

Second Growth: Community Economic Development in Rural British Columbia

Authors: Sean Markey, John T. Pierce, Kelly Vodden, Mark Roseland
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Reviewed by: Sara Teitelbaum, Faculty of Forestry and Environmental Management, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada.

Participatory research has become an accepted, even celebrated, research approach. Increasingly, academics are rolling up their shirtsleeves and getting down to the work of initiating and financially supporting projects that will "make a difference". Community economic development (CED) typifies this research approach. Promoted by researchers in many universities and colleges, it marries theoretical ideas about self-reliance, community capacity and asset-based development with practical tools for the development of local economies.

Second Growth, a 2005 publication by researchers at Simon Fraser University's Centre for Sustainable Community Development is drawn from a 3-year research project on community economic development. Two Aboriginal communities (the Upper St'at'imc, represented by the Lillooet Tribal Council, and the Nuxalk of Bella Coola) and two municipalities (Salmon Arm and 100 Mile House/South Cariboo) participated in a project aimed at identifying and implementing strategies for improving local economic capacity, using a CED approach. Researchers and communities worked together on a multi-stage process that included building institutional capacity for CED, community data collection and analysis, strategic planning, implementation and evaluation.

Interestingly, this book is not a chronicle of the project's research approach and findings. Instead, the book tackles the broader issues surrounding the implementation of a locally oriented approach to development. According to the authors, "specifically, we are interested in how our project experience is able to provide insight into the apparent conflict between the economic imperative and fluidity of capital versus the lived worlds of rural and small-town places... More specifically still, we investigate the capacity of CED to be a contributing force to the successful transformation and/or continued prosperity of rural areas." (p.3). The book is at once a social critique of the forest economy in British Columbia, a handbook to CED theory and practice and, to a lesser extent, the tale of four communities' experience with the CED process.

The book is organized under three main themes - dependency, transition, and resilience. The first section, encapsulated by dependency, lays out the origins of the current economic landscape in rural British Columbia. The authors use staples theory to ground their analysis, arguing that the industrial orientation of forest policy has resulted in under-diversified and unstable communities, significant environmental costs and the economic marginalization of Aboriginal communities. The next section, under the theme of transition, describes a variety of factors contributing to change in British Columbia's forest economy such as

environmentalism, First Nations activism and industry restructuring. These changes are viewed as an opportunity for the implementation of new approaches to rural economic development. This leads us into the discussion of community economic development, conceptualized within the *resilience* theme. Two chapters are dedicated to the fundamentals of this approach. Chapter 5 describes the ideals behind CED as well as its connection to the more commonly applied local economic development (LED) approach. It discusses three important concepts in CED, process, strategic orientations and community capacity, and discusses challenges facing CED. Chapter 6 presents a "success factor" framework for CED. These are indicators of community capital that can be conceived of both as potential preconditions for successful CED or as potential goals of the CED process. They are organized under four headings: human capital, social capital, economic capital and ecological capital. The final part of the book addresses the four case studies, both in terms of the nuts and bolts of the CED process applied there, the strategies that were tried and some of the lessons learned.

The authors made it clear that one of their objectives was to combat what has been characterized as CED's "unruly" reputation. In fact, they point out that for CED to be adopted at a larger scale, it must contain "elements of generalizability and even predictability". In this respect I felt that the authors did an exceedingly good job and make a valuable contribution to the field of CED. The clarity and reflection the authors bring to their description of CED, including its concepts, processes, success factors, and challenges make this an excellent account of the CED approach. In fact, the chapters on CED and success factors could serve as a useful tool for teachers and community practitioners on a stand-alone basis. The aspect that I found less remarkable was the integration of the experience garnered from the case study research. The book hinted at a rich and colourful research process, methodology and project outcomes. The "community voice" essays were particularly evocative of the kind of dynamics that make participatory research so fascinating. Yet the authors seemed reluctant to move beyond the "elements of generalizability" that characterized their fieldwork. This made it difficult for the reader to be drawn into the case studies or to gain a clear impression of what these communities were like, the way each community engaged with the CED process, and how the researcher-participant relationship unfolded. Perhaps the authors are saving this material for another book? In the meantime, *Second Growth* will be a welcome addition to classrooms and community meeting rooms in British Columbia and beyond.