altered climatic conditions that promise to have long-lasting effects on our whole way of life (Wackernagel & Rees, 1996). Nonetheless, we have very few social institutions that can deal adequately with these types of challenges where the resources and impacts are shared 'in common'. Most of our institutions are organized on the principle of private property and the assumption that the outcomes of our actions can be regulated by market transactions. Government regulations provide some means to mitigate the negative effects of these conditions (the environment being exploited for its resources or used as a dumping ground), but they have been restricted in their effectiveness due to fiscal pressures, competing interests in private property, erosion of state autonomy, and the complexity of environmental-social relationships (Krannich & Zollinger, 1997; Coward, Ommer, & Pitcher, 2000).

Non-government organizations have made some contributions dealing with these challenges. Demonstrations, marches, and publicity events have brought some issues to the public domain, and institutional innovations have provided some examples of possible resolutions. *Ducks Unlimited*, for example, compensates landowners for removing land from cultivation to recreate wetland for waterfowl. Several organizations campaign to purchase forested areas to preserve biodiversity, while others serve similar purposes (e.g., the Nature Conservancy of Canada) through their efforts to preserve wildlife species, heritage buildings, or other rural amenities. Tourism is another strategy. The desire for recreation and leisure spaces has led many urbanites to work with rural residents to protect rural environments. A good example of this collaboration is the *Coopérative de Solidarité de la biosphère du lac Saint-Pierre* in Québec (designated as a biosphere reserve by UNESCO in 2000). Here local rural residents, park staff, and urban tourists are all members of the cooperative working to protect the reserve by providing opportunities for rural-urban exchanges and dialogue.

Institutional reorganization

One of the major issues in the 2006 Canadian federal election was the re-evaluation of programs in support of municipalities, based on the common recognition that the infrastructure for municipalities is weak and under-funded. Our research supports the claims that municipalities have inadequate financial resources to meet their needs, let alone take initiative on projects that respond well to local circumstances (Benoy, Lipton, Hagens, & Reimer, 2008), yet several initiatives have been proposed.

The Japanese sites in our research stand as striking contrasts to the Canadian municipalities. Their powers of taxation, fiscal flexibility, and initiative capacity has meant their ability to respond to local opportunities is much greater. A good example can be found in Ajimu Town, Oita Prefecture. Widely known now as the "Ajimu system", which attracts over 2,500 people per year to Ajimu, this membership rural home-stay system faced significant challenges when initially developed. The large investment needed to reconstruct facilities to meet the approval of federal regulations under the Law on Hotel Business and others was a major obstacle for most Japanese farmhouses wishing to use their private homes for tourists. To deal with this problem, a study team in Ajimu devised a membership system, so farmers' private homes can be regarded as 'temporary lodging houses' for tourists, as prescribed under the law, but not for "unspecified general visitors". As "specified members", visitors pay a fee in exchange for "the experience of rural culture" rather than a lodging charge. This system appeals to visitors who desire more personal contact. Every time they stay at the village, a

stamp is placed on their membership card. They become “real relatives” once they have ten stamps.

In Canada we find scattered similar initiatives. The ‘Hôtellerie Champêtre’ program in Québec, for example, markets farms and inns specializing in rural attractions – from home-grown meals to excursions in natural settings. Several others provide specific information and services to urban dwellers, sometimes to facilitate direct marketing ventures and sometimes for educational and advocacy objectives. Equiterre, in Québec, informs urban people regarding programs and actions to make ‘environmentally and socially responsible choices’, which in turn supports direct marketing through organic food baskets and community supported agriculture. The Toronto Food Policy Council partners with business and community groups to improve food security in the Toronto region. Cityfarm in Edmonton focuses on youth and children, providing them with opportunities to learn about “growing food, animal care, and the importance of the natural world” through school programs and other urban agriculture initiatives. Although city-based, these organizations take a holistic approach to issues concerning food and often include various food system stakeholders from farmers to anti-hunger advocates to retailers to public health officials.

Conclusions

By focusing on exchanges, functions, institutions, and values we have identified numerous ways in which rural and urban places are interrelated. This also provides a framework to examine opportunities and strategies for enhancing the position of rural areas within those relationships. We will outline several to conclude this chapter.

In Canada, rural communities are seldom major players in the exchange of commodities. Rural goods are most often shipped out in a raw form, providing some local wages and tax advantages for the local community, but little, if any control over the decisions, royalties, and trade benefits of the exchange. Consequently, Canadian rural communities must form alliances with regional and national bodies for intelligence and influence. This situation may change as the result of amalgamations and regional bodies that reorganize the institutional bases of rural areas, but they usually involve the reformation of services to local infrastructure rather than a major shift in resources.

In Japan, on the other hand, where commodity trade plays a smaller role in these exchanges, small communities have greater control over their local assets. Japanese communities have greater capacity to initiate and sustain local programs on their own or with more regional groups. The Japanese experiments with green tourism, rural visits, and direct marketing are all promising developments for increasing trade and visibility of rural places. The larger populations and close proximity of urban centres gives an advantage to the country as a whole that is not always possible in the Canadian context, especially for direct marketing. Still, Canada provides many opportunities for remote tourism along with the more conventional forms of recreation in rural areas.

In both countries, the shifting functions of rural places provide opportunities for greater visibility of rural areas to urban people and organizations. As the quality of food, safety of water, and concern for the environment become more important to urban people, the link between these issues and rural development must be articulated and communicated. The current preference for regulation over more collaborative approaches should be avoided to

minimize the additional burden on rural producers and residents. Similarly, caution needs to be taken regarding the growing importance of rural areas as habitat regions for commuters, recreational users, and retirees. The current institutional structures do not always allow rural areas to recuperate the costs associated with these functions or to control the decisions regarding their use.

As we have argued, the institutional strength of rural areas in Japan is much greater than in Canada. In Canada, the emergence of regional bodies offers some hope for improvement, but the specific boundaries, mandates, and resources of these bodies will make a big difference in their effectiveness for representing and advancing rural interests. At present, this is under intense discussion in Canada, most often with provincial governments playing a strong role in their design. For this reason, representation to those provincial bodies will be especially important, with regional alliances helping to structure those representations. It is also expedient for local communities to identify the most appropriate levels of amalgamation for particular objectives based on sound research. This research and analysis should include an examination of the 'New Governance' literature. This material addresses the emergence of new governance structures involving private, public, and civic sector partnerships that developed in response to the contraction and consolidation of public sector services and institutions. Innovations in service delivery and decision-making that include fair representation for rural interests should be encouraged as well as those in which rural and urban interactions intersect on strategic areas of interest: food, water, and the environment.

Finally, a strategy for rural revitalization must take account of the perceptions and values of both rural and urban people. This information can serve as a basis for marketing rural goods and identifying new goods and niche markets. It may also help identify which new functions are emerging and which new institutional forms are likely to develop through a revision of existing governance structures. Gathering information about perceptions and values will also serve as a basis for increasing the visibility of rural issues and interests. This can be used to inform urban people about those in rural areas and redefine the discourse on rural-urban relations. This is a fundamental requirement, if rural people are to be integrated into future policy, programs, and actions.

Acknowledgements

We thank the many people in the New Rural Economy Project (NRE) of the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation (CRRF) and our colleagues in OUR, for their contributions, insights and inspiration. Becky Lipton was particularly helpful with the preparation of these materials. We gratefully acknowledge the support of the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Rural Secretariat of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Health Canada, Natural Resources Canada, the Co-Operative Secretariat of Industry Canada, Statistics Canada, and the many rural people in our field sites and meetings.

References

- Aldrich, L. C. B. a. K. K. (1996). Commuting and the Economic Functions of Small Towns and Places. *Rural Economic Development Perspectives*, 12(3), 26-31.
- Beckley, T. M., & Korber, D. (1995). Sociology's potential to improve forest management and

