(Re-)Assembling the Global Countryside:

Applications and Lessons for Rural Development

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erc European Research Council

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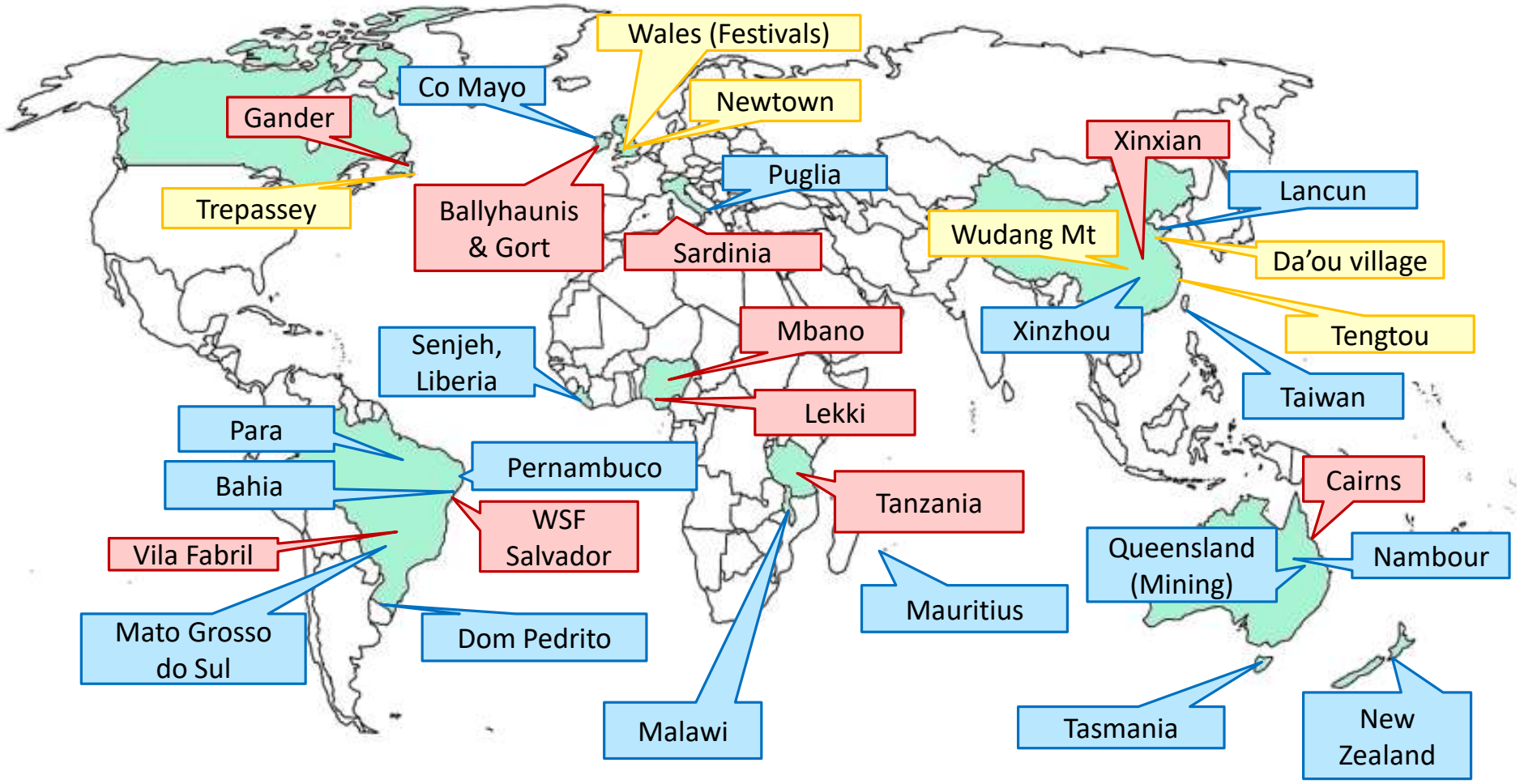

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Researching Rural Change and Globalization

Welcome to the public entry-point for a major research project funded by the European Research Council. The study aims to better understand the impact of globalisation in rural regions.

