SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION IN RURAL CANADA

Community, Cultures, and Collective Action

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JOHN R. PARKINS AND MAUREEN G. REED

Do birds announce the morning? Or by singing do they create it?

– Eduardo Galeano, "Day Is Born"

NACKAWIC, NEW BRUNSWICK

The town of Nackawic was built in the late 1960s to accommodate families who would be displaced by flooding from the construction of a new dam between Mactaquac and Woodstock. Due to Nackawic's ideal location along the Saint John River, a pulp mill was opened in 1970, employing a large portion of Nackawic residents and creating spinoff jobs in forestry, manufacturing, and local services. This economic activity contributed to a strong local economy for approximately 1,200 people living in the community during the 1990s. With the mill came a strong dependence on the fortunes of the forest industry, symbolized by the World's Largest Axe, prominently displayed at the centre of town and on the front page of the town's website.

Like many other communities that are host to the forest industry, Nackawic was not immune to the vagaries of mill closures and forest industry consolidations across the country, and in late 2004, after

thirty years of operation, the St. Anne Nackawic pulp mill abruptly shut down, throwing approximately 400 employees out of work. According to media reports, aside from rumours of the company's financial troubles, there was little to no warning of the impending closure. Union officials were informed of the closure at an early morning meeting on the day of the closure. Like other Nackawic community members, they were shocked by the announcement. Many residents – especially former mill workers – expressed disappointment and anger at the failure of the company to provide advanced warning of an imminent closure, hampering workers' ability to prepare for the event.

The closure of the main economic driver for this single-industry town resulted in frantic efforts by community leaders and provincial government leaders to find a new owner of the mill and get production going again. After several months of searching, they announced a new deal to get the mill running again. The new owner would be an Indian business conglomerate, with Aditya Birla Group as the majority partner and Tembec Incorporated taking responsibility for local operations. In January 2006, the St. Anne Nackawic mill reopened as AV Nackawic, almost sixteen months after it originally shut down. In early 2007, a $30 million retrofit allowed the mill to produce dissolving pulp, a product used in the manufacturing of rayon textile. Three hundred former mill workers were re-employed, and media reports suggested that confidence in the local economy was returning to Nackawic. One newspaper report likened Nackawic's re-emergence to the "mythical phoenix, reborn from the ashes."

CRAIK, SASKATCHEWAN

The town of Craik, population 408, is located halfway between Regina and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. For many decades, Craik serviced the regional agricultural community, and the town's economy has largely relied on agriculture and related industries. An agricultural services company called Viterra operates an elevator in the town that directly services area farmers, and there are many other agriculture-based services in the community. Like so many other agricultural communities across the Prairies, the town has struggled to survive in recent years because of declining family farms and the threat of more closures of local services such as the school and health centre.

A new chapter in the history of Craik began in 2001 when a retired professor from the University of Saskatchewan gave the community an idea to become something new and distinctive. Part of this new vision was the Craik Sustainable Living Project, which formed a basis for community development with a focus on ecological principles that included an eco-centre to promote sustainable living and an eco-village to attract new residents to the community. Free land was offered to individuals in return for the construction of "green homes" off the grid, and other opportunities were made available for "sustainable" business enterprises. Because of these new initiatives, the town's fortunes have turned around dramatically in recent years, with more children in the local school, several new homes, new businesses, and a growing reputation for environmental leadership. Many people in Craik and many more outside this small rural town see a bright and sustainable future ahead.

VALEMOUNT, BRITISH COLUMBIA

The village of Valemount, British Columbia, was originally established as a temporary camp for seasonal forestry work and a desolate train stop for CN rail. A new highway in the early 1960s opened up the town to new opportunities, and in 1967 Canyon Creek Forestry Products opened a lumber mill in the community. The community maintained a strong economic link to the forestry industry for more than thirty years, through several periods of boom and bust in the industry, but in the late 1990s the local lumber mill reduced its workforce by two-thirds. It then closed permanently in 2009.