- inform forest policy. *The Forestry Chronicle*, 71(6), 712-719.
- Benoy, J., Lipton, B., Hagens, V., & Reimer, B. (2008). Municipal finances in the new rural economy. *Canadian Public Administration*.
- Bergman, B. (2000, February 28). Winter of Discontent: Farmers are hurting – and afraid that a way of life is fast disappearing. *Macleans Magazine*, 113(9).
- Compaine, B. M., & Gomery, D. (2000). *Who owns the media? : competition and concentration in the mass media industry*. (3rd ed.). Mahwah, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates.
- Coward, H., Ommer, R., & Pitcher, T. (2000). *Just Fish: Ethics and Canadian Marine Fisheries*. Memorial University, St. Johns: Institute for Social and Economic Research.
- Dever, G. (1991). *Community Health Analysis: Global Awareness at the Local Level*. Aithersberg, Maryland: Aspen Publishers.
- Diamond, J. (1997, November 1). Paradise Lost. *Discover*, 69-78.
- Elections Canada. (2006). *Map of Canada, The 39th Parliament*. Retrieved March 29, 2008, from http://www.elections.ca/pas/39ge/39parl_e.pdf
- Freshwater, D. (2002). (Report No. Staff Paper 01-07). *TVA Rural Studies*.
- Goto, J., & Imamura, N. (1993). Japanese agriculture: characteristics, institutions, and policies. In L. Tweeten, C. L. Dishon, W. S. Chern, N. Imamura, & M. Morishima (Eds.), *Japanese & American Agriculture: Tradition and Progress in Conflict* (pp. 11-29). Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.
- Government of Canada. (2004). *Canada's Local Internet Creations*. Retrieved November 28, 2004, from http://collections.ic.gc.ca/e/clic/clic_call_e.html
- Harper, J., & Yantek, T. (2003). *Media, profit, and politics: Competing priorities in an open society*. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press.
- Halseth, G., Bruce, D., & Sullivan, L. (2004). Leading and lagging: The Long Run Role of Institutions and Social Capital in Fostering Community Economic Development. In G. Halseth, and R. Halseth (Eds.), *Building for Success: Explorations of Rural Community and Rural Development*. (pp. 306-336). Brandon University: Rural Development Institute and Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation.
- Hiller, H. (2005). *Urban Canada: Sociological Perspectives*. Don Mills: Oxford University Press.
- Huddart, E. (2005). *An Exploration of Pro-Environmental Behaviour: Evidence from a Canadian mail-out survey*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of New Brunswick, Moncton.
- Industry Canada. (2002). Canada: Industry Canada.
- Industry Canada. *Community Access Program Website*. Retrieved November 28, 2004, from <http://cap.ic.gc.ca>
- Innis, H. A. (1995). *Staples, Markets, and Cultural Change: Selected Essays of Harold A. Innis*. Montréal: McGill-Queens University Press.

- Krannich, R. S., & Zollinger, B. (1997). Pursuing Rural Community Development in Resource Dependand Areas: Obstacles and Opportunities. *Research in Community-Sociology*, 7, 201-222.
- McLaren, L. (2002). Information and communication technologies in rural Canada. *Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin*, 3(5).
- Nagata, M. (2000). Possibilities and Problems of Green Tourism in Japan. *Today and Tourism* (Vol. 1). Hosei University: The Research Institute of Comparative Economics.
- Nagata, M. (2002). Conditions for Formation of New Green Tourism. *New Development of Green Tourism and Rural-Urban Exchange* (Vol. Part 1). IE-NO-HIKARI ASSOCIATION.
- Odagiri, T. (1999). Nippon nosei no sokatsu to tenbo (Review and prospect for Japanese agricultural policy). *Tochiseidoshigaku*, (Special Issue of Commemoration Fiftieth Anniversary November 1998 Conference), 123-132.
- Partridge, J., & Nolan, J. (2004). *Commuting on the Canadian Prairies and the Urban/Rural Divide*. University of Saskatoon: Saskatoon SK: Canadian Rural Economy Research Lab.
- Pierre, J. a. J. S. (2000). Towards Multi-Level Governance. *Developments in British Politics* (6th ed.). London: Macmillian.
- Reimer, B., & Bollman, R. (2006). The New Rural Economy: Key Observations for Research and Policy in the Canadian Context. In M. Rogers (Ed.), *The Changing Nature of Australia's Country Towns*. Bendigo, La Trobe University: The Victorian University Regional Research Network.
- Singh, J. (2003). Factors Associated with Household Internet Use. *Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin*, 3(5).
- Stabler, J. C., & Olfert, M. R. (1992). *Restructuring Rural Saskatchewan: The Challenge of the 1990s*. Regina: University of Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre.
- The Economist. (1995, September). A survey of telecommunications: the death of distance. *The Economist*, 5-28.
- Thompson-James, M. (2000). Computer Use and Internet Use by Members of Rural Households. *Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin*, 3(5).
- United Nations. (2007) *World Urbanization Prospects: the 2007 Revision Population Database*. Retrieved March 30, 2008, from <http://esa.un.org/unup/index.asp>
- Wackernagel, M., & Rees, W. (1996). *Our Ecological Footprint: Reducing Human Impact on the Earth*. Gabriola Island: New Society Publishers.
- Wallace, I. (2002). *A Geography of the Canadian Economy*. Don Mills: Oxford University Press.