



# ***A Preference for Immobility: Promoting Place in Rural Resource Regions***

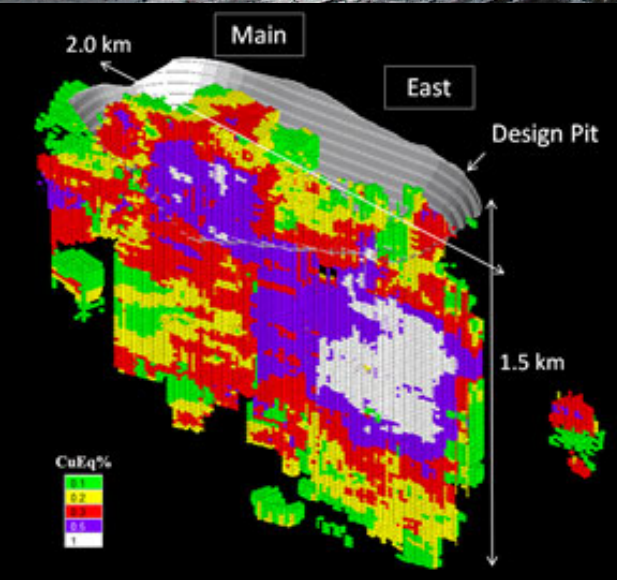
AAG 2016

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# Outline

1. Rural Restructuring
2. Long-distance Labour Commuting
3. Case Region and Methods
4. Findings:
  - Complexity
  - Infrastructure and amenities
  - Social capital
  - Branding
5. Discussion
6. Questions

# Northern BC Assets





# Space Restructuring and Drivers of Uncertainty

- Early 1980s recession
- Neoliberal policy response
- Shift in Fordist compromise: flexibility
- Restructuring and population loss
- Ageing population
- Severing of industry/government - community linkages
- Removal of spatial commitment to equity

CASSIAR CLOSED

NO ADMITTANCE

NO SERVICES

- Fly-in, fly-out; bus-in, bus-out; drive-in, drive-out
  - Workplace is isolated by a distance of at least 200 kilometres from the worker's home community
- 42/7; 21/21; 21/7; 7/7; 14/7...



Source: ebbsandflowers.com

# Rise of LDLC

- Rural and Small Town Restructuring
- Senior Government and Industrial Disengagement from Community
- Industrial Restructuring
- Technology and Transportation
- Worker choice, family preference
- Small town dynamics



# LDLC Community Impacts

- Stress on services
- Affordability
- Social disruption

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- Being “away”
  - Volunteerism
  - Family pressures
- \$\$\$
- Ability to stay in “place”