Realizing that local industry was becoming less reliable as a source of stable employment for community residents, village leaders created an Economic Development Commission and the first Economic Development Plan in 1994. The plan pinned the community's economic sustainability on two complementary areas: forestry and tourism. Because of intensive planning efforts and a rebranding of the town as a place for new investment, Valemount has enjoyed many recent successes. They include a community forest initiative, a new high school that also serves as a community centre, and a major revitalization of the downtown core that includes new roads and sidewalks intended to serve a more diversified, tourism-based economy.

Although some big challenges remain for the community, including a lack of success in securing large-scale tourism development in the region, Valemount has succeeded in attracting more people to visit, and increasingly more people are making the village a vacation destination. A bright spot is the development of a local tourism niche in recreational snowmobiling. Valemount is a growing destination spot for snowmobilers seeking a mountain trail experience. In addition, provincial agencies and the local government recently partnered with the village to assist in providing services and attracting investment to the area. In these and other local initiatives, such as downtown revitalization, the village is in the process of re-creating itself, branding the community for new investment, and finding ways to support approximately 1,000 people who continue to call Valemount home.

The above vignettes of rural communities in Canada are a glimpse into the ongoing successes and challenges of small towns and villages across the country. In Nackawic, New Brunswick, new ownership of the pulp mill was secured, putting local employees back to work and giving local residents a renewed sense of prosperity and continuity with their long history as a forestry town. In the midst of this renewed stability, however, certain things have changed as well. Local ownership is new and culturally distinctive, and forest resources are now exported to new markets in the clothing industry of India.

In Craik, Saskatchewan, there are more significant signs of change in the community. Changes are evident through new efforts to transform the town from a service-based agricultural community to an internationally recognized leader in sustainable living and business development. The challenges for Craik in this period of transition involve material concerns such as the development of new facilities and infrastructure for the sustainable living project. But these challenges are also symbolic and ideological in terms of reimagining what can actually work as the basis for local livelihoods on the Saskatchewan prairie and how these livelihoods can be sustained over the long term.

Finally, Valemount, British Columbia, in many ways is reinventing itself one brick at a time. The newly designed main street is emblematic of a new reality and a new vision for the village – a vision that has taken hold over

decades of careful planning and investment. Valemount is in the process of becoming something new but lacks a clear roadmap for how this will happen. It remains firmly rooted to its past as a forestry town, surrounded by a rich and diverse forest landscape, but, as a sign of the past, it maintains an interest in and a commitment to large-scale development. A proposal for the world's longest gondola lift on a nearby mountain is a case in point. At the same time, Valemount is a place of change in realizing that old forest economies are now gone and that new economies must be imagined and created.

These three stories of rural change offer a glimpse into the ups and downs of rural life that echo all the way back to early Canadian settlement. The influential writings of Harold Innis and the idea of a staples economy bring us into a decades-old conversation about the origins of the modern Canadian economy, the prolonged sense of connection that we have with timber, grain, minerals, and fish, and how these commodities have shaped our towns and rural landscapes throughout the decades (Howlett and Brownsey 2008).

Scholars point to the unique character of Canadian society, closely linked to natural resource extraction, modes of production, remoteness, rurality, and the North. At the same time, the Canadian rural landscape offers a chance to examine the repeated rise and fall of communities, industries, and cultural traditions over decades. Today is no different, with significant attention to numerous interactions among globalized social and economic forces and the impacts of these forces on the Canadian countryside. Corporate consolidation in sectors such as forestry and agriculture suggests a sense of decline, restructuring, and consequent rural change that is almost never ending. The Robson Valley of British Columbia, where Valemount is located, is an example of such change. At the turn of the twentieth century, hundreds of small sawmills sustained many households and livelihoods throughout the region. Yet today you can count the number of sawmills in that valley on one hand. So the vignettes above simply chronicle one more transition in the local economy that mirrors similar changes in previous decades.