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Economy and Trade, Manufacturing

From Yosemite to Antarctica via Burundi

Rural areas have been integrated into multinational networks of trade; bringing benefits through access to international markets, but dependency on global firms has also made rural economies more vulnerable to distant economic events in this era of Globalization.

Wales

Economy and Trade, Sugar

Soft Drinks Stories: Tracing Fanta to Newtown, Wales

How exactly does globalisation work? How is it that we can buy a branded soft drink like Fanta in Newtown, Wales, just as easily as we can over the other side of the world ? A product, which is “worse than useless”, on account of it being the root of .....

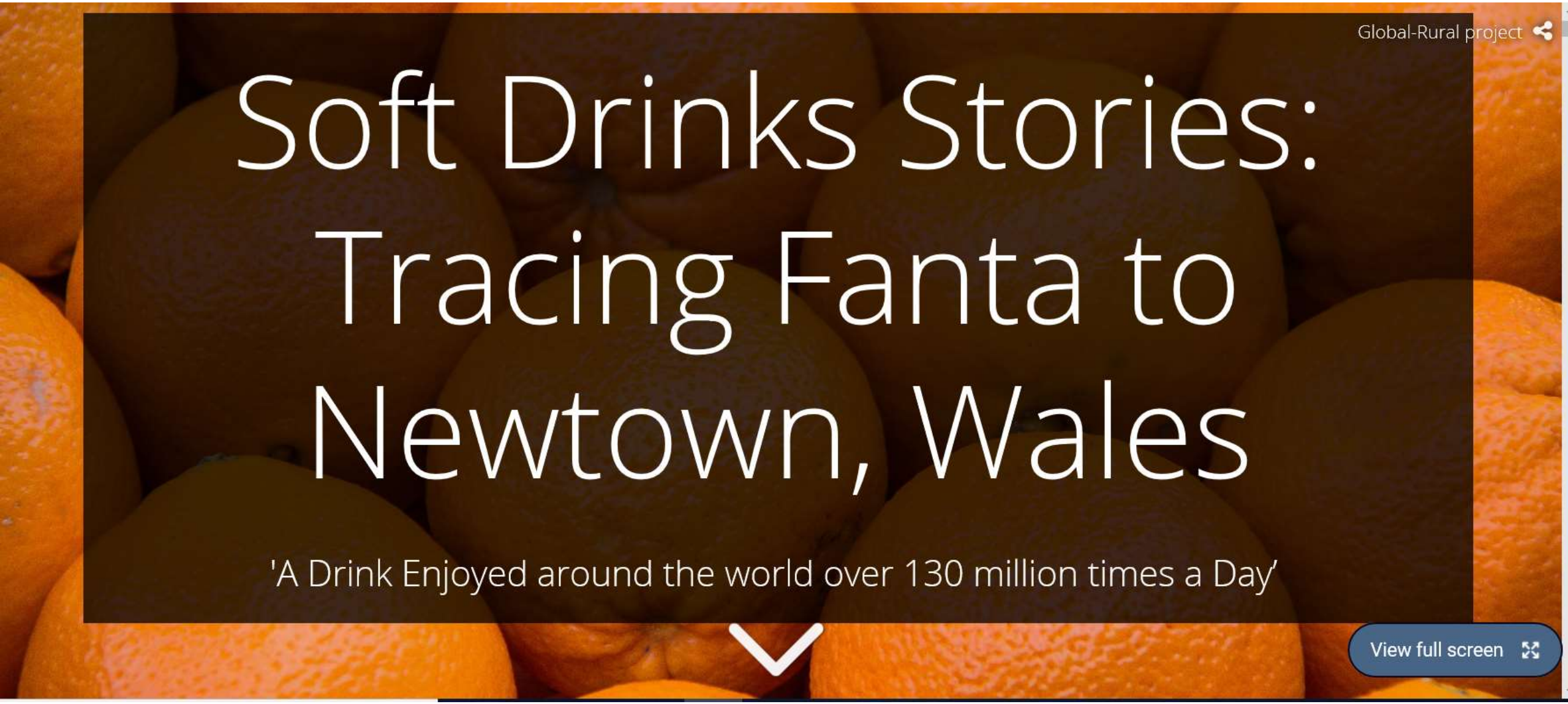
