

A photograph of a rural road. In the foreground, a black horse-drawn carriage is moving away from the camera. The carriage has a red triangular warning sign on its back and a person wearing a straw hat is visible inside. A dark horse is pulling the carriage. In the distance, a person on a bicycle is riding down the road. The road is paved and curves to the left. The surrounding landscape is green with grass and trees, and there are utility poles along the road.

Sustainable Rural Community Development: A Comparative Study of Canada and Australia

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Webinar overview

- The aim of our research
- Our approach
- Where we went and what we saw
- Six factors and the sustainability of Canadian communities
- What can local governments do?
- What can central governments do?
- Lessons for Canadian and Australian public policy
- Summary



The aim of the research

- To learn how small towns and rural communities across Canada were addressing the issue of their sustainability.
- How much should central government do for rural communities versus how much should they do for themselves?

Our approach



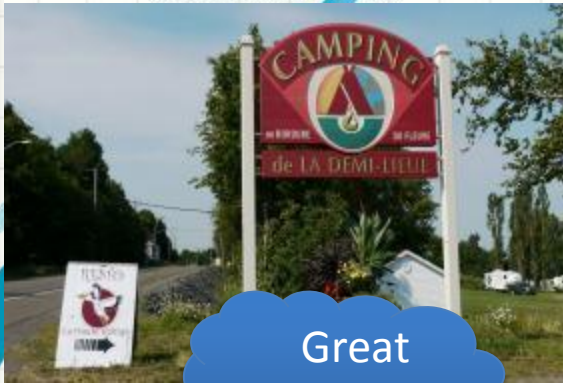
- To visit small towns and rural communities across the southern and Maritime provinces of Canada
- To interview the **mayor/reeve** in each places and ask them about:
 - **History** of European settlement
 - **Economy**: how to people make a living
 - **Society**: how do they associate
 - **Environment**: what is special about their place

The Research Team



Our approach

Travel mode



Great ride!



1989 Volvo
Paid total \$ 4,980
Sold for \$1500



The Cycling Team

John was joined on this journey across Canada by:

- Alistair joined me for trip across Canada
- Trevor joined us in Vancouver Island and across the Rockies
- My son Brendan rode across the Rockies with us
- Annie drove support vehicle across the country and had a few casual rides when possible
- Meg rode a few days and was in support team after joining us in Halifax





My research strategy

- Media -

we filmed all interviews & study towns



- Documentary & Documentation

The reports on the study of small towns are at:

www.sustainablecanadiancommunities.com

-Support of my network of University Colleagues across the country

Sustainable Canadian Communities

Learning about rural communities across Canada. May to Sept 2012

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Networking and Negotiating Leverage for Sustainable Development



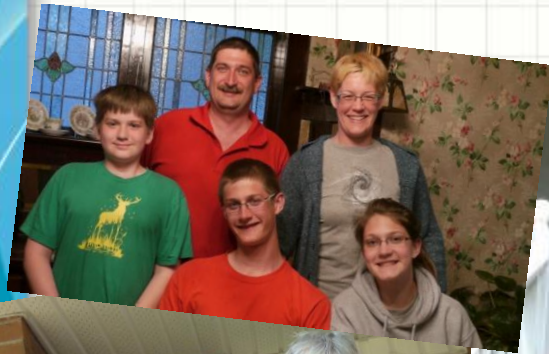
Posted on 08/16/2012

Local leaders must balance a focus on the concerns of constituents while keeping an eye on what is happening in the wider world; regional, provincial, national and global. Importantly they need to appreciate how both local and global changes will impact their community and how such changes will interact. Fly-in-fly-out employment, for example, can have perverse consequences in that it takes potential local leaders out of the community for large chunks of time, yet they bring money back home to support their family and the local economy.

ABOUT THE STUDY

This summer I will be travelling across Canada, west to east, visiting small rural communities in ten provinces to learn about the ways in which people in these places have adopted sustainable living practices. Like small rural communities across Australia Canadian communities are also dealing with significant change relating to economic, demographic and environmental factors. People in these rural communities

Our hosts, wonderful!



Some Surprises







What Towns did we research

- Port Alice, BC
- Golden, BC
- Hussar, Alberta
- Craik, SK
- Winkler, MN
- Terrace Bay, ON
- Huntsville, ON
- Victoriaville, QC
- Doaktown, NS
- Tatamagouche, NS
- Stratford, PEI
- Port Hawkesbury, NS
- Gander, NL

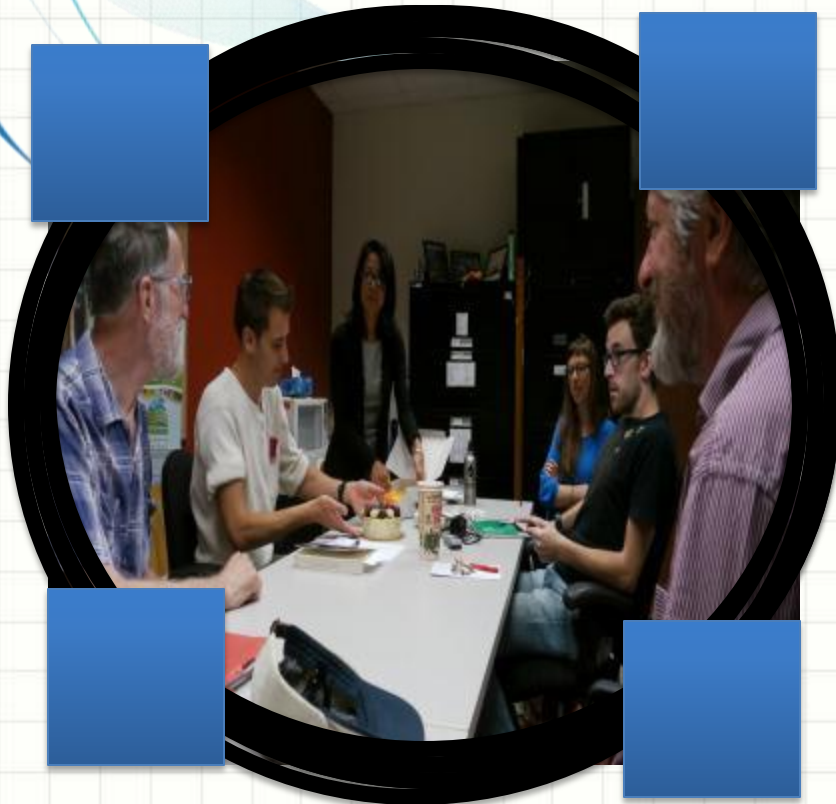
See on map next slide





Besides the Natural delights along the way





So what
did we
find?



Characteristics of sustainable Canadian communities

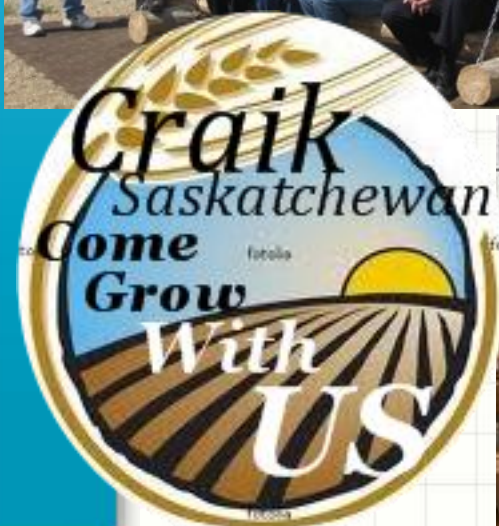
- A sense of purpose, innovation and action
- Sustainability and the Entrepreneurial Spirit
- Sustainability and the Paradox of Leadership
- Institutionalising Sustainable Outcomes
- Managing sustainable development
- Networking and negotiating leverage for sustainable development

A sense of purpose, innovation and action

- Small towns across Canada are keen to tell you what is special about their place
- Local leaders build on these belief systems to both unite locals and engage outsiders
- Defined projects and services help unite a community within and demonstrate to outsiders that they are managing their future.