**“HOST”**

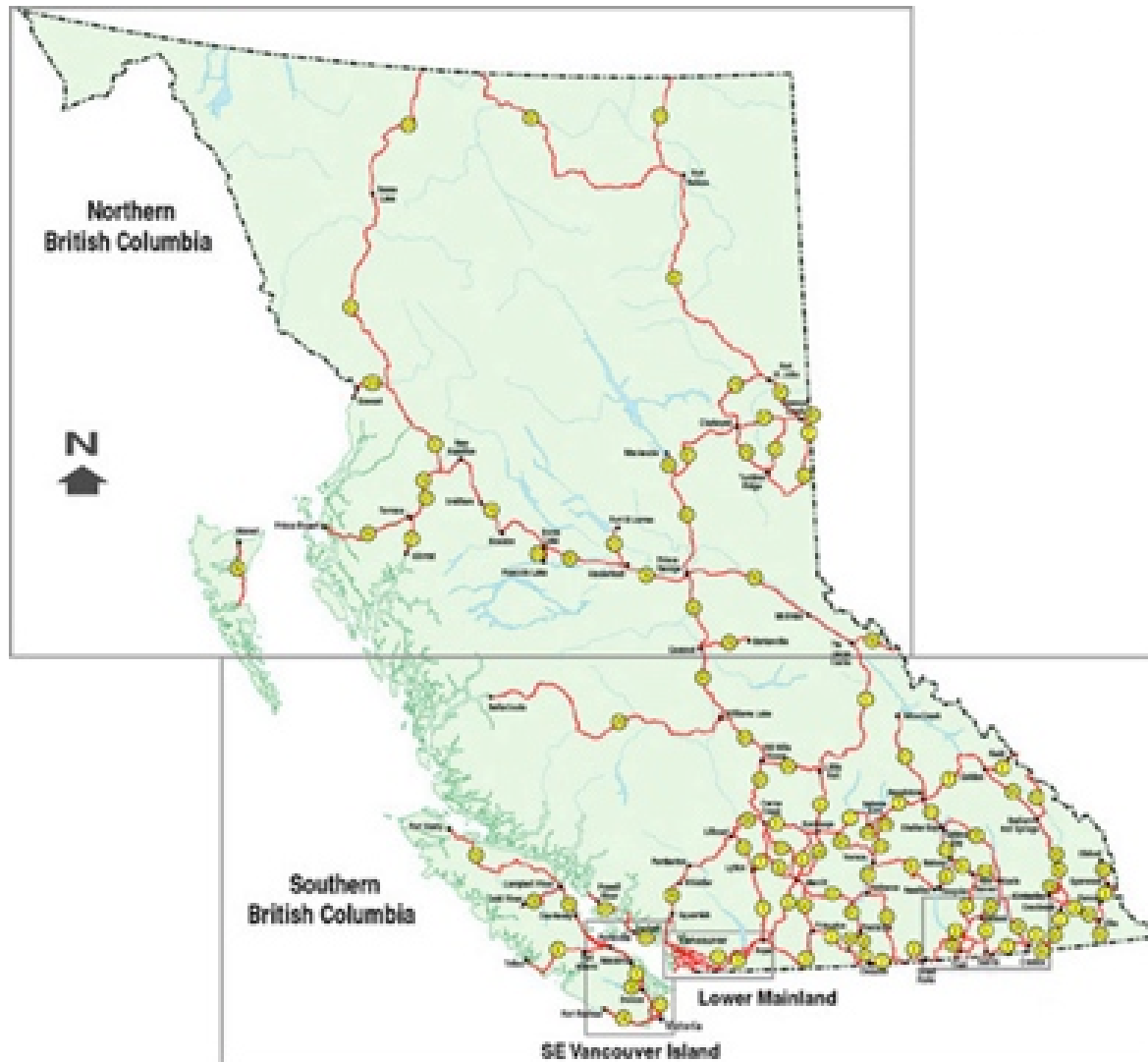
**“HOME”**



# Research Focus

- Examine solutions and strategies that communities are employing to address the impacts of long distance labour commuting.
- Particular focus is to identify strategies that seek to leverage a preference for immobility.
- By immobility, we are referring to a complex dynamic of factors that lead both people and capital to remain in place, in community.