In ongoing efforts to understand these rural changes, some authors point to an emerging post-staples economy in which extractive industries become a secondary factor in new rural-urban linkages and an emerging emphasis on environmental values (e.g., Hutton 2008). Other authors focus on the dynamics of a neoliberal ideology that rolls out a different set of relationships among the state, the private sector, and civil society. Scholars of

neoliberalism show how the erosion of public sector support for remote areas has generated specific costs and new demands for fluid social systems and self-help approaches to rural community development that are now pervasive in rural Canada (e.g., Young and Matthews 2007). These are just a few of the popular narratives about rural Canada today, each one offering important analytical insights into the forces of change in rural Canada and the associated costs and benefits in these locales. So, in one sense, this book adds to the ongoing discussion on our collective experience of change and adjustment in rural places and small towns across Canada.

In another sense, however, this book represents more than a collection of new stories about old processes of social, political, and economic change. There is an underlying theme throughout the chapters that contemporary rural life in Canada is something more than a terrain of externally driven impacts. Large-scale political and economic factors are clearly engines of change, but social changes are not simply an amalgam of local responses to external forces. The authors of this volume step out of this common frame of analysis and invite us to consider something deeper, something arguably more foundational and transformational about what is happening in many rural places and spaces across the Canadian countryside. They offer a series of stories, ideas, and insights on the social dynamics of change *within* rural Canada that contribute to and construct new narratives, break moulds, and reconstruct ways of understanding and relating to each other and the broader world.

Significantly, the authors attempt to distinguish between more conventional understandings of social change and the deeper and more profound kinds of change described as transformative. In particular, they pay attention to how people live in these rural regions and view themselves, their communities, their cultures, and their responsibilities as citizens. Moreover, the authors pay attention to how these aspects of rural life are leading to new and important (re)conceptualizations of social life in rural Canada. Because these stories are about something deeper and more fundamental than our common understandings of social change, a primary thesis of this book is that social transformation is distinct from social change, offering deeper insights into the dynamics of change that resonate with an emerging Canadian rural landscape. Based on this broader theme of social transformation and the role that rural communities play in mobilizing such transformation, the chapters offer interdisciplinary perspectives and insights from many parts of Canada to investigate these important relations of social life.

Describing Social Transformation

What is distinctively transformative about rural life in Canada? How do we know that certain events or processes are transformative? We seek to answer these questions from an interdisciplinary perspective, paying attention to the multiple ways in which events, processes, and actions can have transformative elements or dimensions. In the words of Eduardo Galeano in the epigraph above, we see social transformation as a reciprocal relation to other socio-economic dimensions (internal and external) affecting rural communities. We are also inspired by the writings of Gibson-Graham (2006) and their efforts to imagine a new language and a new politics of possibility for communities and their economies. Gibson-Graham states that "our thinking strives to render a world with an ever-replenishing sense of room to move, air to breathe, and space and time to act – a space of pregnant negativity" (xxxiii). In this sense, we see the work of social transformation as a political project – a way of reading into the events and processes of social change something more than economic transition or demographic shift. Social transformation is therefore a political project and is deeply imbued with power, privilege, and challenge.

Within the chapters here, however, are many important expressions of social transformation that emerge from the perspectives and experiences of the authors. From our individual experiences within our disciplinary homes, our own learning from colleagues, and our research experiences, some dimensions of social transformation are emerging.

Global-Local Nexus

Some authors anchor their understanding of transformation in the idea of globalization, a process of ongoing and dramatic proportions. They are, arguably, in synch with other authors who conceptualize a link between local and global processes of change. For instance, Brandt (2001) and Sumner (2005) use the terms "globalization from below" and "globalization from above" to describe an interlocking collection of drivers that moulds and builds economies and social forces. Belinda Leach's contribution to this collection documents how changes in the automobile parts industry in southern Ontario both respond to and generate changes that are intertwined with globalization. Similarly, Chris Southcott examines transformation in Canada's North, arguing that the region's long-standing connection with the global economy has shaped northern activities and relationships. But the North also makes its own imprint on global processes and economic strategies.

Place-Based Social Transformation

Social transformation involves a way of thinking about the distinctions between endogenous and exogenous forces of change and how the origins (or sources) of change often translate into real differences in the ways that individuals and communities respond. Many stories in this volume are focused on both dynamics of transformation deeply rooted in the community and local action. There is an insider versus outsider dynamic here as well as a distinction between being acted upon and being the actor or agent of change. The authors here are therefore focused on topics of culture, identity, voice, and action as ways of understanding social transformation that is deeply rooted in place and groups of people with an emerging sense of purpose and focus. The chapter by Christopher Bryant on multifunctionality in Quebec farming landscapes and emerging farmer identities is an example of how endogenous social forces develop within a rural landscape and project out to broader urban and suburban networks of social interaction and economic life in ways that are profoundly transformational. In a different sense, Jonaki Bhattacharyya, Marilyn Baptiste, David Setah, and Roger William poignantly relate how identity rooted in place is guiding one community's adaptation to changing social circumstances, technology, and politics.

Game Changer

Contrasting to a degree with the notion of place-based social transformation above, another strong theme in this volume deals with moments of profound change – change that fundamentally alters conventional social relationships and processes within a community. This kind of transformation involves, for example, new ways of thinking about labour migration and mobility. In the chapter by Martha MacDonald, Peter Sinclair, and Deatra Walsh, which describes workers leaving Newfoundland towns for jobs in Alberta and other parts of the country, there is a strong sense that new mobilities are fundamentally transforming the sending and receiving communities of this mobile workforce. The authors argue that community identity is not lost in this process but transformed and reconstructed in new and often unexpected ways. In this sense, social transformation originates from broader social and economic trends and emerging structures that change the rules of the game. However, they intersect with local trends and patterns suggesting that what was once a predictable pattern of interaction between groups is now somehow different in ways that render older structures and processes obsolete.

Historical Anchoring

In his chapter, Mark Stoddart indicates that sedimentation is an important metaphor in our discussion of social transformation. Communities are never delinked from their histories. Rather, they are constantly building on an older foundation of economic livelihood, local natural resources, social relations, and cultural traditions. Social transformation becomes evident through a metaphor of geological discovery, in which perhaps only after a new layer of sediment becomes visible do we understand how something new has emerged and how this new social dimension is built upon the old but also distinctively new in colour, density, and texture. The chapter by Ruth Sandwell brings this point forward in clear terms with regard to how rural livelihoods, from the early days of Canadian settlement, were based upon multiple livelihood strategies, seasonal work, and persistent changes and challenges, in many ways similar to the realities of rural livelihoods today. Yet new layers of rural life have been transformed in recent decades by new roads and communication technology and heavy dependence on fossil fuels. Indeed, Carol-Anne Hudson also alludes to the layering of social change in her examination of community-based poverty reduction strategies in rural Newfoundland.

Power Dynamics

Another aspect of social transformation that comes through in many of the chapters is that of power. We are particularly interested in situations in which the locus of control is shifting, in which a new set of winners and losers is emerging, and in which new identities and economies are formed through the transformation of power. In his chapter on changing grain-handling technology in the Prairies, Darin Barney talks about how railway operators extend power and influence over much of the prairie landscape. Similarly, Mark Stoddart explains power relations when he describes which groups have the power to speak and be heard in relation to ideas of wilderness and recreation that characterize the Tobeatic Wilderness Area in Nova Scotia.

Leadership and Learning

Chapters also point to the role of leadership in social transformation. This includes the willingness to learn from experience in order to generate new ideas and ways of doing things. Emery and Flora (2006) describe such efforts as "spiralling up," wherein people begin to imagine their community

and themselves differently. In large measure, generating this process of spiralling up requires the inclusion of new kinds of leaders – including youth and Aboriginal peoples – as well as others from social groups that have not maintained historical connections to the power structures of local communities. And it requires a willingness to engage in transformative learning, in which individuals work together to critically evaluate existing knowledge and issues, to generate new knowledge, and then to apply this new knowledge to the creation of new policies and practices (Glasser 2007). Through such efforts, people living and working in rural communities develop practical skills, examine underlying assumptions that drive actions, and reflect on and adjust the values and norms that underpin assumptions and actions. Chapters by Emily Jane Davis and Maureen Reed; Laura Ryser, Don Manson, and Greg Halseth; and Ryan Bullock point to the challenges of engaging new leaders and avenues for change in resource-based communities that have historically demonstrated limited agency.

