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Searching for Modernization: Entrepreneurship Education, Economic Growth, Outmigration and the Need for Change in Rural Nova Scotia, Canada

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ABSTRACT

This paper considers the theoretical underpinnings of rural out-migration and economic stagnation, specific to rural Nova Scotia, Canada, and argues that rural Nova Scotia has, in part, misapplied the tenets of modernization. It situates out-migration, and economic stagnation, amongst Modernization Theory and considers how economic rejuvenation, vis a vis entrepreneurship education, can, potentially, revivify the bonds between person and (rural) community. This paper argues three points: first, that rural Nova Scotia is enduring a misapplication of modernization, resulting in a lingering traditionalism that pushes people out and dampens economic growth. Second, that rural Nova Scotia would benefit from a structural shift in its economic model and third, that community economic development through entrepreneurship stands a reasonable chance of reserving the social and economic misfortune in Nova Scotia.

Keywords: entrepreneurship; outmigration; rural economic development

INTRODUCTION

Diaspora is a word intimately linked to the collective human experience. To be sure, the great movement of people, in search of fortune, freedom or food, is resolute in its universality with examples found in the many books of religion,

global literature and historical chronicles. Shakespeare's Petruchio captured at least one explanation for this phenomenon: "Such winds as scatters young men through the world to seek their fortunes further than at home where small experience grows" (The Taming of the Shrew). While Oliver Wendell Holmes (1908) places exodus in more affective terms: "Where we love is home, home that our feet may leave, but not our hearts" (p. 169). Indeed, as history so thoroughly supports, movement, change and the quest for prosperity are powerful forces for upheaval. Moon (2013) articulates this idea nicely noting that "Migration is an expression of the human aspiration for dignity, safety and a better future. It is part of the social fabric, part of our very make-up as a human family." These sentiments, so it seems, support the notion that to move is, in part, what it means to be human.

For the Atlantic Canadian, exodus in pursuit of economic and social prosperity is not a novel concept. References to the colloquial "going down the road," to find employment out-of-province have been a long-standing part of Nova Scotia parlance and in recent times, the explosion of *civium ex provinciae*, it might be argued, has become the region's defining issue. Nova Scotia has changed; once the economic powerhouse of pre-Confederation Canada, a contemporary examination reveals some stark realities. Vast numbers of young people have fled the province while older citizens return, seeking the comforts of a slower pace for their golden years. In many ways, Nova Scotia is mirroring the vast movement of people around the world to urban areas in pursuit of economic prosperity. The United Nations Population Fund (2016) notes that 2013 saw the majority of the planet's population shift to a predominantly urban life, a break from 10,000 years of civilized human history. Urbanization, if one accepts the discourse of competitive neo-liberal globalization, has the potential to usher in a new era of well-being, modernization, resource efficiency and economic growth, and for many, these promises have served as powerful pull-factors.

Considering the wider forces of globalization, this paper adopts one central position and argues three points. The central position is that rural Nova Scotia, Canada's economic malaise is, first and foremost, a cultural issue. By that, I position that the citizenry has not taken advantage of its natural cultural advantages and, as a result, has failed to modernize. In this context, the failure to modernize has led to pernicious out-migration and economic stagnation. Subsequently, this paper offers three points: first, that rural Nova Scotia is enduring a misapplication of modernization, resulting in a lingering traditionalism that pushes people out and dampens economic growth. Second, that rural Nova Scotia would benefit from a structural shift in its economic model akin to the so-called Lewis Dual Sector Model, and third, that community economic development through entrepreneurship education stands a reasonable chance of reversing the social and economic misfortune now ubiquitous in the areas outside of Nova Scotia's capital

region. Also included is critical commentary on the influence and implications of economic neo-liberalism on rural Nova Scotia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The turn of the 20th century was an important few years for Nova Scotia. Hampered by stifled trade and antiquated methods for conducting agriculture, scores of Nova Scotians left the countryside for, as Brown (1997) notes, "the lure of the United States…the attractions of the city and the promise of western lands" (p. 48). The result was steadily unhurried population growth that proved to be much slower than most parts of Canada. Notwithstanding a minor population bump after World War II (WWII), Nova Scotia entered into a prolonged era of population stasis.

In the post-WWII era, Nova Scotia saw a measure of population stability. As MacEwan (1976) notes, "command of resources and proficient manufacturing, particularly in steel, moved Nova Scotia toward mini-golden age" (p. 23). This was, unfortunately, both unsustainable and disproportionate. By 1960, a good deal of steel manufacturing had left Nova Scotia while the emerging wealth gap of the Confederation era between those in Halifax and those in rural areas continued to grow substantially (Gwyn & Siddiq, 1992). Concurrently, western Canada was seeing a significant increase in oil production that demanded skilled labour for high paying jobs—a tempting proposition for the workers of eastern Canada.

By 1996, rural out-migration in Nova Scotia was fast becoming the new normal. A diminishing natural resource sector, seasonal employment and reliance on government created a toxic economic cocktail. Compounding matters, as Corbett (2007) so sternly writes, is the irony that Nova Scotia schools have been educating their students to leave through the creation of comprehensive skilled-trades course programs applicable, it so turned out, in stronger job markets out-of-province. When the dust settled, some areas of rural Nova Scotia saw a 24% decline in population from 1996 bench line data (Statistics Canada, 1996; 2001; 2006) and the accompanying social and economic degradation. Where these communities were once vibrant, with strong social bonds and ample opportunities for youth, now the experience is far more isolating as out-migration has taken many of the opportunities for youth with it. As Marré (2009) notes, "The out-migration endgame is a snowball effect. Citizens who stay behind often lose connection to the community and eventually leave" (p. 25).

A Call to Action: The Ivany Report

In February of 2014 a well-known university president chaired an economic commission that penned *Now or Never: An Urgent Call to Action for Nova Scotians*. The drafters of the report, along with several commissioners from the business, environmental and cultural sectors, pushed the sitting provincial government to investigate and propose solutions for what was described by many as Nova Scotia's economic stagnation and decline. The project was met, one could

argue, with equal parts fanfare and nervousness. Optimism swelled both in government and in the private-sector about the ostensible momentum for positive economic change, while a latent concern, captured chiefly by voices in the media, about what the report might conclude tempered the groundswell of enthusiasm. As the project began it became the source of much public discourse as Nova Scotians waited anxiously for a potentially transformative economic moment.

The Commission's findings were grouped into 19 goals, demarcated by the areas of population, economic development and governance. The goals converge on 12 strategic directions or, in the language of the report, "game changers" (p. 51). The central theme called for a break in the so-called "status-quo" and warned that "Nova Scotia is today in the early stages of what may be a prolonged period of accelerating population loss and economic decline" (p. 4). Among the calls for changes in the social, psychological, historical, cultural, legal and economic forces that have shaped the government and business attitudes in Nova Scotia, was the conclusion that "Nova Scotians must become more entrepreneurial, optimistic and united, and therefore must move away from outdated reliance on government" (Nerbas, 2015). Entrepreneurship is an important concept in the report and is viewed as a means to spur innovation, stabilize population and change the ideas Nova Scotians hold about business. The recommendations of the Ivany Report are indeed sweeping and multi-dimensional and, in essence, call for a paradigm shift in Nova Scotia toward wholesale modernization.

Theoretical Positions

Modernization Theory

Questions about the sustainability, both in terms of economics and population, of rural Nova Scotia have been a protracted matter of concern for researchers and policy makers alike for decades—with particular attention in recent times. Certainly, the mass migration of people from rural to urban locales, in this age of competitive globalization, has seen a sharp increase, resulting in a fundamental shift for the rural experience. The resulting reality, I think, can be explained vis a vis an examination of the tenets of modernization theory.

Modernization theory is one of the most influential theories in the social sciences. The theory postulates that economic development brings large changes in values, from material and survival values to post-materialist quality of life concerns, and has been linked to the work of Marx, Weber, Rostow, Parsons and Sutton. More precisely, the theory claims, according to Stockemer & Sundstrom (2016), "that as the composition of the economy develops from agrarian to industrial and then to postindustrial, citizens will increasingly embrace cosmopolitan and post-materialist values such as environmental protection, self-

expression and gender equality" (p. 696). In essence, modernization suggests that there can be continuous progress and improvement in human affairs.