Global, Newtown, Wales

Forced Migration, Labour Migration, Linked Migration, Migration

Diversity in an Irish Small Town

In contrast to other Irish small towns, which experienced rapid immigration in the 2000s, Ballyhaunis has grown the last 40 years, with over 40 nationalities and 48% residents born outside Ireland. The residents are proud of their cosmopolitan town, and there is much that other communities can learn.

Ballyhaunis, Ireland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'A Drink Enjoyed around the world over 130 million times a Day'
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Soft Drinks Stories: Tracing Fanta to Newtown, Wales

Reach & Recognition

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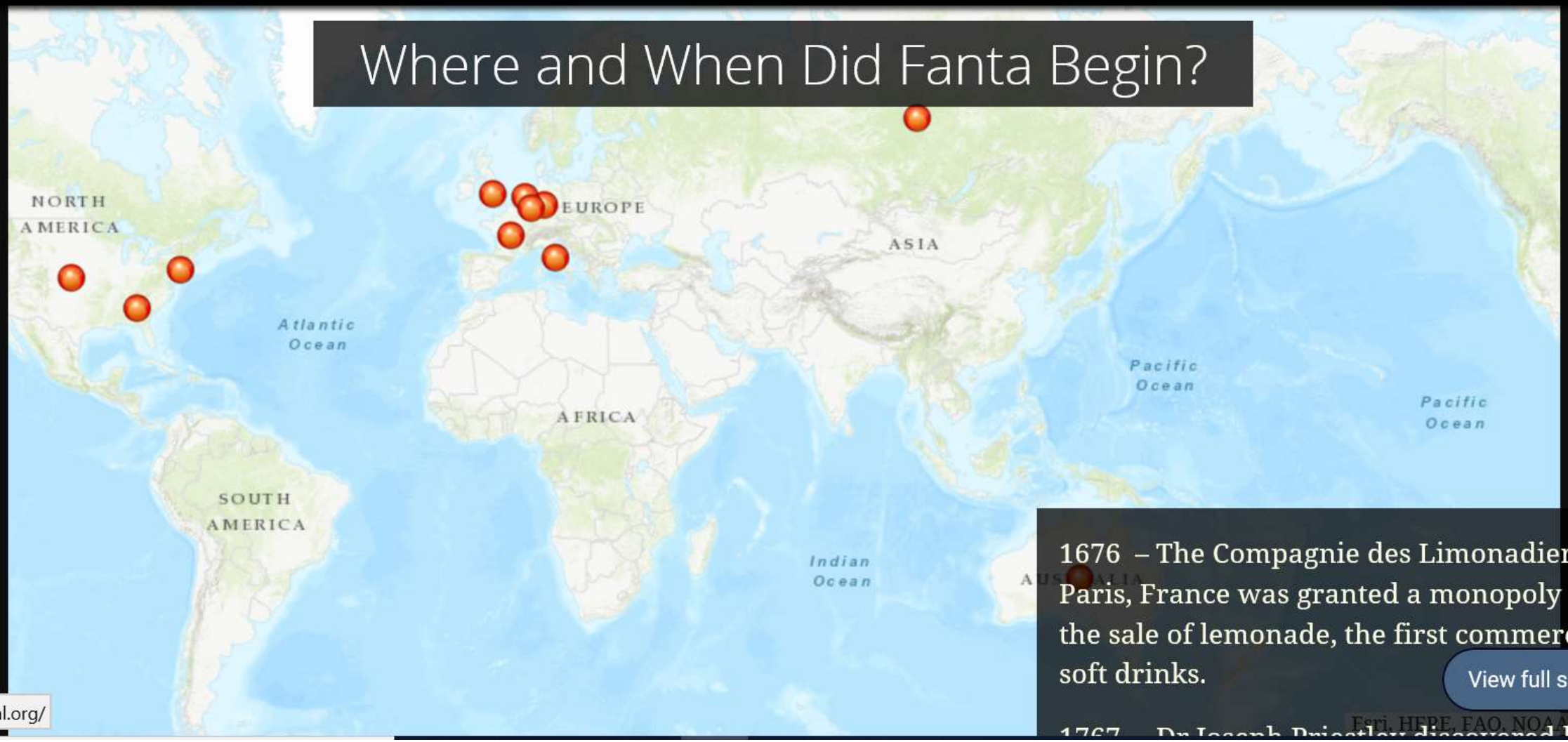