Craik
Eco-Village
www.ecovillageliving.ca





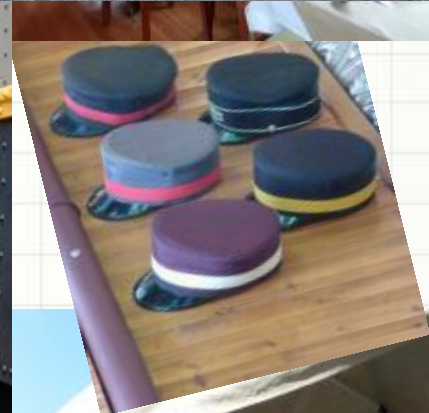


Sustainability and the Entrepreneurial Spirit

- Individuals are the initiators but they cannot do it alone
- Having the freedom to try is essential: what role does the community play here?
- After the innovator (who typically moves on to other ideas) it is essential that the community are in place to grow the business



Tatamagouche, NS



Sustainability and the Paradox of Leadership

- Their action is a paradox: ostensibly 'in charge' but passionately involved
- A sense of self and their place in the community: the opportunity and obligation they have
- Pushing and pulling quietly, usually by example
- It is about action with the community, alongside rather than in front











Institutionalising Sustainable Outcomes

- They need to be seen as common place, 'core business'
- Habitual: as a matter of course from recycling to energy use (no idle)
- Embedded in institutional performance and reporting (council plans and annual reports; also business plans and practice)



Managing sustainable development

- Once institutionalised as part of the organisational landscape used to monitor and evaluate performance across all aspects of community
- A purposeful, planned and well managed activity that is the norm, not the exception



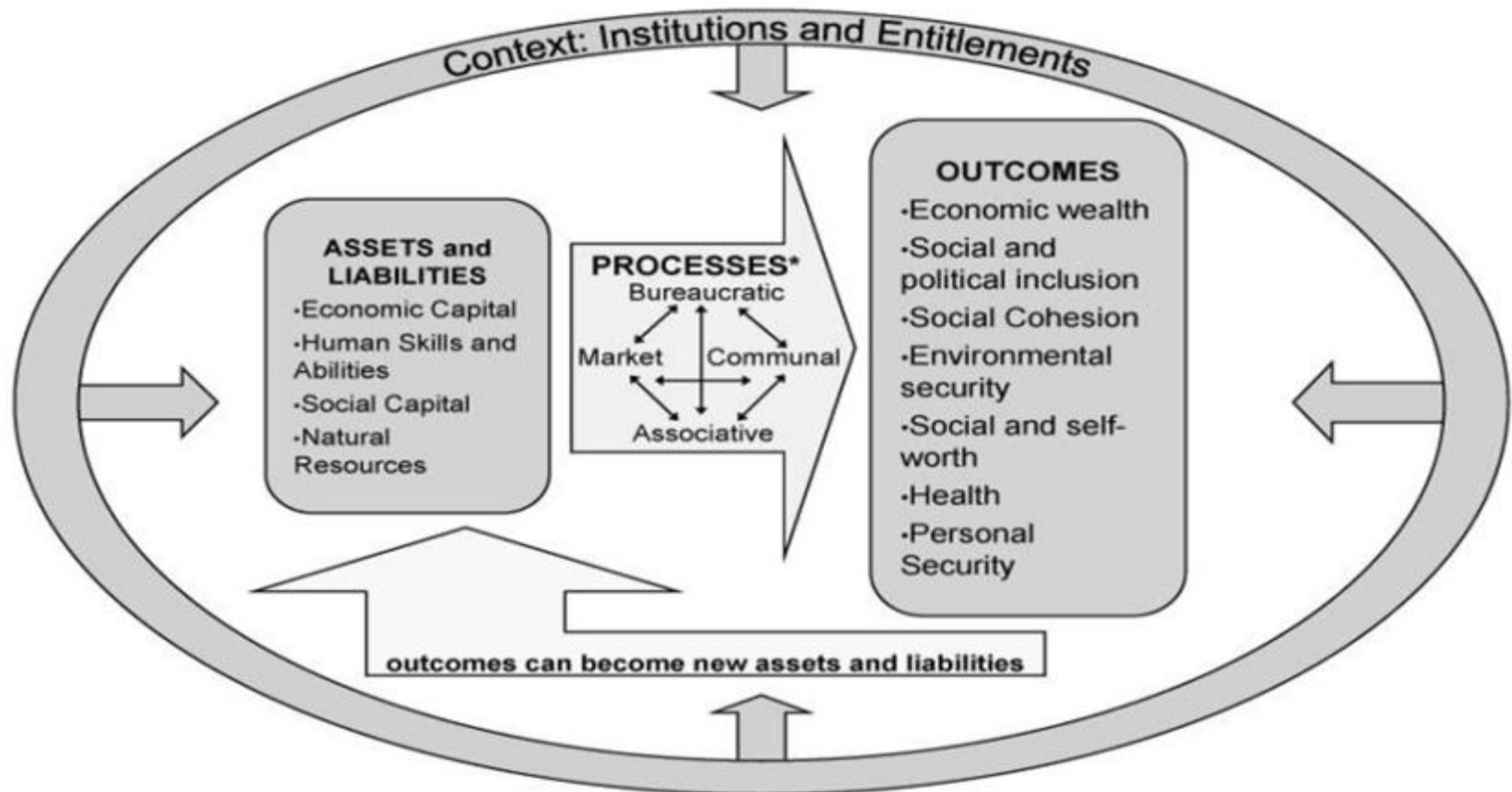
Networking and negotiating leverage for sustainable development