Interdependence

Much has been written about the connections between rural and urban places. Similarly, many of the chapters in this book illustrate that transformation of rural areas does not happen in isolation but is tied to conditions of and power relations with urban centres. The argument of interdependency, however, makes a related but slightly different point. It connects urban and rural places and people rather intimately in an ever-evolving, cyclical, and deliberate relationship. The chapter by Bill Reimer brings this point forward clearly. Some of the most obvious examples relate to mobility. Both historically and currently, some people choose to move from urban to rural places and stay (see the chapter by Yoshida and Ramos); in other cases, members of rural families migrate to urban places and back (see the chapter by MacDonald, Sinclair, and Walsh). Elsewhere, the proximity of rural and urban allows people to commute between them, creating an interdependency of employment. Additionally, rural producers rely on urban markets to sell their products (see the chapter by Bryant), and rural places offer urban residents opportunities for recreation (as described in the chapter by Stoddart). Yet contributors to this volume also emphasize that these interdependencies are not simply based on the acceptance by rural people of urban demands for rural space, labour, resources, and places. Rather, social transformation is wrought by connections *deliberately* fostered by policies, programs, and rural initiatives (see the chapters by Bryant; Nelson, Duxbury, and Murray; and Reimer). Sometimes these deliberations take years of

painstaking lobbying and political action, as described by Hudson in her chapter on the challenges of poverty alleviation in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Imagination

Finally, social transformation has to do with imagination. The role of imagination is not often front and centre in writing about rural change. Nevertheless, imagination is a key factor in understanding current circumstances and how they might be altered. For example, Lorelei Hanson emphasizes that how stewardship has been imagined over time is key to understanding the policies and programs introduced by the Alberta government to manage public lands. She suggests that land management can be understood as a social imagining of land, space, and place, working to actively construct meanings about landscapes and shaping the actions that we take to "develop" or "work" them or simply leave them alone.

Nathan Young speaks about how imagination infuses the economic identities of places, constraining or limiting options for future transformation. By focusing on places in British Columbia where older economic identities tied to resource industries are being questioned, he illustrates how new visions of place and identity offer opportunities for rural places to reinvent themselves and demonstrate bold acts of imagination as strategies for transformation. This theme is also advanced by Ross Nelson, Nancy Duxbury, and Catherine Murray, who suggest that a focus on cultural and creative industries as strategies for regional economic development will require a reimagining of rural communities and new mechanisms for cooperation. Ken Caine's chapter relating to land management and power relations in Northwest Territories demonstrates the power of imagination. Caine explains how the Déline people dared to imagine themselves differently from the constraints imposed on them by bureaucractic planning processes of the federal and territorial governments. In exercising an alternative vision for themselves, they challenged both the authority and the mindset of old structures and offered new frameworks for economic and social change – transforming the bureaucracy in the process.

Defining Rural

In addition to the term "social transformation," that of "rural" is key in the title of this collection. One popular way of defining rural places is the *descriptive approach,* in which certain characteristics of a place are emphasized, such as population size and density (Woods 2005). The Organisation

for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), for instance, defines rural as individuals in communities with fewer than 150 persons per square kilometre. Using a similar method, Statistics Canada defines the rural census population as those who live outside settlements with 1,000 or more people and a population density of 400 people per square kilometre or fewer. Statistics Canada also identifies a gradation of rural and small towns in relation to urban influence – reported in terms of a Metropolitan Influence Zone (MIZ) (Statistics Canada 2009). This definition of rural (as a function of variation in urban influence) is reflected in Figure I.1.

Another approach to defining rural involves what Woods (2005) describes as the socio-cultural approach and is reflected in the classic distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft.* In the late 1880s, Ferdinand Tonnies made this distinction between ideal rural living *(Gemeinschaft)* in contrast to the impersonal and dehumanizing experience of city life *(Gesellschaft)*. This dichotomous approach to the social characteristics of rural life has given way to more contemporary ways of defining rural, one of which is defined by Woods as the *locality approach,* in which the economic base becomes a defining feature. In this approach, rural locations are associated with primary industry such as agriculture, mining, or forestry. Also, scholars have identified a *social representation approach,* in which rural has little to do with actual population levels or type of economy. What makes a place rural are the meanings imposed on it by residents and visitors. In this way, rural is a "state of mind" and thus socially constructed.