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Woods, M. (2018) Precarious rural cosmopolitanism: Negotiating globalization, migration and diversity in Irish small towns

Journal of Rural Studies, available as early view. View online

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Woods, M. (2018) Rural cosmopolitanism at the frontier? Chinese farmers and community relations in northern Queensland, c. 1890-1920 (2 MB)

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Jones, L., Heley, J. and Woods, M. (2018) Unravelling the Global Wool Assemblage: Researching Place and Production Networks in the Global Countryside

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From olive groves to cargo holds: the dissident assemblages of invasive species (2 MB)
Presentation by Laura Jones at RGS-IBG Annual conference, Cardiff 2018. Session on 'Global Challenges and Assemblage'

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What does this all add up to?

The GLOBAL-RURAL Contribution

- A new way of thinking about globalization
- A framework for analyzing how globalization changes places
- A toolkit for helping rural communities respond to globalization

GLOBALIZATION

Rethinking Globalization

"Globalization refers to a multidimensional set of social processes that create, multiply, stretch, and intensify worldwide social interdependencies and exchanges while at the same time fostering in people a growing awareness of deepening connections between the local and the distant."

Steger (2003) *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction*, p 13

Rethinking Globalization

- Globalization is reproduced through places not imposed from above
- Globalization has different outcomes in different places
- Local places are neither inevitable victims nor inevitable winners in globalization

- How precisely does globalization work through places?
- Why do some places fare better than others?
- Can local peoples and institutions make a difference?

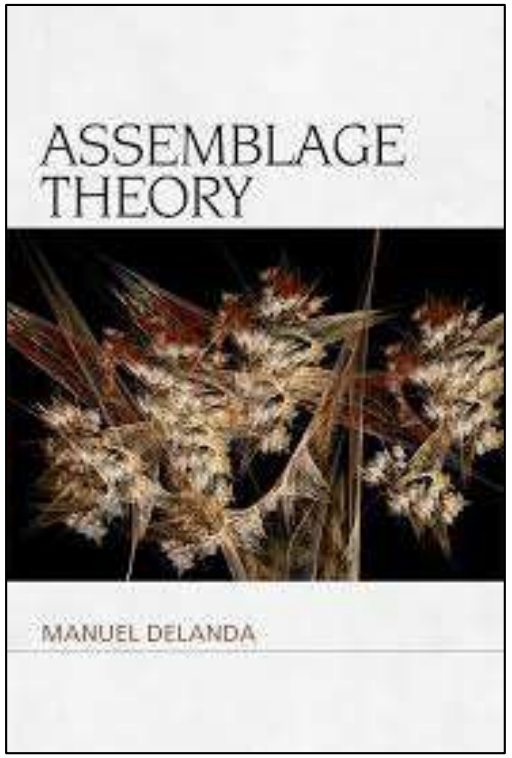
Assemblage Theory (or Assemblage Thinking)

GLOBAL-RURAL case study research

Analytical Framework

A (Very) Brief Guide to Assemblage Theory

- Society is “an assemblage of assemblages”
- Assemblages are social entities made up of multiple, diverse parts
- Assemblages exist in nested sets – assemblages are components in larger assemblages; and components of an assemblage are themselves assemblages
- Assemblages interact with each other



