
Stimulating Rural Labour Markets: County Donegal and Lyit's Strategies and Successes

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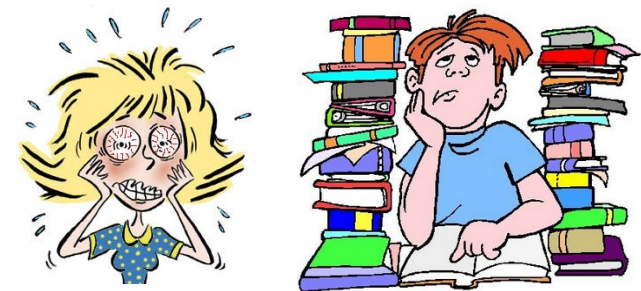
Agenda

- Purpose/Interest
- Background Information
- Methodological Highlights
- A Pause... What could be done?
- Findings
- Wrap-up



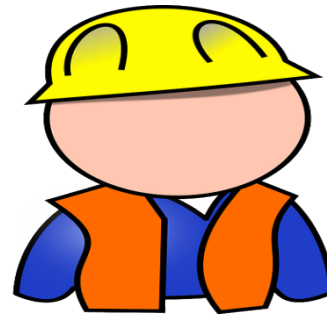
Purpose/Interest

- Purpose:
 - to explore the strategic responses that local governments, public sector institutions and organizations, and grassroots community groups can do to stem the tide of seemingly unstoppable labour market 'waves'.
 - Our focus is on Ireland's County Donegal. It is relatively rural, and relatively remote, and has had relatively high unemployment and low per capita incomes.



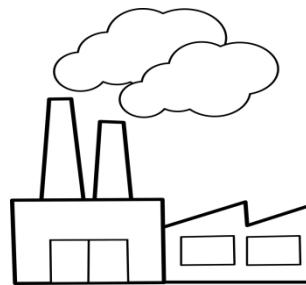
Background Information (1 of 4): Labour markets

- Full-time, full-year (FTFY) jobs are disappearing
- Polarization within labour markets
 - Lucky few vs. worried many...
- Working conditions are primarily employer-driven
- Workers can extract desirable working conditions only with sufficient power
 - Power: from unions, being in public sector, being high skilled, being in a tight labour market



Background Information (2 of 4): Rural labour markets

- Jobs are more likely to be non-standard (i.e. seasonal, temporary, on-call, part-time, etc.)
- Jobs also relatively likely to be 'dead-end' (i.e. lower paid, little upward mobility, etc.)
- Less diverse economies, on average. Sometimes struggling to adapt from primary industries to new technologies & service-based economies.
- Tending to consist more of older workers (since rural populations are shrinking and aging, and young people are more likely to out-migrate)



Background Information (3 of 4): County Donegal & Lyit

- Ireland's 'Celtic Tiger' ended with a thud in November 2008.
- That 15 year boom did not fully reach County Donegal. The area continues to suffer from a relatively low and aging population, high unemployment and out-migration,
- County Donegal: 161, 000 people; low density: 33/square km.
- County Donegal is tucked away in Ireland's Northwest. Three hours from Belfast and four hours from Dublin.

- Letterkenny Institute of Technology (Lyt)
 - Main campus is in Letterkenny, which is a small city of about 20,000 people, and, for its rural location, is rather centrally located! It is about 30minutes or less to Derry, a larger city within Northern Ireland.
 - Lyt has roughly 3,000 students, but offers a wide range of programs and courses in a new(ish) set of buildings and facilities.
 - There is a small 'tourism college' Lyt campus in Killybegs, which is a small coastal town/village (of roughly 1500 people) about one hour away, and getting quite rural (and further west).

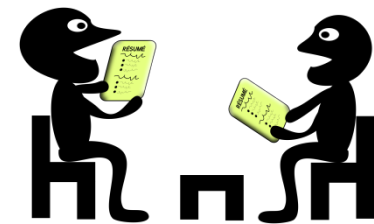


Background Information (4 of 4): Our Research

- Cooke, G.B. 2012. High Fliers versus Upstream Swimmers: Young rural workers in Canada and Ireland. In *Youth Unemployment and Joblessness: Causes, Consequences, Responses*: 151-168. Association for International and Comparative Studies in the field of Labour law and Industrial Relations (ADAPT). Cambridge Scholars Publishing. ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-4056-4
 - High Fliers: ambitious and likely to leave rural areas for work and educational opportunities in urban/metro locations.
 - Upstream Swimmers: the rural youth who stay at/near home and are struggling to fight the currents in the contemporary labour markets .
 - Mid Fliers: inclined to stay in their rural hometown, but want to choose the best possible local work/education options.
 - Cooke, G.B., Mann, S.L. & Burns, J.K. 2015. Education and employment choices among young rural workers in Canada and Ireland: A tale of two studies. In Kelly Vodden, Ryan Gibson, & Godfrey Baldacchino (Eds.), *Place-Based Development in Rural, Island, and Remote Regions*. Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER): Newfoundland and Labrador, CAN. ISBN 978-1-894725-25-5.
 - Many young rural people would happily stay, but need help to be able to thrive.
 - Suggestions: education/skills options locally, transportation options, some income supports
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Methodological Highlights

- Multi-method
- Semi-structured interviews: Phase I: Feb 2009 to Sept 2010
- Semi-structured interviews: Phase 2: Sept 2010 to April 2015
- A total of 34 interviews in County Donegal, 14 with 'young'; 20 are older
- Pilot surveying with tourists in County Donegal: 76 collected in 2012-13; 58 usable.
- Surveying with Lyit students in Letterkenny & Killybegs: collected in 2012-13; 330 usable surveys.