It can be reasonably assumed that the charge of modernization demands social adaptability and mobility. This paper takes the position that rural Nova Scotia lacks these traits. It should be stated, however, that this reality is not necessarily a detriment or an unconquerable barrier to stability and growth. The traditionalism often found in rurality is grounded in, to quote Tönnies (1922), *Gemeinschaft*, a deep kinship that could serve to buoy the social changes needed to usher in modernization and add a measure of "resistance" (Corbett, 2007, p. 266) to the urban-biased conception that a rural life is a dross life (Barter, 2008).

Dependency Theory

Examinations of how areas become modern began, perhaps predictably, on the economic front. Dependency theorists mainly take the position that economic development has, throughout the age of capitalism, created conditions detrimental to the advancement of humankind. Ferraro (2008) notes that Dependency Theory emerged in the 1950s, in a direct response to the mal-development and economic inequality between Western and non-Western states. Indeed, capitalism's great promises seemed to sputter in the so-called developing world with obvious disparity between the economic advances of the West and non-West. Secondi (2008) explained this phenomenon in relatively simple terms:

> …poor countries exported primary commodities to the rich countries who then manufactured products out of those commodities and sold them back to the poorer countries. The "Value Added" by manufacturing a usable product always cost more than the primary products used to create those products. (p. 32)

The endgame was a clutching dependency by developing states on developed states and— as the work of George (1990) so clearly supports—economic uncertainty, environmental collapse and social instability.

Dependency Theory, despite its intuitive macro level applications, can be properly used at the micro level, more specifically, to help understand rural Nova Scotia's economic predicament. I will use Dependency Theory in two regards: urban reliance and the need for capital. Urban influence, and reliance, over rural areas is not a new idea. Von Thünen (1826) was among the first to explain how rural areas depend on urban markets and, subsequently, how to most effectively use land to service this relationship. In earlier time periods, rural-urban linkages were almost exclusively related to agriculture—a seemingly one-way conveyor belt of food to cities—but as economic conditions changed, so did the linkages. Mylott (2006) explains:

> Rural areas depend on urban areas for secondary schools, post and telephone, credit, agricultural expansion services, farm equipment, hospitals and government services. Greater access to information technology, better roads,

> improved education and changing economic realities are increasing the movement of people, goods and services, waste and pollution and blurring the boundaries between urban and rural areas. As incomes from agriculture decrease, rural households are forced to develop new and more complex livelihood strategies, more dependent on urban areas, that include both agricultural and non-agricultural incomes, including remittances from seasonal and permanent migrants. (p. 2)

Under a system of dependency, further realities emerge for rural citizens. With diminishing economic opportunities in rural locales, citizens are pushed out in search of work. Papastergiadis (2000) calls this phenomenon the "water pump model," and describes it as "the movement of people to and fro by the needs of capital" (p. 15). This is certainly the case in rural Nova Scotia, where scores of people exist in a life of transience, commuting back and forth between job site and home—some refer to the lifestyle as being shackled in "golden handcuffs." The remittances obtained under this arrangement have, ironically, helped maintain many rural Nova Scotian communities.

Parsons's Modern Social System

Parsons has offered a variety of perspectives on modernization. Unlike the Marxist predilection for social upheaval, Parsons was interested in what gave society stability—functionalism for a sociologist—and how that stability was perpetuated. 1951's *The Social System* offered a range of intriguing explanations for societal development and produced Action Theory, a bridge between positivism and hermeneutics. Related to modernization, Parsons provides two relevant insights: pattern variables and functional system problems.

Pattern variables provide a means of describing and classifying institutions, social relationships, and different societies, and the values and norms of these. All of the norms, values, roles, institutions, subsystems and even the society as a whole can be classified and examined on the basis of these pattern variables. Of Parsons' six pattern variables, the notion of expressive versus instrumental tasks harkens closely to modern societies. According to Parsons (1951), traditional, perhaps non-modern, societies are more likely to be characterized by expressive tasks, described nicely by Morgan (1975) as "people, roles, and actions concerned with taking care of the common task culture, how to integrate the group, and how to manage and resolve internal tensions and conflicts" (p. 29). On the contrary, more modern societies, Parsons argues, are characterized by instrumental characteristics: "…people, roles, and actions associated with ideas, problem solving, getting the task done" (Morgan, 1975, p. 33). Expressive characteristics are linked to both the political and economic sphere. Furthermore, while the dichotomy of expressive versus instrumental characteristics is useful in classifying types of societies, Parsons also proffered four basic functions that all social systems must perform if

they are to persist. His Adaptation, Goal Attainment, Integration and Latency (AGIL) model adds a depth of understanding to the charge of societies to modernization. According to Adams, Bert & Sydie (2002):