- Using own information: valid, reliable and well grounded to negotiate with others (both within and external to the community) ongoing local sustainability
- Seen to be effective with other levels of government, potential business investors.





The New Rural Economy Model (Lyons and Reimer 2009)



Space, faith and the weather

- The tyranny of distance
- A diverse culture reflecting 400 years of development
- Above the 49th Parallel

For Australia, also space, colonial but quite different heritage, and it is hot and dry, tropical in the north, temperate in Tasmania. Most people born in Australia would not have seen snow, least had to live with it through long, dark and cold winters.....

What can communities do?

- Recognise their assets: environmental, economic and **social** (see Mark Roseland's *Toward Sustainable Communities: Solutions for Citizens and Their Governments*).
- Identify and work with external agents who have mutual interests: recognise reciprocity.
- Build the base: education, community and celebrate success.
- Think regionally and engage locally: neighbours will have much in common.
- Expect dramatic economic cycles with thin or singular industries, and save for the rainy day.
- Value local leaders and empower them to work beyond your community.



WHAT CAN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS DO?

- Engage their community in a dialogue about their collective future
- Articulate a sense of vision and purpose
- Have a project(s) that go beyond normal roles
- Look beyond their community to learn
- Institutionalise sustainable practice - be held to account
- Expect to be surprised

WHAT CAN CENTRAL GOVERNMENTS DO?

- Recognise the value of local government and the principle of subsidiarity (partnership)
- Assemble information for local governments
- Explore opportunities through grant based incentive schemes
- Respect parochialism and encourage service delivery options which do not infringe local democracy

Lessons for Canadian and Australian public policy

- An effective federation is one which respects and recognises the complementary roles of all levels of government
- Sustainability is best achieved through a mix of top down and bottom up policies
- Local governments can be far more proactive than they typically are
- Achieving sustainability is a collective endeavour

Summary

- ‘if you have been to one town ... you have been to ONE town’ (attributed to Canadian researchers!)
- Understanding the role of key individuals and the way communities, institutions and society works is essential for success
- Federal structures are effective when all spheres of government have a place in the sun. Subsidiarity!
- Sustainability is not assured – you have to work at it.



QUESTIONS?



THANK YOU!

www.sustainablecanadiancommunities.com

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