

**Coasts Under Stress Workshop**  
**Junior Common Room, Memorial University**  
**March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006**  
**Notes From the Afternoon Break-Out Sessions**

**Breakout Group #1 – Rob Greenwood (Facilitator)**

**Policy**

Managing for scarcity of resource: how to re-build/re-generate the resource when it returns or how to manage if it doesn't.

Can cod come back? If so, probably not to historical levels. However, it might still be possible to maintain high value with fewer landings. But it's probably best to act as if the cod are not coming back. What are the impacts on communities, on the ecology, on politics?

Rural community sustainability: What can be done? People want to maintain their communities (e.g., Harbour Breton). Government can provide solutions.

Long-term ecological impacts interact with social and economic factors. Short-term responses don't meet the need.

Government can't be a magic bullet. It is committed to long-term strategic planning but when a crisis hits, it wants short-term, top-down solutions.

Resettlement: Is the province moving towards 200 communities? If so, how? No politician will say that but demographic trends say yes. Social implications of youth out-migration, no support for elderly. Out-migration is not a new issue, but migrants always thought they could come back. The drop in fertility rates is new, and is linked to insecurity and social change.

There are opportunities to save communities (quality of life, economic viability, leadership). When opportunities are created or happen, demographics/migration respond, i.e., people will stay. How to move from being reactive to proactive. What role can government and especially government policy contribute? Lots of micro decisions every day in addition to the more infrequent macro decisions (e.g., ports, roads, health).

Boom and bust cycles, resource cycles, etc., are difficult to manage. This is nothing new, but there is now enough research on these cycles (Labrador Coast, Marystown, Millertown/ Buchans).

Since the cod moratorium of the early 1990s, long-term conflicts regarding diversification and governance have been the focus in rural areas. The focus on diversification was too great, and insufficient attention was paid on the recovery of the fishery. The resource potential of oceans has been under-studied (science of crab, etc.). Government investment in the enormous

geography “under water” pales when compared to funding for things such as stream/site reclamation.

The approach used in Marine Protection Areas, which incorporates local stewardship, needs to be expanded; this approach promotes collaborative governance. Ironically, while informal mechanisms encourage collaboration, the legal framework supports government “top-down” decision making.

A huge investment in research is required for working with communities.

Insecurity in rural regions: most people don’t think government will solve their problems but they don’t know where else to turn.

Rural areas have a large proportion of disabled people, and government policy must keep this in mind.

Example of government inaction in rural areas: Moulder of Dreams, a social-enterprise pottery shop in Port Hope Simpson, was cut off from financial support.

## **Research**

Government is trying to find solutions to complex problems. There is a need for government to understand what research is currently being done by academics and how it can respond to government’s priorities. (For example, the Labrador-Northern Strategy could benefit from work done under CUS.) There are opportunities for government and the university to work together more closely. There is a need to cut across the silos of government, and CUS – as an inter-disciplinary research project – provides a useful model.

There is a corresponding need to better communicate the realities of government decision making to researchers; researchers must understand government priorities. However, it is imperative that researcher independence be respected.

In the past, government has consulted with the community, however, it didn’t think of talking to university researchers. The Harris Centre can provide a mechanism where government can identify and contact the most appropriate researchers for any particular issue.

For its part, university researchers need to include communities and government in the research process, for example, by inviting government representatives to research consultations.

Government and the university need to better involve people in communities. It is important to develop the stewardship potential and the capacity of local communities. There have been improvements in this area in the last five years. Future CUS-government joint discussions need to also include labour and business.

There is a need for more matching of research with university capacity/expertise and researcher availability/willingness (champions).

We need ways to formalize government-university linkages, such as mechanisms to set shared research priorities (e.g., collaborative agreements). Another example is a fund for community eco-system science. The Leading Tickles Marine Protected Area research dialogue is an excellent example of government-university collaboration.

### **Breakout Group #2 – Kelly Vodden (Facilitator)**

Many studies have large and complex datasets and are hard to translate/boil down to policy implementation (knowledge transfer). Policy makers sometimes have narrower interests than academic researchers, and may misuse research results as a result.

Government, the university and the community have been three solitudes. There is a need to work together and to inform each other. While government undertakes many research projects, it should also regularly review the independent research prepared by the academic community. There is a need to meet together more frequently and to listen to each other.