A (Very) Brief Guide to Assemblage Theory

- Assemblages are comprised by **human and non-human components**
- The components of an assemblage perform **material** and **expressive** roles
- Assemblages are held together by **territorialization**
- Territorialization describes the tendency of an assemblage towards **homogeneity**; **Deterritorialization** describes divergence and increasing diversity
- Assemblages are given meaning by **coding** (names, maps, statistics, regulations, conventions)
- Components may be **detached** from one assemblage and **attached** to another
- Assemblages are **constantly changing** and with each change there are **multiple possible forms** that an assemblage can take

Globalization and Assemblage

1) Globalization involves the rearrangement of components in assemblages, as components are added, removed or exchanged between components

Subsidiary companies and plants sold between transnational corporations
Edith Creek dairy, Tasmania, sold by Australian Murray Goulburn to Thai-owed Dutch Oven

International land investments
Woolnorth property, Tasmania, bought by Chinese-owned Moon Lake Investments

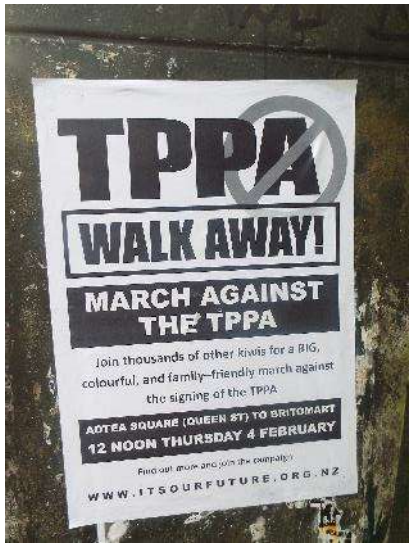
Migrants moving between countries and introducing new foods and cultural practices
Shop serving Syrian community in Ballyhaunis, Ireland

Globalization and Assemblage

2) Globalization occurs through recurrent interactions between assemblages and fusing into larger assemblages

Takeover of local companies by transnational corporations
Laura Ashley, Newtown, bought by Malaysian-owned MUI

Trade agreements expanding market
Opposition to the Trans-Pacific Partnership, New Zealand



Social movements uniting in transnational alliances
World Social Forum meeting, Salvador

Globalization and Assemblage

3) Globalization advances through the deterritorialization and reterritorialization of assemblages, as they overspill boundaries, expand and extend

Households and communities deterritorialize when members leave to work in other countries

An estimated 70 per cent of the population of Vila Fabril, Brazil, has lived and worked in Ireland

Communities deterritorialize as immigration produces a more diverse population

Multi-lingual shop sign in rural community in New Zealand

Globalization and Assemblage

4) Globalization is fostered by the 'territorialization' of assemblages towards increasing homogeneity, including the imposition of standard codes

Standardization of quality standards through a commodity chain
Quality standards for UK retailer Marks and Spencer followed in a clothing factory, Tengtou, China

Proliferation of global brands as everyday globalization
McDonalds and KFC in Newtown, Wales and Fielding, New Zealand

Market dominance of a handful of transnational seed companies
Pioneer maize from US transnational DuPont planted in New Zealand

Globalization and Assemblage

5) Globalization is not a linear process as cycles as local components can be cut from translocal assemblages and connections rearranged

Advances in transport technology leave redundant stopping-points less well connected

Gander Airport in rural Newfoundland, Canada, once described as 'The Crossroads of the World' as an obligatory refueling point for TransAtlantic flights, now has no scheduled international flights