# Case Region



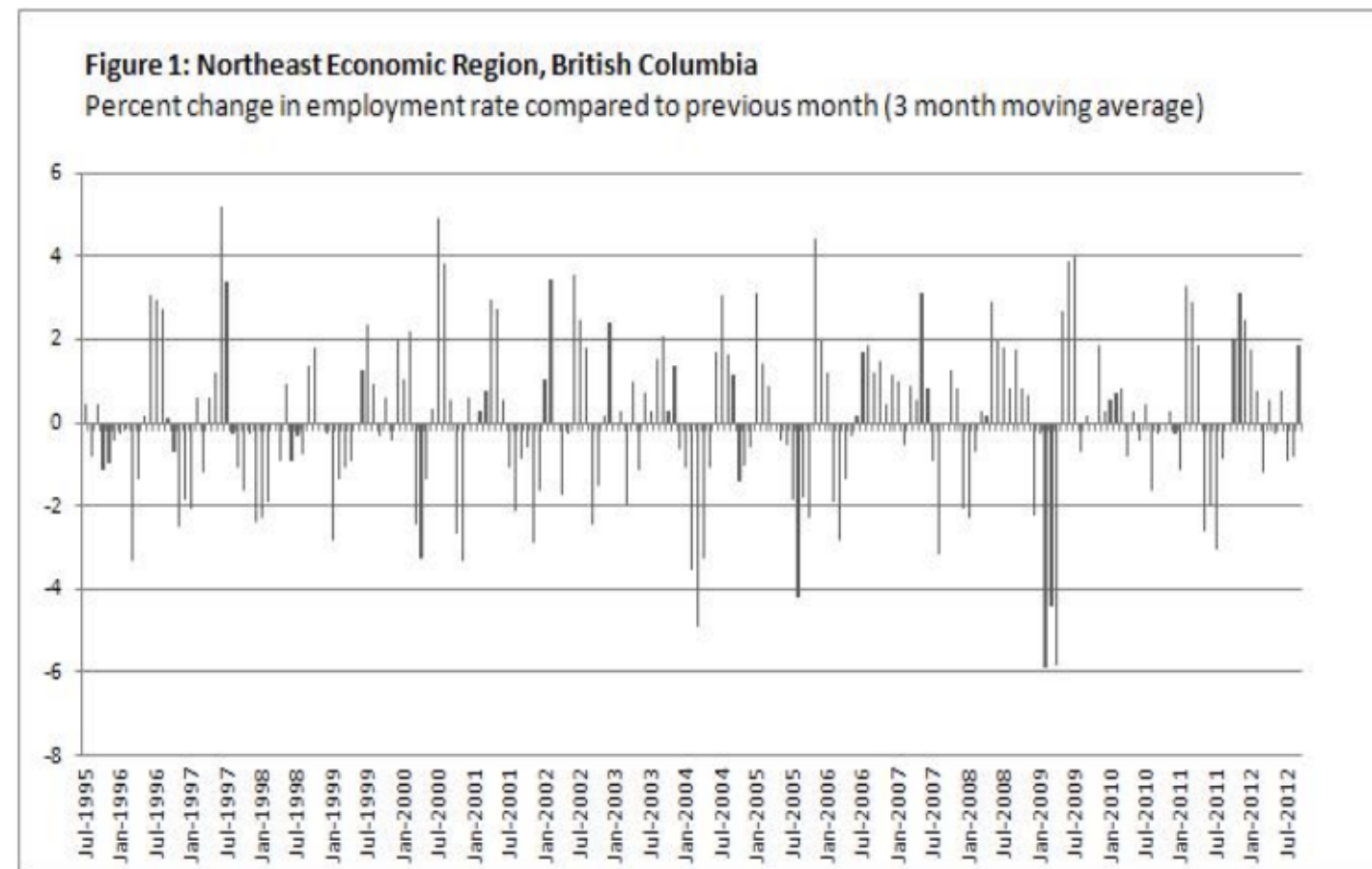
- On the Move: broader cross-Canada partnership that is exploring the complexities of employment-related geographic mobility (ERGM).
- Long history of community-based research in the region
- Case research with x communities:
- Key informant interviews (# in 2014) and review of planning documents

# Findings: Complexity

- Issue is multi-faceted and fast changing
- “Host” and “home” communities
- Lack of regulatory concern, oversight
- Lack of jurisdictional control: e.g. health, housing, education
- Limited industrial engagement
- Turnkey operations and market responsiveness

# Regional Waves vs. Boom & Bust on the move partnership

*Figure 1: Northeast Economic Region, British Columbia.*  
Percent change in employment rate compared to previous month (3 month moving average).

