



An Overview of the Literature on Linkages Between Communities

3 March 2005

RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS
INFRASTRUCTURE CANADA



Context: Developing a Research Agenda on Linkages

Rationale

- Linkages between communities are crucial in shaping human activities and inter-actions. They connect people and places together and forge interdependencies between communities.
- They are economic, social, cultural, environmental, political and geographic.
- Weak understanding of linkages leads to ineffective policies.
- It is essential that Infrastructure Canada's policies to modernize public infrastructure and advance the New Deal for Cities and Communities be rooted in a sound knowledge of the complex and changing interdependencies between communities.

Objectives

- To foster collaboration and a community of interest among researchers and other experts committed to supporting policy makers in better understanding the linkages between communities.
- To develop innovative, effective ways to disseminate and communicate knowledge on linkages between communities among policy and decision makers, experts, practitioners, researchers, communities, non-governmental organizations, industry and the general public.
- To build new knowledge by identifying and pursuing further avenues for research and developing new approaches to the linkages question.



The Literature Review

Objectives

To identify:

- rich sources of literature that allow us to study social, economic, environmental and cultural linkages between communities;
- literature which goes beyond the traditional dichotomy of rural/urban – agricultural/industrial – core/periphery - to embrace linkages between communities of all sizes and types;
- elements of a framework for understanding linkages; and
- avenues for further research.

Conclusions

There is no body of research specifically focused on the linkages between communities. However, although fragmented, there are several areas of research that address different facets of the linkages between communities which could be used to support further research and policy development:

- Urban Systems Theory;
- Suburbanization and Metropolitanization;
- Impact of ICT;
- Globalization;
- Demography (migration and immigration);
- Cultural growth poles; and
- Environment Studies.

There is no prevailing analytical framework for understanding linkages between communities.

- The variety of relevant areas of geography might be more clearly integrated with each other, and in turn with social, cultural and environmental perspectives.
- The systematic approach of urban systems theory might be drawn on to contribute to our understanding of economic, environmental, social and cultural linkages.
- Research, and in particular urban systems theory, needs to account for recent changes in linkages such as immigration and globalization.

There may be other areas of research, more traditionally applied to investigating relations within communities, such as social capital, which might be used in analyzing relations between communities.