REMOTE CONTROL: LESSONS IN GOVERNANCE FROM RURAL AND REMOTE REGIONS

Webinar for Rural Policy Learning Commons
Rob Greenwood, Ph.D.
February 4, 2016
2005 Twillingate, NL conference; “Remote Control: Governance Lessons for and from Small, Insular, and Remote Regions” (ISER Books, Memorial University)
The North Atlantic Rim

- Cultural / Historic connections
- Sparse population dispersed over a wide geographic area
- Transportation challenges
- Resource industry dependence
- Labour market shortages
- Differences in national / regional / local governance
GLOBALIZATION offers potential for rural individuals and groups but does not guarantee it

Critical to understand how the ‘local’ can be mobilized for maximal benefit

Role local governance assumes in achieving these benefits

Particularly acute where ‘local’ is composed of small, largely rural populations isolated by distance and/or natural barriers such as oceans
KEY QUESTIONS

- How can local capacity be developed?
- Most important agents?
- What role do local governments, and governance in general, play?
- How can isolation, smallness and marginality in an increasingly global world be in fact advantageous?
• Iceland, with 330,000 people, and an area smaller than the island of Newfoundland, enjoys all the powers of a sovereign nation

• The Isle of Man, a Crown Dependency of Britain, has much greater fiscal autonomy than a Canadian province, with only 75,000 people

• The Åland Islands, far-reaching home rule powers as an autonomy within the Finnish state and a negotiated separate protocol with Finland’s accession to the European Union in 1995, population of just over 26,000
THE ECONOMIST, 2003

• Recognized the superior economic performance of small jurisdictions in the global economy – from Bermuda to Luxembourg, from Liechtenstein to Cayman

• Defying the myth that bigger and central is necessarily better in forging competitiveness
SET OF WINNING TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

• The ‘scaling up’ of municipal units
• The development of tourist and commuter-driven industries
• A strategic engagement with their diaspora
• A branding of niche products and services
• The facilitation of ‘boutique’, small scale manufacturing
• A limitation on local firm rivalry
• The creative deployment of the resourcefulness of jurisdiction
USING / STRETCHING / CREATING NEW FORMS OF JURISDICTIONAL AUTHORITY

- Subsidiarity
- Municipalities, regions and small jurisdictions have far more room to manoeuvre than they normally realize
- Stretch their jurisdictional authority to advance their development goals in strategically creative ways that are outside their formal allocation of powers
- Confident leaders who can work in partnership with other levels of government and with non-governmental partners, can forge new systems of governance
POLITICAL POWER VS. POLITICAL WILL: CANADA

Political Power

Regional

Provincial

Federal

Political Will
SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE VS. LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

Federal

Provincial

Regional

Specialized Knowledge

Local Knowledge
ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY FOR RURAL / REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Fiscal Resources
- Human Resources
  - Leadership
  - Skilled Staff
  - Community Participation
- Legal Authority
- Local Democratic Accountability/Legitimacy
- Geographic Area
- Time
Good governance is the key to long term sustainability

Communities, regions, and provinces can position and lobby for more powers, but they must also make best use of the powers they have

Explicitly considering:

- How they govern in any policy area
- How devolve authority / use what they have
- How partner outside jurisdiction
THANK YOU!

Questions?

Discussion?