ADDRESSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

and why it matters for
community economic development

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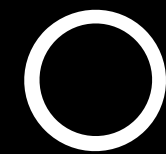
THIS
IS
NOT
THE
CENTRE
OF
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FOR ME, THIS WAS THE CENTRE OF THE UNIVERSE FOR 5 YEARS (AND STILL IS)

PRINT AVAILABLE FROM WWW.SADIEANDJUNE.CA

COVID-19 HAS NOT BEEN AN 'EQUALIIZER'

+

TECHNOLOGY HAS NOT BEEN UNIVERSALLY LIBERATING

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

+ 20+ years and 8+ different federal broadband programs

+ Low targets/minimum standards that reinforce a cycle of 'catching up' for under-served areas

+ Jurisidictional confusion, policy failure, over-reliance on market forces

+ Little to no longitudinal analysis of investment effectiveness, minimal exploration of intersectional review of multiple digital divides, and difficulty 'following the money"

WE DON'T HAVE TO ASK OURSELVES "CAN" WE DO IT ANYMORE. WE HAVE TO ASK OURSELVES: "WHAT."

What do we want do?

BRIAN DAVID JOHNSON

WHY DOES IT MATTER FOR CED?

CED IS ABOUT BUILDING BETTER PLACES TO LIVE + WORK

Rural residents and businesses must have access to Internet service as well as the ability to leverage that connection for social and economic development.

Broadband policies and investments should respect and respond to the needs and aspirations of underserved communities by addressing their unique challenges and opportunities. This includes specific programming that addresses key socio-economic determinants of well-being and climate resilience (i.e. enabling telehealth capacity, access to remote work and learning, and opportunities to reduce carbon footprints by embedding these opportunities in community).

Programmatic responses cannot meaningfully overcome systemic and structural challenges. CED leaders, organizations, and institutions must contribute their skills to radially re-imagining how we connect our communities.

Ensuring everyone has access to high-quality, affordable, high-speed broadband Internet - and the skills to use it - is a matter of equity. It's time to get to work.

AN EXAMPLE: GREY COUNTY HERE'S WHAT WE DID

SWIFT (INFASTRUCTURE)

Invest
Enable
Connect

BUILDING THE FUTURE
Holistic
Adaptable
Scalable

CONNECTED COUNTY

Stories
Data
Community

THIS IS NOT FAST WORK

IT TOOK 5+ YEARS TO BECOME
AN OVERNIGHT SUCCESS...
SO THE TIME TO START IS NOW

2012:
Western Ontario Wardens'
Caucus and Grey County start
pursuing an unspecified,
regional broadband project

2014:
Grey County leads support for
Southwest Economic Alliance
Intelligent Region Initiative

2017:
Grey County recognized as Top7
Intelligent Community by ICF

INTELLIGENT COMMUNITY FORUM

CONNECT

Broadband infrastructure is the critical enabler for digital transformation

WORK

Supporting a resilient work-force that can transition as economies shift

INCLUDE

Digital transformations must include those most at risk of being left behind.