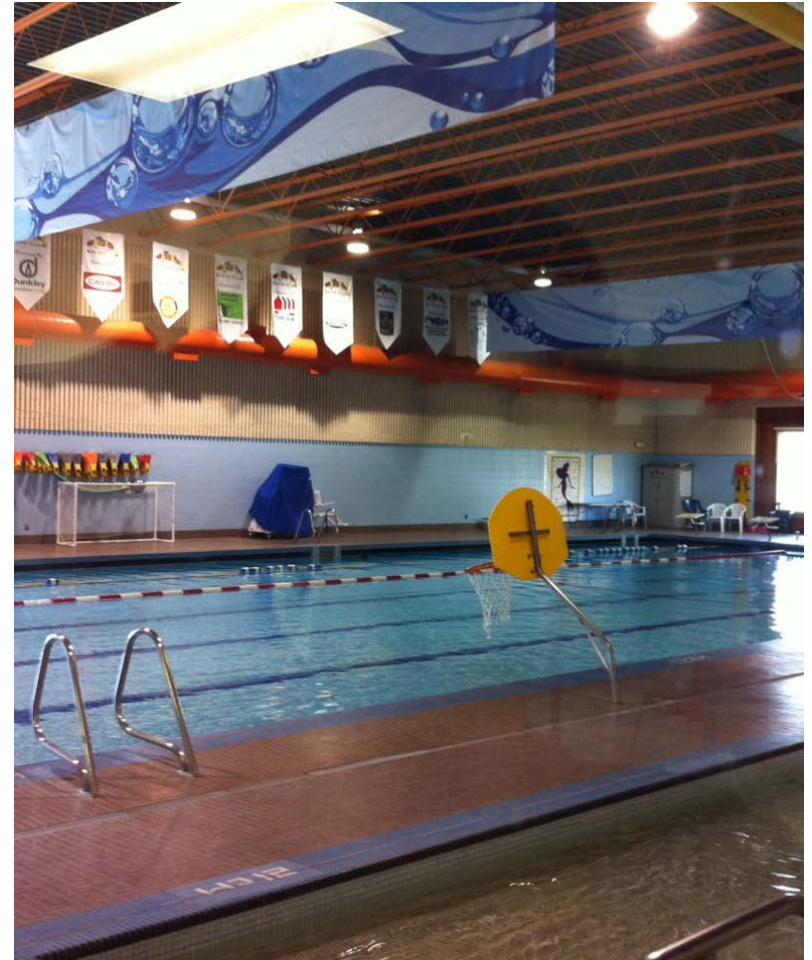


**= Uncertainty**



# Findings: Infrc & Amenities

- Mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century infrastructure – “infrastructure deficit”
- Instant town template (lack of diversity, inability to age in place)
- Housing subject to severe boom and bust resource patterns, swings



# Findings: Social Capital

- *“It’s probably only been within the last couple of years that you’ve noticed, after the downturn. Normally you going to the grocery store and you spend half your day in there say hello to everybody. **But now there’s a lot of new faces**, a lot of new faces that you see in town.”*  
– Mackenzie
- *“We are working on trying to link people up, provide information to people, and as people come in to the community, **we try to get them connected quickly** because we think that that’s probably one of the keys. Hanging onto people.”* – Williams Lake

# Findings: Branding

- Typical branding and marketing campaigns
- Interesting shift in terms of targeting existing residents (“focus on keeping the people we do have”)
- Gradual shift to place-based approach
- *“It doesn’t really matter what they do, **we want people here who want to be here**, because for community sustainability that is a key element....it would be silly to think that a community would only focus on amenity migrants, because that isn’t realistic.” – Williams Lake interviewee*

# Mackenzie, British Columbia

on the move  
partnership





# Lifestyle, Quality of Life



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# Discussion

- Appreciation for place-based development lacking...but improving (NEV II)
- { • Control, jurisdiction, influence
- Community and regional planning and advocacy (constant engagement)
- Direct worker outreach – need to be proactive
- Place-based benefits for both “HOME” and “HOST” communities

# Discussion

1. As Halseth (2016) states, “while corporate interests have quite deliberately recognized the changing competitive environment of the global economy, and have made decisive moves to reposition themselves to be more competitive in that environment, **public policy and local community efforts have not been as transformative.**”
2. Place-based development offers a “**no regrets**” approach to community development and planning within a volatile ERGM environment.

# Thank You!

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