> For Parsons, the AGIL functions exist at all levels of society and in each subsystem. These may not be consciously worked out functions, and roles and functions can be shared among organizations or individuals. In traditional societies, most of these functions would have been centered in family and kinship structures, and in local communities. In the traditional society, there may have been little differentiation in functions, although culture and the integration function often came to be associated with religion. As societies have developed, these functions tend to evolve and differentiate themselves, with different institutions emerging to undertake different functions; within organizations, as they develop, there is a differentiation of functions, so that organizations become more bureaucratic, with different departments, branches, and programs developing responsibilities for separate functions – finance, human resources, marketing, service, production. Specialized functions and roles develop, and specialized institutions to carry these out also evolve, and it is best to have specialized roles and specialized institutions to carry out the functions of a modern, complex society.

Sutton's Societal Characteristics

As scholarship on societal development advanced to the post World War II years, thinkers began to consider, in less philosophical terms, how and why some societies are able to culturally, politically and economically advance—in other words, become modern.

Sutton's (1955) paper on "Social Theory and Comparative Politics" examines the structure of both agricultural and modern, industrial societies. His writing encompasses most of the generally accepted distinguishing characteristics of societies, beginning with the modern society, which he described as endowed with "the predominance of achievement norms," a "high degree of social mobility," "well-developed and insulated occupational systems," "non-ascriptive social structures" and an "egalitarian class system" (p. 71). The non-modern society, what some (e.g. Redfield, 1947) call "traditional" or "folk," by contrast is, according to Sutton, "ascriptive," marked by "limited spatial mobility," and "simple and stable occupational differentiation" (p. 71).

Rural Nova Scotia & Modernization Misfiring

Considering the various explanations and characteristics of modern societies, I position that Nova Scotia has, at best, misapplied the tenets of modernization, and at worst, flat rejected it. This process began, according to McKay (1994), in the 1960s, as the state, the emerging tourism industry, and

various businesses branded Nova Scotia as a space removed from the massive changes taking place in North American society, including advances in technology, capitalist expansion and industrialization, and urbanization. The result, according to Thompson (2015), was that "Nova Scotia had become "Canada's Ocean Playground," a therapeutic space to which overworked, overwhelmed, and to use McKay's phrase, "overcivilized" residents of the continent's big cities could travel to escape the stresses of modern life" (p. 183). Thompson (2015) adds that "In establishing this culture as traditional and quaint, the state and artists in Atlantic Canada constructed what Wyile calls a "folk paradigm" that positions the region's way of life as frozen in time, idyllic, rooted in the land and the sea, innocent, untouched by technology, and authentic" (p. 184).

The notion of the folk paradigm, which has been wholly embraced by Nova Scotia's tourism sector, is, I argue, a problematic concept. Wylie (2011) notes that the problematic nature of this paradigm is, paradoxically, both contradictory and complementary. The first is the representation of Nova Scotia as charming, unspoiled and picturesque. The second is the derogatory version, marked by "constructions of the East Coast as Canada's social, economic, and cultural basket case" (p. 138). Comparisons of these sorts have a good deal of history behind them. Mckay and Bates (2010) note that attempts to present Nova Scotia as a prepossessing land with populations living in harmony have their roots in the tumult of the 18th century.

To demonstrate this point, I shall use the example of Guysborough County, on Nova Scotia's south coast, for its experience is largely reminiscent of other rural areas in Nova Scotia. Guysborough County has seen the highest number of out-migration, when compared to other Nova Scotia counties, since the year 2000. A picturesque town on the shores of the Chedabucto Bay, Guysborough was once a bustling sea-port with strong port industries, a varied service sector and reliable employment in agriculture, fishing, forestry and farming. However, a combination of primary industry decline, the loss of major employers and youth 'brain drain 'ravaged the area and eventually led to a 24% population loss from 2001 baseline numbers (Statistics Canada, 2012). As employment stagnated, scores of youth looked to inter-province migration, primarily to Alberta, while interest in the skilled trades increased multi-fold (Phyne & Stalker, 2011). Concurrently, a growing frustration mounted for those still living in Guysborough. Phyne & Stalker (2011) found, in roundtable discussions with youth from Guysborough, that there is a government-directed lassitude toward innovative job creation. From a roundtable interview:

> In Canso, the government didn't try to replace jobs when the fishery closed in 1992 but also bought the temporary fishery. Most families then moved there [to Ontario]. Look at income; people are still unemployed – no jobs. The educational institutions are not teaching students jobs that will keep them in town. They are not teaching specific skills [for] what we need to

> sustain our community … Development workers are not promoting what we as a community want. They are promoting things that will cause them to leave. [They] should look to training applicable to the area. It will take more than tourism. (p. 30).

In response to this certain economic crisis, government, it seems, pushed solutions that I deem regressive. To bolster a sagging forestry industry, *once* a dominant employer in Guysborough, the Nova Scotia provincial government doled out subsidies to a local pulp and paper mill to the tune of $124.5 million—assistance that came on top of $36.8 million to help keep the mill in operation (Tutton, 2015). This, combined with preferential access to Crown Lands, had the effect of hampering innovative growth in the forestry sector (O'Brien, 2015).

Additionally, Guysborough accelerated the so-called "learning to leave" (Corbett, 2007) phenomenon. The creation of a skilled-trades curriculum program known as Options and Opportunities (O2), embraced by area schools, essentially guaranteed a steady flow of out-migration, for students were being prepared to work in industries with very limited job prospects in Nova Scotia. O2 offers students a spate of qualifications, preferential selection at vocation trades schools (Nova Scotia Community College) and access to specialized facilities that provide carpentry, electrical, automotive and plumbing training (Rankin, 2015). These features, it can be argued, seem to validate the findings of the Ivany Report. Reliance on government for job creation, a lack of innovative economic will and flawed education course options have created conditions of stagnation and decline. This, perhaps, supports the work of Huntington (1971), who argued the mobility, afforded by a society will result in a change of aspirations—in Guysborough's case, these aspirations have meant migration in search of economic prosperity.

Potential Explanations: Considering the Literature

In the early stages of this paper, I put forth that Nova Scotia lacks the conditions social/economic adaptability and mobility—a misfiring of the tenets of modernization. This point is defendable vis-à-vis the work of Marx Parsons, Sutton, Torres and Hyslop-Margison.

Beginning with Marx, his writing indicates a belief that capitalism needs constant innovation in order to exist. In addition, Marx discusses the role of inequality in the capitalist economy. According to Beaud (2001):

> This inequality creates competitive competition, and through this process of competition derives innovation. It is only natural for a business to adopt new modes of production if it notices that others achieve more benefits from them. That is where capitalism comes into play; because capitalism

> needs constant growth in new ways of production, while exploiting the less innovative players of this almost zero sum game. (p. 307)

Consequently, and in this context, the winner is the one that perhaps adapts to new environments quickly by innovating modes of production. Rural Nova Scotia, I position, has struggled in his regard. In an age of rapid technical innovation, Nova Scotia has seemingly elected for a firm grip on the predictable and ostensibly reliable primary and seasonal work sectors. Missing from this equation is a commitment to infrastructure development and renewal, high speed internet access, red tape reduction and the ability to take advantage of a progressively skilled and educated labour pool (CFIB, 2011; Munro, 2016).

In addition, there has been a frequent concern about the so-called attitudes held by Nova Scotians regarding business and community development. The *Now or Never Report* speaks to confronting the "current attitudinal barriers to business development and entrepreneurship" (p. 9). These attitudes, which have been captured by Stephenson (2014) and Risser (2016), include "economic dependency…closemindedness… a change-resistant culture and a host of other ills, in part due to factors beyond our control." In particular, closemindedness speaks to pessimistic emotionality, a harbinger of static, traditional thought, which, as Weber argued, stifles a society from achieving calculated, means-end reason.