ENGAGE

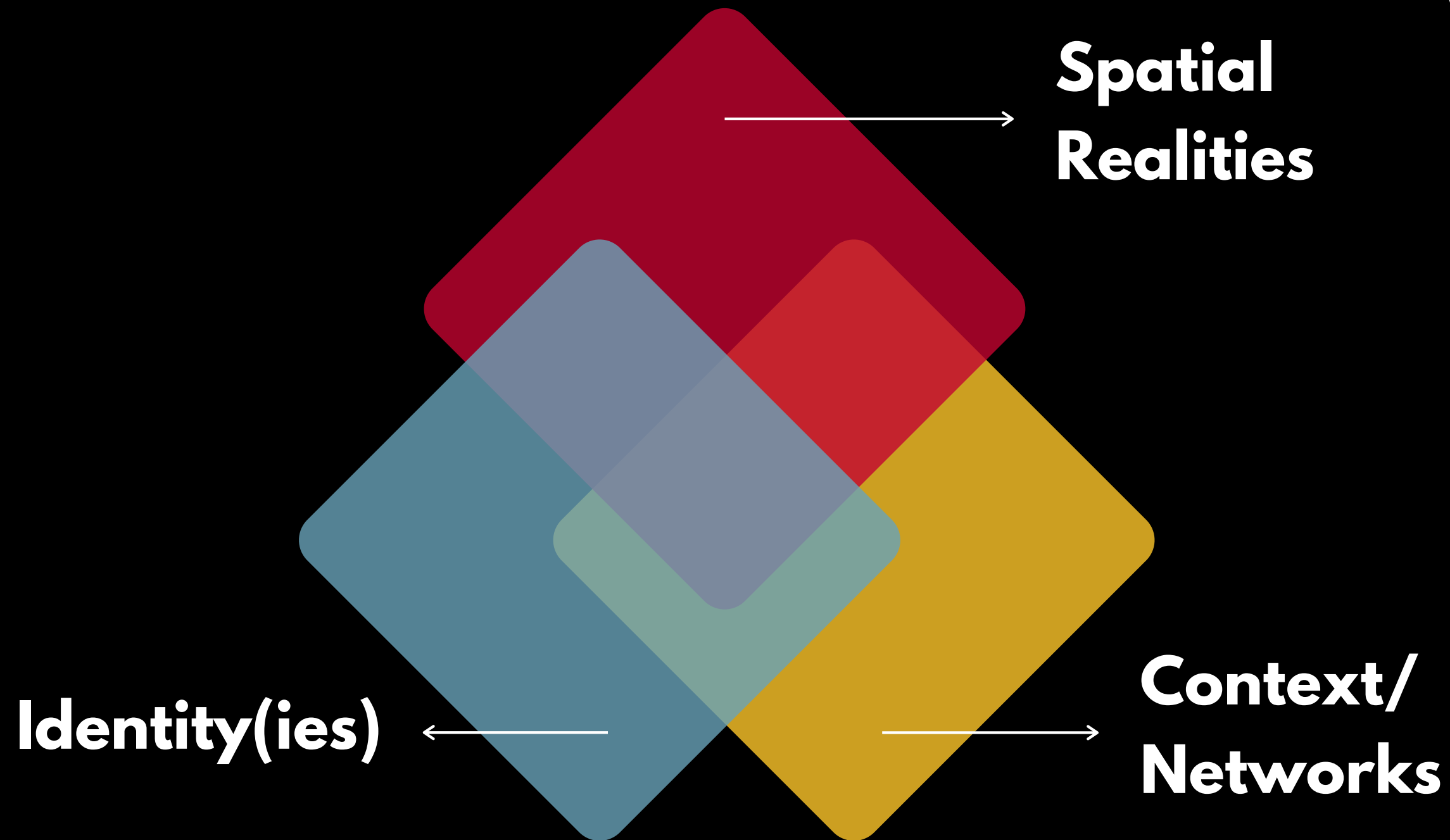Everybody's gotta get on the bus - community commitment is key.

SUSTAIN

We only have one planet. We have to behave accordingly.

INNOVATE

Helping each sector do what they do best & come up with new ways forward.

GET IN TOUCH

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SOME READING

THINGS YOU MAY FIND HELPFUL

How Canada's rural communities can become innovation hubs: https://torontoist.com/2016/10/how-canadas-rural-communities-can-become-innovation-hubs/

CRRF Rural Insights Series: COVID-19 - Addressing the Digital Divide: www.crrf.ca/covid-19

Radical Rurality: Imaging Multiple Futures Beyond City Limits: https://some-thoughts.org/weeden.html

A Digital New Deal for Rural Canada: Exploring Opportunities for Local Governments to Invest in Critical Broadband Infrastructure: http://rplc-capr.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Connecting-Rural-Canada-RPLC-RGN-Policy-Brief-Weeden-31MAY2020-FINAL.pdf

START HERE:
https://plato.algonquincollege.com/ac-library/digitalDivide/story_html5.html

What is your own digital capacity? How comfortable are you with technology? What assumptions do you have about the role of technology in your life and work? How do these experiences shape the way you work?

In your current role or the one you aspire to, how does the digital divide affect the community you serve? How does your organization incorporate this knowledge into your service offerings?

Next steps:
1 - Name ONE action you will take immediately
2 - Identify TWO partners you would like to work with to address the digital divide in your organization/community
3 - Develop THREE questions you will pose to decision makers (organizationally, locally, federally, etc) about the digital divide that go beyond "more funding"

MAKE A GAME PLAN

LET'S EXPLORE KEY QUESTIONS FOR DEVELOPING DIGITAL ADVOCACY, EQUITY + COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT