

rural development NEWS

Fairness and Resources: The Community Development Tragedy of Earmarks

by Cornelia Butler Flora

Historically, sociologists and economists have argued that in order to move toward a modern economy, universalistic criteria are needed (Weber 1927, Parsons and Smelser 1956). These criteria, the basis of bureaucracies, mean that the rules are set that determine access to and distribution of resources and those rules apply to everyone.

For children, it means that resources are divided fairly—and sorrow when it seems they are not. Our younger daughter's saddest day was when she realized, "I'll ALWAYS be the youngest." Her age is an ascribed attribute about which she can do nothing, except be sure that she is participating in systems where age is not a criterion of access, beyond a threshold, such as age to drive and age to collect Social Security. Recently a mother of identical twins, she instructs all that one is not older than the other, so that neither will always be the youngest.

For adults, it means that there is a level playing field, and that decisions are made impartially, not because of whom you are related to, who you know, or how much money you have.

In a society that purports to be fair, fulfillment of certain criteria is necessary to get access to certain goods and services. We believe that everyone by virtue of residence is entitled to clean water, so we make rules and regulations that determine the level of compliance for clean water standards, sanctions for systems that don't conform, and we also give grants and loans to help systems move to compliance.

However, there are requirements to get the resources to come into compliance. You don't just get money because you have failed to comply. There are a series of steps localities must take, such as making sure the rate structure is such that enough revenue is generated and the expenses shared fairly. That means involving the community so that each rate payer understands the importance of the water system to decide a rate that will cover the infrastructure costs.

Another way to improve a water system is to hire a lobbyist and get an earmark or special grant. The more earmarks there are, the less money available to those who have followed the universalistic rules of showing not only need, but ability to manage after state or federal resources are gone.



NCRCRD director, Cornelia Butler Flora, with her younger daughter and twin granddaughters.

published by the



Volume 29 Number 1, 2007
<http://www.ncrcrd.iastate.edu>

Rural Development News is published four times a year by the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development.

Cornelia Butler Flora, Director

Mary Emery, Associate Director

Janet Ayres, Senior Fellow

Corry Bregendahl, Assistant Scientist

Susan Fey, Program Coordinator

Pam Cooper, Administrative Secretary

Julie Stewart, Communications Director

Kristi Hetland, Web Designer and Editorial Assistant

ISSN 0886-8611

The NCRCRD prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). To report discrimination, contact the Director, NCRCRD, Iowa State University, 107 Curtiss Hall, Ames, IA 50011-1050; (515) 294-8321, or USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Ave. S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD).



This material is based upon work supported by annual base funding through the Cooperative

State Research, Education and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Any opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The particularistic manner of accessing resources, such as resources for infrastructure, can dramatically undermine holistic community development efforts to determine community priorities built first on internal resources and to maintain those new assets into the future to create new community assets.

In our research on community development across the nation, we have seen a number of communities that explain that they really don't need to organize and talk to each other. They really don't need to build working relationships across different groups because "Sam here knows 'good, old' Congress-person X. They go hunting or fishing together, and he'll just make sure we get the money for this thing." And since the Congress-person is on a particular committee—let's say it's the Appropriations Committee—he can make sure that money comes without strings attached.

Some members of Congress argue that they alone are able to make these decisions because they know their areas very well and that mere bureaucrats who follow rules, often set by Congress, are incapable of doing the kinds of distribution that is based on the need that they see. Of course, this kind of earmarking reinforces dependency, discourages local organization and innovation, and makes sure that the persons providing those services, based on particularistic criteria, maintain their strong ties that can result in them keeping their jobs, whatever that might be.

We further find that this learned dependency—using particularistic criteria of who owes whom a favor, which lobbyist or group contributes money to whatever campaign, or who has that personal relationship—really discourages communities from serious assessment of their assets and determination of how those assets can be recombined to create stronger, more dynamic communities with healthy ecosystems, vital economies and social inclusion. Instead, these communities tend to have a clientelistic culture with a few people in the community who are good friends of the Congress-person, figuring out what the Congress-person has to give and making sure those are the projects for which they can cut the ribbons in whatever community they want to maintain their patronage.

This of course tends to undermine the legitimacy of the bureaucracies who do not have the funds to respond to those who follow the rules, as well as undermining the efforts of community organization.

Our society cares a lot about rule-following and having rules that are fair. Community collaboration to ensure community benefits allows communities to use their own resources first to address mutually determined priorities. Using clientelistic ties to go around the rules undermines the democratic principle of equity. And such delivery mechanisms teach dependency. ○

References

Parson, Talcott and Neil J. Smelser. 1956. *Economy and society; a study in the integration of economic and social theory*. Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press.

Weber, Max. 1927. *General Economic History*. New York: Greenberg.

International Linkages Strengthen Domestic Research, Extension and Teaching

International linkages strengthen domestic research, extension and teaching, according to Cornelia Butler Flora, who recently received the Excellence in International Agriculture Award from Iowa State University's College of Agriculture.

"Much of the work that has helped the NCRCRD and regional colleagues develop the Community Capitals Framework was validated through my international work with colleagues," says Flora, director of the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development and Charles F. Curtiss Distinguished Professor of Agriculture in Sociology at Iowa State University.

The Center's work in developing the Community Capitals Framework has spawned a number of exciting initiatives across the country in helping Extension and other agencies map both input into program development and outcomes and impact. The Community Capitals Framework helps Extension educators go beyond tracing the impact of programs on individuals to tracing the ripple effect of the program on the community.

In addition to her position with the NCRCRD and her appointment at Iowa State University, Flora currently serves as an adjunct faculty member and a visiting professor in the department of crop management at the National Agrarian University in La Molina, Peru, and an adjunct professor in the Sociology of Latin American Agriculture graduate program at the National University of Comahue, Argentina.

"Teaching in Latin American universities has provided content for courses I teach at Iowa State University and through the Community Development On-line Master's Program," says Flora.

Flora also believes that "serving on international advisory boards provides important insights into collaborative governance and multi-institutional collaborations, which has allowed the NCRCRD to be more effective with its diverse partners in the Midwest."

Flora is currently a member of the Board of Directors for Winrock International, a nonprofit organization that works with people in the United States and around the world to increase economic opportunity, sustain natural resources, and protect the environment.

She is a member of the governing board for the Consortium for the Sustainable Development of Andean Ecoregion, which consists of more than 75 research institutions, universities, NGOs, businesses, producer groups and government agencies. CONDESAN works to create lasting relationships respectful of the complexity of social and physical environments.

Flora is also a member of the academic advisory committee for the Washington Office on Latin America, which promotes human rights, democracy, and social and economic justice in Latin America. WOLA plays an important role in fostering dialogue, debate and policy consensus among U.S. and Latin American non-governmental organizations with diverse perspectives that share the same goal.

Professional foreign travel has taken her to 16 countries in Latin America, five countries in Europe, four countries in Asia, and three countries in Africa. ○



Cornelia Butler Flora, NCRCRD director

Reducing Rural Poverty in the Region and Worldwide

Rural poor in the North Central region are generally the working poor. They are employed in low wage jobs—often several at a time. Poverty in the North Central region is also hard to see because of the cultural context. Poverty is viewed as being equal to moral failure.

But ignoring or stigmatizing rural poverty does more than disadvantage the rural poor. It helps perpetuate the current model of industrial attraction of low wage industries at substantial local expense. It shifts emphasis from increasing the productivity of workers to increasing the number of jobs.

The NCRCRD and researchers throughout the Midwest are addressing this issue by linking analysis of labor markets and cultural perceptions of poverty with economic development models to reduce poverty and increase local residents' assets. Members of this regional research committee presented their work at the 53rd Annual North American Meetings of the Regional Science Association. The presentation set the context and state of knowledge about working poor and offered a multi-variate, cross-sectional model of the working poor in the North Central region. Case studies were then presented using the model with particular focus on outlier counties for seven states.

While the NC 1100 regional research committee is focusing on the unique context of poverty in the North Central region, a former student worker at the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development is focusing on addressing rural poverty worldwide. Amber Herman, who worked at the NCRCRD prior to her graduation last month, has been very active in working on problems related to hunger in the United States and in Africa.

As a freshman in college, Amber spent six weeks teaching English in a rural village in Kenya and witnessed children succumbing to starvation. That memory, and the knowledge that thousands like them perish everyday, left her with a sense of urgency about addressing rural poverty.

In 2003, Amber was a keynote speaker on the North American Leaders Today Take Action Tour, where she spoke to 24,000 students about international poverty and youth empowerment. In 2005, she represented Oxfam America at the G8 Summit in Scotland and at the United Nations Youth Assembly. In spring 2006, she attended the School for International Training Uganda Development Studies Program to conduct research for her senior Honors Project on youth farmers in Uganda. Amber wrote about her experiences in Kenya for an SIT newsletter. Read the article at <http://ourworld.worldlearning.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=8551>.

Regional Research Committee NC 1100

Rural Development, Work and Poverty in the North Central Region

http://www.lgu.umd.edu/lgu_v2/homepages/home.cfm?trackID=4414

Joe Colletti, Administrative Advisor, Iowa State University

Cornelia Flora, North Central Regional Center for Rural Development

Cindy Anderson, Ohio University

Mary Emery, North Central Regional Center for Rural Development

Richard Goe, Kansas State University

Gary Green, University of Wisconsin

Donna Hess, South Dakota State University

Linda Lobao, The Ohio State University

Scott Loveridge, Michigan State University

Michael Schulman, North Carolina State University

In March 2006, Amber was selected as a Harry S. Truman Scholar, for her exceptional leadership potential and commitment to careers in government and the nonprofit sectors. She received a \$30,000 scholarship, leadership training, and is part of a network of other students who are committed to making a difference through public service.



Amber graduated from Iowa State University in December 2006 with a degree in public service and administration in agriculture, with a secondary major in international agriculture. She plans to pursue a master's degree and doctorate in food policy and international rural development.

At the NCRCD, we share Amber's passion for reducing rural poverty, both in the North Central region and worldwide. We wish her well in her post graduate endeavors. ☺

More information on Amber's activities to address rural poverty can be found below.

Leaders Today Take Action Tour

<http://www.leaderstoday.com>

Leaders Today is a youth leadership organization delivering innovative local and international training experiences to more than 350,000 youth every year.

Oxfam America

<http://www.oxfamamerica.org>

Oxfam America is a nonprofit organization that works to end global poverty through saving lives, strengthening communities, and campaigning for change.

G8 Summit

<http://www.g8.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pageName=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1078995902703>

In 1975, the French President invited the leaders of Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States and Italy to an informal gathering near Paris to discuss then-current world issues. Following the success of the Rambouillet Summit, these meetings became an annual event. Canada joined the group in 1976 and Russia in 1997. The first G8 Summit subsequently took place in 1998. Since then, the G8 Summit has evolved from a forum dealing essentially with macro-economic issues to an annual meeting that addresses a wide

range of international economic, political and social issues.

United Nations Youth Assembly

http://www.faf.org/programs/unyouthassembly2007/ya2005/ya2005_home.htm

The Youth Assembly is an annual gathering of individuals and young leaders from around the globe at the United Nations Headquarters. The Youth Assembly is about showing how one person can make a difference by engaging with the challenges of the present and being an educated and active citizen.

School for International Training

<http://www.sit.edu/index.html>

The mission of the School for International Training is to prepare students to be interculturally effective leaders, professionals and citizens. SIT fulfills this mission with field-based academic study abroad programs for undergraduates and degree and certificate programs for graduates and professionals. Participants in SIT's Uganda Development Studies program work closely with faculty and students from Makerere University to study complex issues of social and economic development in Uganda, a once-turbulent nation with a fast-growing economy.

publications

Building Native Communities

"A Native community is more than the sum of its parts. It embodies the mystique of community, the circle of inclusion. Within each member it generates powerful feelings of cultural solidarity. That precious spirit cannot survive without the underpinnings of economic development. But the development must be for everyone—not for just a few. That is the Native understanding."

This quote is from a guide to financial investing titled *Building Native Communities: Investing for the Future*. The workbook—designed to teach the basics of investing—was developed with guidance from an advisory group of Native financial experts.

Investing for the Future provides an overview of basic investing concepts in an accessible, easy-to-use format, and is the latest addition to the First Nations Development Institute's *Building Native Communities* curriculum series on financial education. The workbook's interactive exercises and accessible style work well for use in a classroom or educational workshop. Investment concepts are introduced through stories, exercises and illustrations, allowing the reader to apply investment practices to their own life while thinking about investing for the future.

Investing for the Future is part of the ongoing efforts of First Nations Development Institute to recognize and develop the assets, talents and abilities of Native people. This project is supported by the NASD Investor Education Foundation.

Building Native Communities: Investing for the Future is available from the First Nations Development Institute at (540) 371-5615, <http://www.firstnations.org>.

Increasing the Odds for High-Performance Teams

The use of self-directed teams in business, industry, government, charitable groups and educational institutions is increasingly prevalent. They can provide increased employee engagement and creativity, plus enhanced productivity of products, services or both.

Those familiar with self-directed teams have wondered why some work teams greatly outperform others within similar organizational settings, and whether teams from very different sectors of the economy and society achieved a high performance level by using similar means. They want to know what they or others might do to help teams increase their chances of becoming truly high performing.

Increasing the Odds for High-Performance Teams addresses these questions and more. This book, through a series of case-study chapters, shows how various teams started and became very high performing, and what organizational and team conditions helped propel them to that high performance. The experience-based book also highlights lessons that can be learned—those specific to the individual cases and those broader lessons that cut across the teams analyzed.

world wide web

Community Economic Toolbox

<http://www.economictoolbox.geog.psu.edu>

Communities today face real challenges. Jobs, incomes, education, proximity of family members, and general well-being are all tied to a community economy's effectiveness, dynamism and resiliency. More than ever before, citizens, public and private employers, and civil servants are actively involved in critically examining their local economies as they plan their economic futures. To be successful, everyone involved needs to know how their economy works—its strengths, weaknesses and hidden potential. This web site, with its tools and links to a wide range of economic development literatures, is designed to enable anyone interested in their local economy to use standard indicators to make a first cut at understanding its potential.

A set of tools have been selected that are standard in the field of community economic development. The focus is on understanding elements of a local economy that can often be affected by public policy. In most cases comparisons are provided with the state and the nation to give the user a better sense of the relative circumstances found locally. Suggestions are provided for how to use the results of the tools to formulate a picture of the local area and to consider future options.

The Community Economic Toolbox was developed as a project for communities and individuals by Dr. Amy Glasmeier, Department of Geography at The Pennsylvania State University, for the Web site Poverty in America (<http://www.povertyinamerica.psu.edu>).

conferences

The authors intend the book to assist professionals in private, public and not-for-profit organizations, including educational institutions, who want to use the team approach to improve their performance. Also, it is intended to be helpful to team members, team leaders, mentors, coaches and administrators across these sectors who want to diagnose their team and organizational conditions in order to make improvements.

The cases of high-performing teams are diverse—food manufacturing, laboratory analysis of genomes, automotive product testing and development, education and technical assistance, and a women's interest group for farm and community development. Three of the five case-study chapters in the book include administrative support teams—a team at the top in food manufacturing, a team leaders group in laboratory analysis, and a regional administrative team in extension education. Included are both co-located teams and virtual teams.

Increasing the Odds for High-Performance Teams, by Arlen Leholm and Raymond Vlasin, is available from Michigan State University Press at (517) 355-9543, <http://msupress.msu.edu>.

The Joy of Farm Watching

Penn State Cooperative Extension has released a roadside guide to help non-farmers better understand and appreciate the types of agricultural activities they may encounter in Pennsylvania. *The Joy of Farm Watching: A Roadside Guide to Pennsylvania Agriculture* provides a short overview of each of the major farm types in Pennsylvania and includes a description of their production activities and maps that show the counties where the different types of farms typically exist.

The Joy of Farm Watching is available from Penn State University's College of Agricultural Science's Publication Distribution Center at (814) 865-6713, AgPubsDist@psu.edu or <http://www.farmwatching.psu.edu>.

What's for Dinner?

For many individuals, stopping by a well-stocked grocery store on the way home is a pretty painless task. It's fast, convenient, and a cost-effective way to purchase nutritious foods. But rural areas risk becoming "food deserts" as young families move away and market pressures continue to squeeze small grocers and retailers. Food deserts are defined as counties in which all residents must drive more than 10 miles to the nearest supermarket chain or supercenter.

The latest issue of *Rural Realities*, titled "Starved for Access: Life in Rural America's Food Deserts," examines the distribution of food deserts across the United States and describes the major socioeconomic attributes associated with these places. To gain a clearer sense of the economic and health consequences for rural people who live in food deserts, the authors highlight findings from a case study in Iowa. The brief concludes with insights on what local communities and policy makers might do to expand access to quality foods for rural people living in food desert areas of the country.

Rural Realities is a quarterly publication of the Rural Sociological Society. The latest issue, "Starved for Access: Life in Rural America's Food Deserts" is available at <http://www.ruralsociology.org/pubs/RuralRealities/Issue4.html>.

Online eCommerce Training

A series of five online training sessions titled "eCommerce: An Opportunity Whose Time Has Come" is being offered by the NCRCD on the second Tuesday of the month, February through June. The series will provide information and strategies for addressing community-based technology opportunities and eCommerce applications related to online government and expanding business opportunities. More information is available at <http://www.ncrcrd.iastate.edu/projects/breeze/ecommerce/index.htm>.

NACDEP

The 2007 National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals conference is scheduled for April 16-19, 2007, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This year's theme is "Declaration of Interdependence: The Fabric of Community." New opportunities include mobile workshops and skill building sessions, along with two pre-conference workshops. More information is available at <http://www.nacdep.net>.

National Diversity Conference

The National Diversity Conference is scheduled for April 25-27, 2007, in Seattle, Washington. This year's theme is "Diversity Leadership: Modeling Systemic Change." The National Diversity Conference is a forum for sharing evidence-based knowledge and successful diversity leadership models. More information is available at <http://emmps.wsu.edu/NDC>.

Visit the NCRCD Web site at <http://www.ncrcrd.iastate.edu> for more conference announcements.



North Central Regional Center for Rural Development
Iowa State University
107 Curtiss Hall
Ames, IA 50011-1050
(515) 294-8321, (515) 294-3180 fax
<http://www.ncrcrd.iastate.edu>

Return Services Requested

Vol. 29 No. 1

NCRCRD Research Featured in New Online Journal

The premier edition of the *Online Journal of Rural Research and Policy* in 2006 featured an invited article co-authored by Dr. Cornelia Butler Flora, Susan Fey and Corry Bregendahl of the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development. The article, titled "The Measurement of Community Capitals through Research," forcefully argues communities—those that wish to survive—create their best strategies by identifying their best assets. The research focuses on communities that evaluate which factors are most effective in generating positive community economic development.

Research such as this is representative of how the *Online Journal of Rural Research and Policy* seeks to provide useful information on matters of rural importance. "Rural issues may have urban origins, but rural communities have their own physiology requiring independent examination and explanation," argues publisher John Cyr, executive director of the North Central Regional Planning Commission.

The journal is a peer-reviewed, online publication of the North Central Regional Planning Commission in cooperation with Kansas State University. It publishes academic and community-based research, commentary and policy articles focused on the Great Plains in a way that is of interest to both academic and community audiences. The goal is not only to present theory, but to stimulate discussion, encourage more research on rural issues, and improve access to information that promotes decision-making that enhances rural people and places.

Five issues of the online journal were published in 2006. NCRCRD research was featured in issue four as well, in an article titled "Economic Development in Indian Country: Redefining Success," by Mary Emery, Milan Wall (Heartland Center for Leadership Development), Corry Bregendahl and Cornelia Flora. More information is available at <http://www.ojrrp.org>. ○

Community Response to Raid on Meatpacking Plants

The recent raids on meatpacking plants in the North Central region have had repercussions not only on the households and firms immediately impacted, but have set up a climate of fear throughout the region.

The North Central Regional Center for Rural Development is organizing a multistate research group to examine community response to the recent raids on meatpacking plants. Land-grant university scientists from Iowa, Minnesota and Nebraska attended an initial virtual meeting. A second face-to-face research design meeting is planned. The intent is to link to groups in meatpacking communities responding to the increased fear and its impact on local economies and community social capital.

If you are interested in being a part of this research effort, please contact Cornelia Flora, NCRCRD director, at cflora@iastate.edu, (515) 294-1329. ○