In this collection, we take an expansive view of rural Canada, reflected in the lightly shaded areas of Figure I.1. This includes all regions and territories of Canada that lie outside major urban areas. The case studies and descriptions of social transformation reflected in this volume come from these vast regions of Canada as we explore new insights into community, culture, and collective action.

Structure of the Book

History, Trends, and Territory

Part 1 provides a starting point for exploring the social transformation of rural Canada. The authors in this part take a longer and broader view of transformation than is generally the case in the other parts. For Sandwell, this view spans seventy years from 1870 to 1940 and draws attention to the diversity of livelihood strategies deployed by land-based households during

this time. Southcott offers an analysis of fifty years of development in the North. He charts the social transformations of this region in terms of substantial shifts in social relations and the empowerment of northern Indigenous populations in particular. Finally, Yoshida and Ramos offer a picture of recent trends in rural immigration. As a nation of immigrants, Canada is being transformed by a continual process of immigration that offers tremendous value in terms of cultures, ideas, and economic resources.

Structure and Discourse

Part 2 is about structure and discourse. Social structures involve patterned social behaviours or factors that extend beyond the limits and experiences of any individual. Class and gender are examples of social structures and can be used to form a structural analysis of human behaviour. In this sense, all of us are embedded in different kinds of social structures that precondition how we think and act in a given situation. In similar ways, discourses are associated with meaning-making activities. For example, the dominant discourses of rural Canada, such as "northern Canada as frontier" versus "northern Canada as homeland," are at the heart of many debates about what we value, how we relate, and what we expect from our rural landscapes. In this sense, we understand discourses to be closely linked to power and privilege as certain discourses about rural life and development gain dominance.

In his examination of social structure, Reimer offers key insights into the topic of rural-urban interdependencies. He deals with the question of social transformation in terms of four areas of interdependence: through trade and exchange, through institutions, through identity, and through shared environment. In the chapter on labour migration and mobility in Newfoundland, MacDonald, Sinclair, and Walsh offer an analysis of migration patterns and impacts on communities from a new mobilities paradigm. They define social transformation as a fundamental change in economic, social, political, and cultural relations, with a focus on the multifaceted aspects of mobility as a transformational dimension in many Newfoundland communities.

Leach offers an analysis of the globalization of production in the automobile industry in rural Ontario. She takes a feminist perspective on social transformation, arguing that transformation requires no less than a fundamental altering of existing patterns of relationships between men and women and the resolution of all forms of gender inequality. Similarly, the chapters by Hanson and Caine offer an understanding of discourse as a powerful tool for conditioning norms, values, and behaviours regarding rural landscapes and relations among rural people. Finally, the chapter by

Ryser, Manson, and Halseth demonstrates how both social transition and economic restructuring have led to dramatic demographic changes that are socially transforming rural and small-town places through population aging and out-migration of younger households.

Culture and Identity

"Culture" typically falls along a materialist-ideational spectrum, with the materialist perspective focusing on the behaviours, customs, and ways of life of a group of people and the ideational perspective focusing on their ideas, beliefs, and knowledge (Fetterman 1998). Similarly, the term "identity" comes with a wide range of interpretations that include personal identity formation (individuation) and more collective forms of identity (identity politics), where specific groups are organized around gender, race, ethnicity, or socio-economic forms of identity. Culture and identity are the focus of Part 3.