The very cultural strengths of rural Nova Scotia: communality, commitment to the welfare of others and strong social bonds have also served to restrict modernization. This firewall is likely sourced from the strong social bonds and appreciation for community we so praise small communities for, has, in many regards, been an effective means of scuttling new ideas. A 2017 Atlantic Provinces Economic Council report on immigration retention appears to validate this point. The report found that 50% of Nova Scotia's rapidly-growing immigrant population leaves the province within five years. Begin-Gillis (2009) has identified, in part, why:

> The challenge for smaller centres is that they often lack the resources, both human and financial to systematically address welcoming community priorities. They are unlikely to be able to provide the range of settlement and integration supports offered by immigrant-serving agencies and settlement organizations in larger urban centres. (p. 13)

This is usually combined with linguistic challenges, non-existent familial ties and scant educational, cultural and economic opportunities (p. 11). By shifting the character of rural areas to one that embodies a willingness to accept change and innovation—instrumentality, in Parsons' parlance—we are likely to see the creation of a problem-solving oriented culture. One that looks internally for solutions to pressing matters, not, as Ivany has decried, external (government) fixes.

As a penultimate point, Sutton's (1963) "nine characteristics to the modernization process" reveals a useful, and relevant, consideration. According to

Sutton, "modernization is a complex process. It cannot be easily reduced to a single factor or to a single dimension…At minimum, its components include…social mobilization" (p. 288). Despite arguments to the contrary, there are social institutions in Nova Scotia that give its citizens the conditions to pursue social mobility. Even in the most economically disadvantaged areas, education attainment rates have never been higher (NSCC, 2016), resulting in an increasingly dense labour pool. Access to effective education, combined with high paying jobs in places like Alberta, has afforded the rural Nova Scotian a good measure of social mobility. The problem, so it seems, is that this social mobility has not been captured in the local context. With economic empowerment largely out-of-province, social mobility has been exercised through resettlement in places like Fort McMurray. In essence, the very social mobility created in rural Nova Scotia, is not of direct benefit to rural Nova Scotia.

The Paradox of Economic Neo-Liberalism

Neo-liberalism, as Cassell & Nelson (2013) define, is the transition of global economies to the "belief in the proposition that the opening, deregulating and privatizing of national economies make them more competitive, attractive to foreign capital and, therefore, ultimately, more successful" (p. 247). Torres (2013) presents neo-liberalism as a series of 16 theses, which include, most damning, the preference for hyper-competition, consumerism and social fragmentation. Neo-liberalism places its stock in rationality, efficiency and effectiveness—what Samier (2008) would call "New Public Management" (p. 3)—and is unshakable in claim that freedom and prosperity comes from an unfettered capitalism.

There is no questioning that neo-liberal economic principles have been disproportionally hard on rural areas (Smith & Lee, 2024). There are many examples of this in the Nova Scotia context, including a recent decision by the Michelin Tire corporation to shed 500 assembly jobs in the face of "changing consumer demand and high production costs" (Erskine, 2014). This is a perfect representation of Hyslop-Margison's (2012) definition of the neo-liberal apparatus, one that ensures the continual downsizing of the work force. As much of rural Nova Scotia's economic base is rooted in the primary sector and foreign-owned industry, and thus vulnerable to economic shock, the neo-liberal advance is a powerful source of explanation for the stifling of modernization.

With that, it is intriguing to consider the role that neo-liberalism could play in rural Nova Scotia's economic development. The Ivany Report, referenced frequently in this article, makes specific reference to an area of neo-liberalism that could serve to benefit Nova Scotia, one with cultural implications. The first is related to the regulatory process and its ongoing tension with environmental advocacy. Historically, corporate entities have tried to engage with Nova Scotia's

natural resources but have been met with resistance, to varying degrees, by community stakeholders (Bennett & Burton, 2012). Over time, this tension has, in some areas, morphed into resistance, creating a counter-productive cocktail of corporate in-action and unemployment. According to Ivany et. al. (2014):

> To escape this impasse, opinion leaders in different sectors will need to develop a more constructive dialogue on the twin necessities – economic growth and industrial expansion on the one hand, and responsible and effective environmental practices and risk management on the other. (p. 67)

Worth considering is the role of government regulation. Traditionally, neo-liberal principles has pushed for the wholesale reduction of government regulation in favour of unabashed free- marketism. This philosophy has clashed with the citizens of Nova Scotia and their topophilic bonds to the province—a phenomenon found in other jurisdictions globally, we well. Recognizing this, commentators like Vogel (1998) have found that market liberalism, vis-à-vis neo-liberalism, can exist in a regulated environment. This idea lends credence to the notion that streamlined, yet rigorous, regulatory processes can do much to advance economic growth, while catering to the concern for social and environmental responsibility.