There needs to be more citizen input along with academic input into Environmental Impact Assessments.

Researchers need to understand national and provincial imperatives (e.g., contrary to statements made by CUS, there has been significant investment in fishery adjustment already).

Mechanisms are needed for interaction and for funding of collaborative, interdisciplinary research addressing sustainable development in rural Canada.

Regional development practitioners need an index or an inventory of academic research (“what we know”).

Simple messages need to be communicated: small is good; silos need to be replaced by interdisciplinary initiatives; education is an essential investment; the history and culture of exploitation needs to be replaced with a more positive self-image.

Leadership: provide examples of individuals with the stewardship ethic (e.g., Jim Russell) and of positive case studies to help build confidence that alternatives are possible. Provide a sense of urgency that change is necessary, in order to overcome the opposing agenda. Adopt lessons from First Nations and other cultures.

Intergenerational involvement: mentoring, exchange programs (e.g., government-academe), shared experience and understanding.

There exists a lot of data in government which could be of use to academics, however, it is not systematically recorded or easily accessible. Could the university help in this regard?

What kind of society do we want to be? There is no forum for discussing alternative social visions or possible solutions.

There is a preoccupation within government with how to do more (or at least, not to do less) with less money. How can this agenda be changed? There is a need to discuss motives, outcomes and to have a balanced discussion.

There is less policy capacity in the provincial government since the cutbacks of the 1990s. This creates an opportunity for university researchers to provide input, however, academic independence and integrity must be maintained.

How can government policy get out of reactive mode and to take a more proactive approach (e.g., in regards to wind power or coastal zone planning)?

How do government and the university start thinking collaboratively, sharing information and responsibility? What are the steps? Options? We can't ignore demographics, reality. We need to envision together a way to deal with this.

Dialogue: forums, policy booklet, ...

We need to find core issues which have major implications. One way to do this would be to hold workshops around the province talking about community futures and sustainability.

How can government and university feed into their respective ongoing processes?

### **Closing Plenary Session: Next Steps**

The report from this workshop should be sent to the provincial governments of Newfoundland and Labrador and of British Columbia, as well as to the federal government (both Ottawa and the Federal Councils in both provinces).

There are similarities on both the East and West coasts of Canada, and therefore opportunities to learn and collaborate. (CUS has advisory boards in both NL and BC.)

Government must understand that researchers are struggling as best as they can; more funds are needed to conduct more and better research.

If we allow nature to recover, it will. We should start planning on what to do with resource when it does come back – or what to do if it doesn't.

The issue is too big for government, academia and communities to succeed on their own. Major situations require collective action. We need to work together to develop wise policies, but there is no clear path as to how to proceed.

The CUS research could help point the way to better collective action; it becomes part of the knowledge base for moving forward in a more interactive manner.

Academic researchers find it hard to get government's ear; there needs to be more receptivity on the part of government, as well as a new language around research.

The concept of "Bay Councils" resonates with meaning, but one size does not fit all; different bays may have different approaches. Such an approach requires a province-wide policy. A first step would be to form a standing committee of government, university and community representatives.

How can we prepare for when fish stocks come back? When stocks recovered in southwest Nova Scotia back in 1991, it resulted in a huge fight over quotas. Unresolved conflicts pre-dating the moratorium in the 1980s resurfaced. Questions were not resolved but put on hold. The important lesson for NL is to resolve questions now before stocks recover! Some issues on the table now: small boats vs. trawlers; dysfunction within communities, etc.

There are currently limited opportunities for people with common objectives to advance a discussion. Now is the time to bring together experts, decision makers, communities. We need to "manage small": large-scale/short-term policies need to become small-scale/long-term. (However, it is unavoidable that some short-term policies will be needed; we need to manage at the appropriate scale.)

We need to treat fish stocks as regional/local resources; this will allow for local stewardship. However, some stocks do migrate long distances, and these need multi-scale-spatial and multi-governance approaches.

We need to think of enterprise allocations as the basics of investment; you can take these to the bank. Buy-backs don't sustain industries.

Silos create communications problems. Shouldn't we rethink this concept?

Groups need to be able to get together enough to be able to talk to each other around key issues.