

REIMAGINING RURAL FUTURES

HELLO! I'M ASHLEIGH WEEDEN

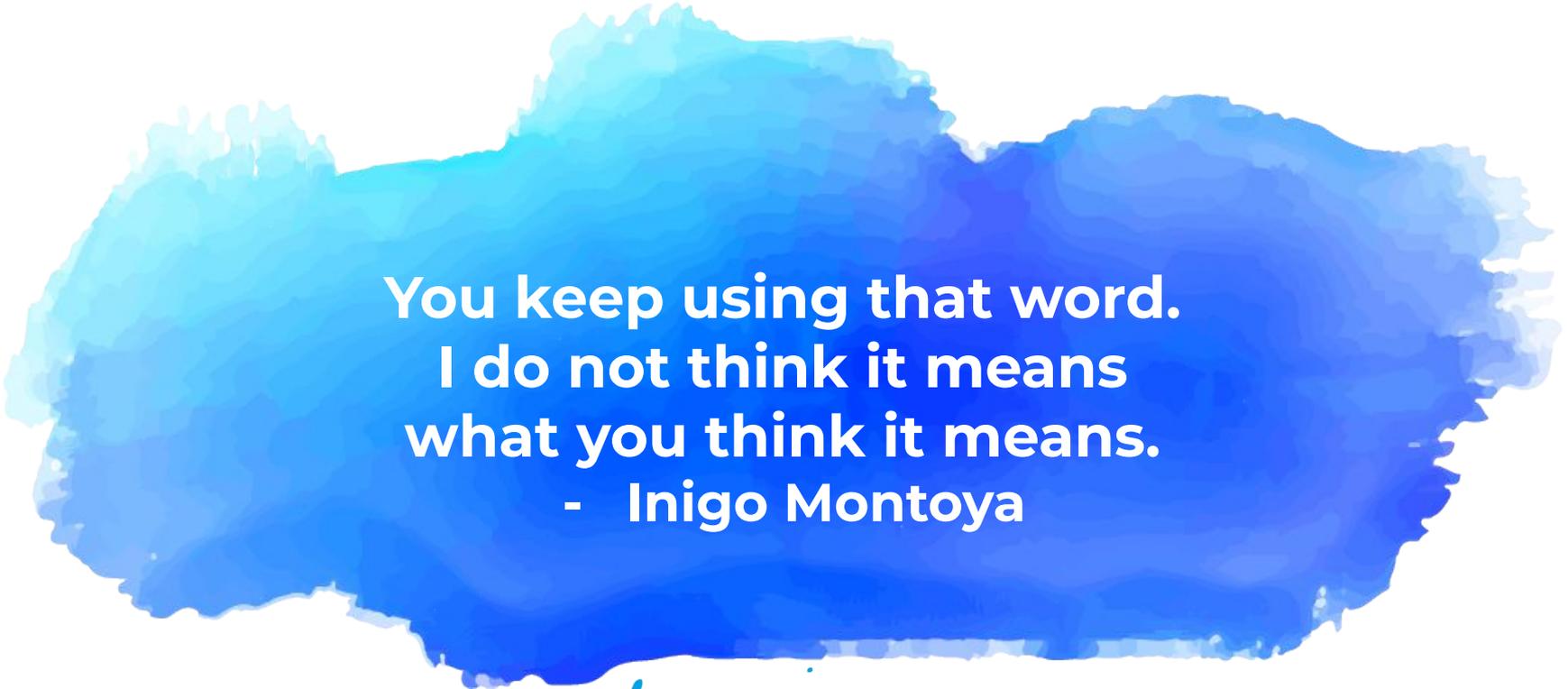
PhD Candidate - Rural Studies
School of Environmental Design & Rural Development
University of Guelph
Fall 2019: Visiting Researcher, Scotland's Rural College

Find me online: www.ruraldev.ca/ashleigh-weeden
Twitter: @ashleighweeden





Why are
we here?



**You keep using that word.
I do not think it means
what you think it means.
- Inigo Montoya**



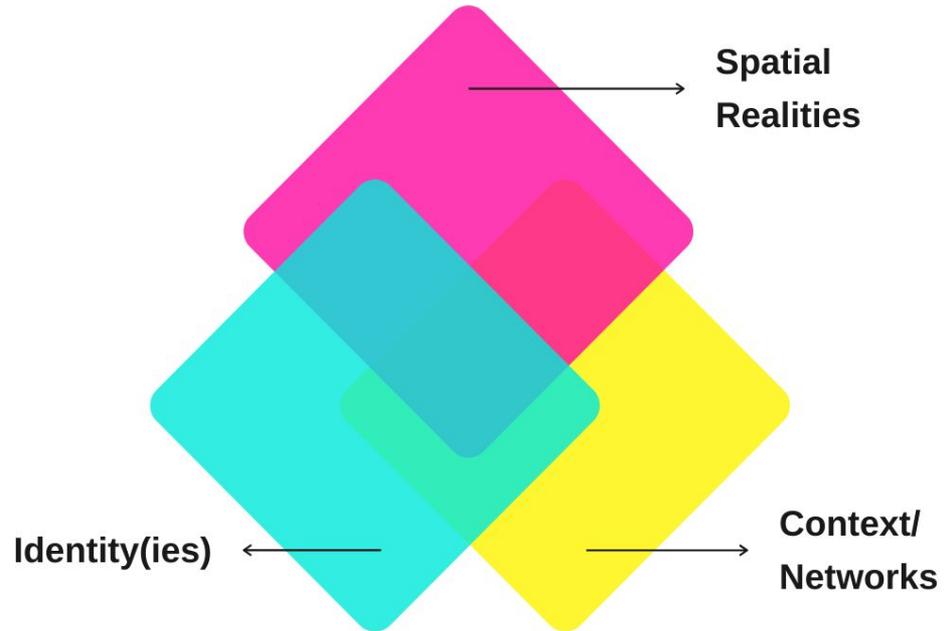
PLACE?

Place is somewhere in particular.

Places have multiple identities.

**Places are dynamic processes -
not frozen in time.**

**Places are not containers or flat
surfaces - they are alive and
composed of layers of stories
written through time and space.**





INNOVATION

is taking two things that already exist and putting them together in a new way.

- Tom Freston

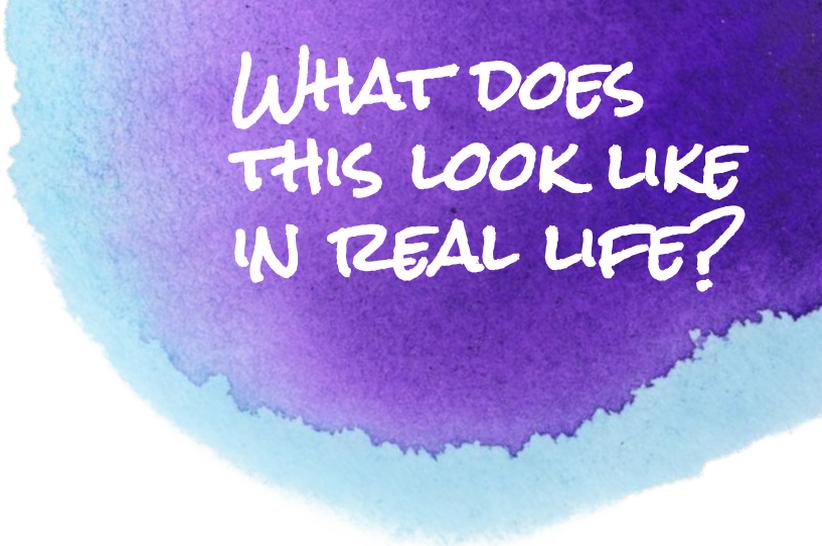


- ☑ Develop *relationships*
- ☑ Get comfortable with *ambiguity & nuance*
- ☑ Create *capacity*
- ☑ Empower *community*

THE INTELLIGENT COMMUNITY MODEL:

**Broadband
Knowledge Workforce
Advocacy
Innovation
Digital Inclusion
Sustainability**

- ▣ Grey County, Ontario
- ▣ Whanganui, New Zealand



WHAT DOES
THIS LOOK LIKE
IN REAL LIFE?

BUT I THINK
THERE'S MORE
TO IT....

SCENARIOS PLANNING, PLACE + RURAL POLICY

- ▣ Time to reconsider **'policy by projection'** as the dominant process
- ▣ **Multiple uncertain futures** that may play out based on today's decisions
- ▣ Exercises in story-telling based on what's **possible, plausible, and exciting** for the people most likely to be affected in these future scenarios
- ▣ **Re-imbed social science** into scenarios planning for a **holistic approach** to rural policy + development - including **both foresight AND backcasting**



HOW DO WE USE
PLACE +
INNOVATION FOR
FORESIGHT?



**We are all
on the hook
for dealing with
the hard stuff.**



**WE CAN DO
HARD THINGS**

"VULNERABILITY
IS THE
BIRTHPLACE OF
INNOVATION,
CREATIVITY
AND CHANGE."

(BRENE BROWN)

**What have
I noticed
here in
Scotland?**



LET'S TELL DIFFERENT STORIES



Future-oriented place-based policy requires tools + channels that are targeted, transparent & tangible

- ▣ leveraging **local, regional, national, and global networks**
- ▣ play with the **people who love you** & learn to **see unicorns** (hint: they're just fat and we call them rhinoceroses or narwhals)
- ▣ choose wisely, do it on-purpose and own the fact that **no one will care more than you do**
- ▣ be delighted & delightful: this can (and should) be fun!
- ▣ get out of the **black box**: make everything clear & transparent

IT'S NOT
JUST ABOUT
TECHNOLOGY.

EXCHANGES ≠ ENGAGEMENT
TRANSACTIONS ≠ TALKING
MEETINGS ≠ MEANING



“THE DOING IS *THE THING*”

*The talking
and worrying
and thinking is
NOT THE THING”*

(Amy Poehler)

Thanks!

Let's jam!

Find me on Twitter at
[@ashleighweeden](#)

Email me at
weedens@uoguelph.ca

Find out more about the work at
www.ruraldev.ca