Toward Modernization

While areas of this paper might read as bleak, there is indeed reason to be hopeful the conditions in rural Nova Scotia will, and have, improved. The source of this hope is, in my view, threefold and includes economic diversification, a capitalization of social bonds, and the potential of entrepreneurship (Thompson & Hernandez, 2024).

Sense of Community

Sociologically, social bonding serves "as a glue that holds society together through shared beliefs, values and traditions" (Ballantine, Korgen & Roberts, 2016, p. 582). These bonds can be stronger than in more heterogeneous, urban areas for the mix of topophilia and a strong sense of community tend to be, as McMillan & Chavis (1986) found, "a defining part of the rural condition" (p. 277). In this context, McMillan & Chavis also found that a strong sense of community offers its citizens "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (p. 15). These realities invite the creation of a community development mandate. Cavaye (2000) captures this point beautifully:

> Community development combines the idea of "community" with "development." Hence, community development relies on interaction between people and joint action, rather than individual activity…"Development" is a process that increases choices…a directed

> attempt to improve participation, flexibility, equity, attitudes, the function of institutions and the quality of life…It leads to a net addition to community assets, avoiding the "zero sum" situation where a job created "here", is a job lost "there". Putting the two terms together – community development – means that a community itself engages in a process aimed at improving the social, economic and environmental situation of the community. (p. 1)

Capitalizing on the robust sense community of rural Nova Scotia (Statistics Canada, 2013) is a natural advantage toward the pursuit of modernization. It means tapping into an inherent strength not easily found in urban Canada for there is a vested interest by community members in seeing their town or village develop resilience and, so to speak, solider on (Wu & Singh, 2024).

The Lewis Model

While the character of a rural community does afford a number of strengths, this must be enhanced by sound economic planning. Given the historical, and lingering, preference for more traditional modes of employment (e.g. primary resource extraction; seasonal work) it stands to reason that any job-creation scheme in the rural context should include a mix of traditional and more modern economic modalities.

Such a model does exist and is known, informally, as the Lewis Model—a classic theory for economic development under the umbrella of economic structural change theory. Often referred to as the two-sector surplus labor model, the Lewis Model posits that an economy consists of two sectors: traditional and modern. The traditional sector has a surplus of underemployed labour, which can be transferred to the modern sector creating a process of "self-sustaining growth" (Gollin, 2014, p. 72). The process of self-sustaining growth and employment expansion continues in the modern sector until all of the surplus labor is absorbed. When taken in Nova Scotia's rural context, the Lewis Model appears to align with its economic realities. According to Statistics Canada (2007), Nova Scotia has the fourth highest rate of seasonal employment in Canada. This has, in part, contributed to conditions where Nova Scotia also holds higher than national average rates of unemployment insurance claims (Nova Scotia, 2017). The resulting economic inactivity by workers has been shown to slow Nova Scotia's economic growth. By mobilizing this surplus of skilled labour, the Lewis Model argues that economic productivity can be enhanced by, quite simply, putting people back to work.

Entrepreneurship Education

In recent years, the call for young people to become more actively involved in the economic stability of their hometowns has grown louder (Patel & O'Connor,

2024). The explicit link between entrepreneurialism and regional population stability is clear, and is representative of statements made by Nova Scotia's Centre for Entrepreneurial Education and Development, which asserts the need:

> …to keep our 18-35 year olds in the province, as outmigration in this age demographic has become a serious problem … this issue needs to be our "projet nationale". But where do we start? How can it be done? "Youth need to see entrepreneurship as a viable career option" (CEED, 2016).

Galvanizing youth is an important element of economic policy. As provinces like Nova Scotia continue to grey, young people must serve as the economic vanguard to ensure future prosperity. To help guarantee this future, youth exposure to entrepreneurship education, I argue, must become the central cog in the economic development wheel. For further consideration, Canada 2020, an economic and social policy think-tank, in a report entitled *Unemployed and Underemployed Youth: A Challenge to Canada Achieving its Full Economic Potential* (2014) concluded that engaging youth in the practice of entrepreneurship is vitally important and requires a multi-phased strategy. The centerpiece of this strategy includes increased access to entrepreneurship education and business mentoring. Canada, according to statistics presented in the paper, is lagging behind other developed states in terms of "…education and training focused specifically on the needs of entrepreneurs" (p. 20). Canada 2020 (2014) notes that both the federal and provincial government must do more in terms of supporting entrepreneurship, "…especially in the provision of mentoring programs, business incubators and the availability of informal networks" (p. 20).