Bhattacharyya and her colleagues offer an important contribution to our understanding of culture and identity with the land as a way to understand the possibilities for social transformation in the Nemiah Valley of British Columbia. These authors provide a place-based understanding of identity (a closer connection between the social world and the natural world) in which the natural environment is a core aspect of social transformation. Young's chapter, also based upon British Columbia, examines the close relationship between economic change and local identity. Although it is often assumed that economic change acts on identity, causing confusion, crisis, or resistance, Young argues that identity is also an active field of imagination and assertion that can pattern and structure economic futures. Using case studies from the communities of Port Hardy and Bella Coola, he outlines two competing identity responses to economic change that attempt to recast communities as "places that (still) matter" despite declines in traditional resource sectors. Davis and Reed identify social transformation as a process and an outcome, where outcomes are often discussed in terms of fundamental changes to social and economic structures and processes are closely linked to leadership and the reorganization of diverse local resources. Bullock maintains this linkage between identity and transformation with a focus on forest-based communities in northern Ontario. His understanding of social transformation involves a relationship between the ways in which society and culture change in response to economic, political, or other social factors. He also draws on social framing analysis to examine the shifting perspectives held by individuals and organizations. With the last chapter in

Part 3, Bryant takes a close look at the social transformation of agriculture in Quebec, focusing on fundamental shifts in values embedded in farming and agricultural land. These shifts are noted not only within the farming communities but also within the non-farming and periurban context in particular.

Voice and Action

Issues of voice and action speak directly to power dynamics in transformative processes. Viewed through the perspective of political mobilization by raising voice and taking action, rural people engage directly in transformation by refusing to take for granted the economic and social conditions that they experience as somehow inevitable or path dependent. Rather, these changes are created from historical and geographical contingencies that generate, reinforce, or re-create political relationships and priorities. These shifting relationships and priorities speak to the dynamic distribution of power and resources between rural and urban, among rural people, and among rural communities and more distant actors. Gaining an understanding of these relationships reveals who has voice, who takes action, and with what effects. In the set of chapters on voice and action in Part 4, contributors pay attention to strategies of political mobilization and economic action that emerge from rural areas.

Barney's chapter exemplifies the distribution of power, resources, and political possibilities through processes of technological change in agriculture. Barney explains how changes in grain-handling technology and railway transportation have not gone uncontested and how a CN branchline slated for abandonment became the site of local action. The chapter by Stoddart documents the campaign to protect the Tobeatic Wilderness Area in rural Nova Scotia in order to examine the intersection of two social transformations: the increasing importance of "attractive" modes of interaction with nature and the increasing political salience of environmentalism. Stoddart analyzes how media coverage of the Tobeatic Wilderness Area frames "wilderness" and "environmental issues" and how the area is defined primarily as a space where humans are welcome as non-motorized visitors rather than permanent residents. In her case study of Newfoundland and Labrador, Hudson documents decades of rural activism around poverty. Her chapter shows how, during the 1990s, a closely connected network of women's groups based in small towns and rural communities led a coalition of provincial interfaith groups and a strong rural labour movement to pressure provincial politicians to address rural poverty in the 2000s. Finally,

Nelson and colleagues note that significant concentrations of artists and cultural workers in other artistic sectors are located in small and rural municipalities across the country, offering opportunities for economic and social revitalization of rural places. Their chapter describes four approaches to developing the artistic sector (entrepreneurial, amenity, social, and ecological) and recommends that ecological strategies are the most effective because they combine elements of the other three, including physical infrastructure, development through quality of life and recreational amenities, grassroots approaches to strengthen local social capital and skills, and a commitment to linking local communities into wider cultural, social, and economic networks. Together these chapters offer examples of local action and transformation in rural Canada.

Conclusion

Issues of rural social transformation have captured the attention and scrutiny of a wide range of scholars. In this volume alone, contributors come from the fields of sociology, geography, history, environmental studies, political science, anthropology, and communications, along with several community leaders and practitioners. They also represent a mix of new and more established scholars who have learned much from one another in the process of compiling this volume. The disciplinary and demographic mix of scholarship speaks to rich understandings and ongoing sensitivity and engagement of researchers to the characteristics and dynamics of rural places and people. As we close our introductory remarks, we would be remiss if we did not note that we are inspired by what we have learned from the rural communities where we have conducted our work. Many of the scholars in this volume consider themselves to be community-based researchers. Research that is community based is highly interactive and contextualized, placing "greater attention [on] and commitment to empowerment, participation and social change objectives" (Markey, Halseth, and Manson 2010, 159). As we listen to and learn from those living and working in rural places, those who are experiencing these social transformations remain a constant source of inspiration and admiration.

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