A Pause... What could be done in terms of employment policies?

- Wouldn't life be grand (for rural regions):
 - If there were local jobs available for those young and old, and for those of varying levels of skills & experience, and preferences.
 - If Governments were willing to intervene to stimulate the local economy (efficiently and effectively)
 - If Governments were proactive about developing new opportunities for the present and future
 - If there were appealing and suitable programs locally available/accessible for people to gain academic and vocational training



Findings (1): Tourist Surveys (2012-2013)

- Visitors were overwhelmingly pleased with this trip to County Donegal, but half of them noted that the physical infrastructure (e.g. roads, transit, signs, facilities) was a problem!
- Also, many indicated that it takes effort to visit County Donegal.
 - We feel that this indicates that there is a shortage of coordination between tourism operators and governments, plus insufficient promotion of the things to do.



Findings (2): Lyit Student Surveys

- Lyit is able to attract a meaningful number of international students (maybe 5%+?)
- ¼ of young international students (3 of 13) expect and prefer to work in County Donegal after education
- 15% or so of Irish students with a hometown outside of the county expect to live within County Donegal after education
- A slim majority of young students from County Donegal expect to work within the county after education
- A majority of young students from County Donegal indicated that they chose to attend Lyit due to convenience, affordability &/or the program offerings.



Findings (3): Interviews

- From an older male in 2009: something needs to be done. Only casual work is available, and for low pay and no benefits. Governments are killing small towns by withdrawing services and funding.
- From a tourism/hospitality business owner in 2011: people are not knocking down my door looking for work. It is hard work, and with the short season, many don't seem to think it is worth the effort.
- From a middle-age male in 2013: he was suspicious of Governments' motives. They focus too much on efficiency. Decentralization efforts only extend to regional cities, and that doesn't help 'us'.
- From a young female in 2013: Encountered repeated logistical troubles trying to participate in 'local training opportunities. Hindered by the training rules and lack of coordinated transportation.



Findings (4): Observational Analyses

- Good jobs are indeed relatively scarce.
- But, there is part-time and seasonal work available.
- Unfortunately, the tourist industry is very seasonal here. But, there are tens of thousands of tourists within a couple hours of County Donegal.
- Almost all interview participants referred directly or indirectly to the need to consider out-migration specially among young people
- There was quite a bit of support and appreciation for FAS/social schemes that exist.
 - Wow! The Irish Government allows double-dipping. People can get income supports while also picking up any available sporadic work.



Findings (5): Observational Analyses (continued)

- Lyit has a very good reputation locally. There is a need to fill, and they are filling it.
- The business incubator (i.e. 'Colab') is amazingly large and well-funded for its location. This, and the program offerings at Lyit, provide evidence that there is a real commitment to foster entrepreneurial behavior.
- Wow! The Irish and local Governments unveiled the Wild Atlantic Way in March 2014. It has boosted local tourist visits sharply. (It appears that the revenue per tourist visit is still modest, though.)
- Donegal County Council has made serious efforts to partner with adjacent counties and international partners to strengthen (search for?) business links/opportunities.
- There continue to be signs, in town and village centers, of sluggish economic activity.
- So, conditions, on the ground, are mixed.

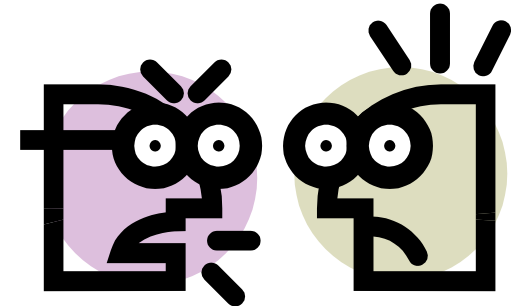


Wrap-up

- Like those in other regions that are rural/remote, the residents of County Donegal face some economic/strategic challenges.
- The nature of work has changed. Non-standard work is the new 'standard'.
- Ireland has 'social schemes' that are helping (some) people who are only able to acquire part-time or part-year work.
- The Donegal County Council and Irish Government have been proactive with, and willing to spend money on, the business incubator, Lyit's facilities and programs, and tourism.
- People within Lyit, Donegal County Council, and the county generally, are looking outward for opportunities.
- It is unclear how sunny the future will be, but the steps taken are admirable.



Questions?
Comments?
Complaints!?!
Suggestions?



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