Asheghi-Oskooee (2015), using the Carland Entrepreneurship Index, an assessment that measures individual entrepreneurship potential, concluded that "…if youth could learn the opportunities and skills related to entrepreneurship, most probably they will become successful entrepreneurs in future" (p. 40). Noel (2001) made comparable conclusions, stating that "Overall, it was found that entrepreneurship graduates have stronger intentions to open a business, and that this intention is more pronounced the longer the time horizon. Having an entrepreneurship major also appears to have resulted in more actual businesses being owned" (p. 18).

Of additional consequence is the growing bank of literature of so-called side-desk projects. A side-desk project is most easily explained as a mode of secondary employment—a small scale job that brings reliable income. The 2016 Expert Panel on Youth Employment found that a growing number of Canadian youth are engaging in side-desk projects, largely in the field of technology. This, I think, has intriguing implications for rural Nova Scotia. By combining the technical competency of today's youth with entrepreneurship training there is, most likely, a recipe for economic success.

Education Policy: Business Education & Entrepreneurship

While education is certainly a centerpiece of the provincial economic-development strategy, I argue that rural Nova Scotia public schools are, bluntly, inadequate in terms of their entrepreneurship education offerings. In fact, some schools in Guysborough, Shelburne and Victoria counties offer no general business programming whatsoever, let alone entrepreneurship. It is, perhaps predictably, Halifax, the provincial capital, that offers the lion share of business programming—it also worth noting that Halifax is the only part of Nova Scotia that has experienced some economic growth as of late.

Entrepreneurship education, and indeed general business education, can exist in many forms—inter-disciplinary; experiential; problem based—with the interdisciplinary model a natural fit for those rural schools with limited program options. By incorporating entrepreneurship principles: accounting into math, social entrepreneurship into social studies, application development in technology courses, we have the ability provide a measure of business exposure to students. Additionally, the experiential elements of entrepreneurship, the business venture, for example, could also be incorporated into a variety of courses lacking explicit business content.

Teachers must also begin to think in entrepreneurial terms. The National Business Education Association (2013) states that teachers' right across the spectrum—from primary to grade 12—can pique the entrepreneurial interests of their students. A recent study by the same organization found that elementary teachers see entrepreneurship pedagogy as a task reserved for junior or senior high teacher when, as other studies show, there is evidence that the longer the exposure to entrepreneurship principles, the higher the likelihood of intention, or, the willingness to start a business.

Despite this research, the Nova Scotia Department of Education continues a foot-dragging approach to entrepreneurship curriculum. A survey of the Nova Scotia Public Schools Program reveals that, in general terms, business education is not offered until grade 10 with the only course dedicated to entrepreneurship education found at the grade 12 level. Additionally, the curriculum for Entrepreneurship 12 was drafted in 2003 and has only gone under review as recently as 2016. The scope of business course offerings in Nova Scotia, non-specific to entrepreneurship, is significantly less than other Canadian provinces. Both British Columbia and Ontario, for example, offer courses ranging from business management, marketing, accounting and finance, to business technology and career development. This offers students more exposure to business education and, potentially, a greater likelihood of pursuing a career in business after graduation. It stands to reason that enhancing the shape, scope and access to business education, in all its forms, would be of economic benefit to Nova Scotia communities.

Concluding Points

The examination of rural Nova Scotia's economic and social challenges reads as a discursive combination of angst tempered by moments of optimism and hope. There is no question that there are significant challenges to the future stability of rural areas—both in Nova Scotia and across Canada. The scourge of out-migration and economic uncertainly has wrought a new, more despair-oriented reality. In order to prevent the future erosion of the rural condition, there must be a bona fide push towards modernization. This does not signal a break from the way of life that has come to define the rural condition, for there is strength in the rural Nova Scotia ethos. What it does mean, however, is a commitment to a progressive process of change. I conclude with a quote from Lerner (1958):

> The traumas of modernization are many and profound, but in the long run modernization is not only inevitable, it is also desirable. The costs and pains of the period of transition, particularly its early phases, are great, but the achievement of a modern social, political and economic order is worth them. Modernization in the long run enhances human well-being, culturally and materially. (p. 438).

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