Globalization and Assemblage

6) Globalization is a more-than-human phenomenon

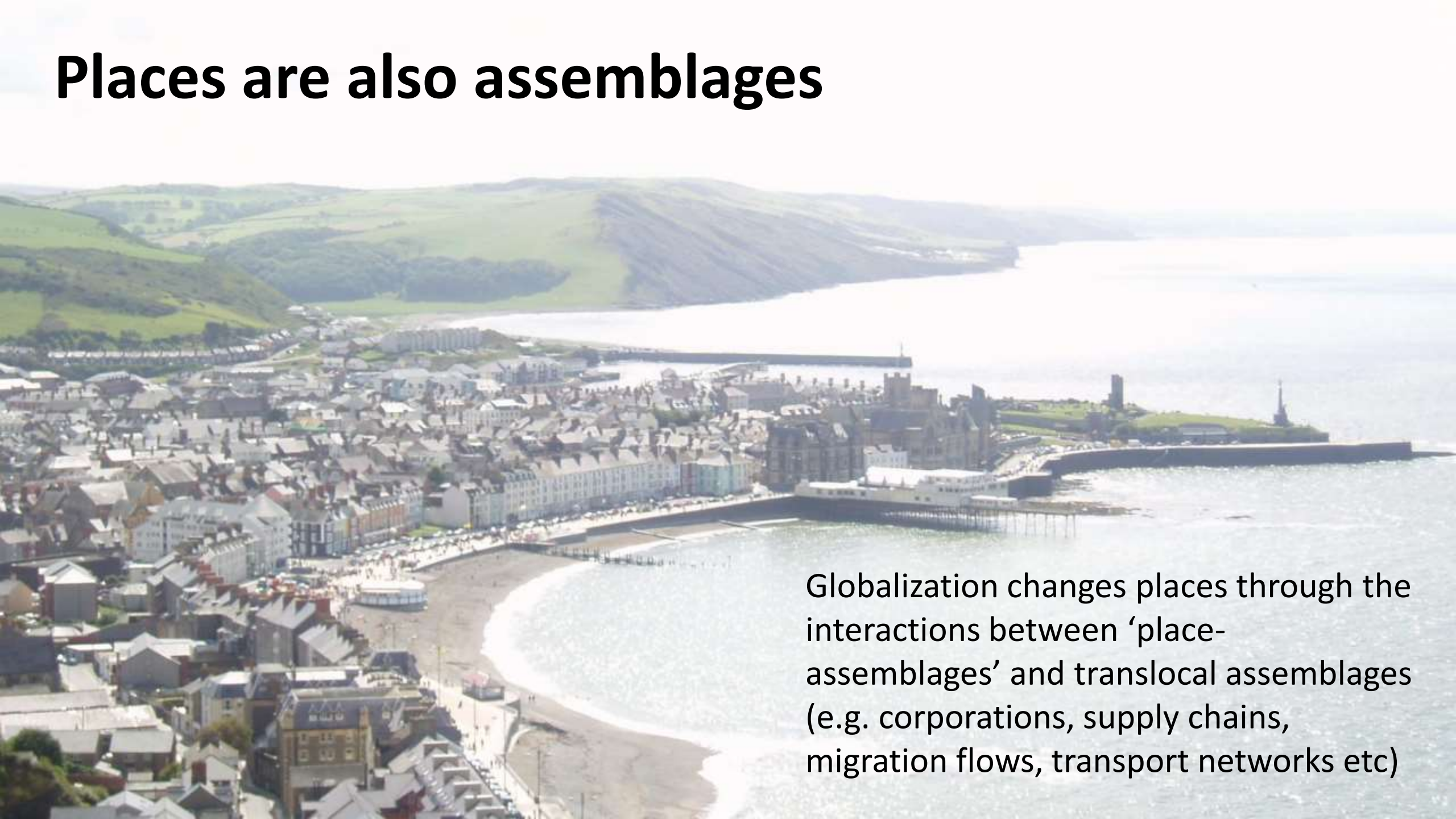
Technological components enable translocal assemblages to transcend space

Recharging mobile phones in rural Malawi

Invasive species and pathogens circulate as the unintended consequences of global assemblage

Olive trees in Puglia, Italy, threatened by the spread of Xylella fastidiosa

Places are also assemblages



Globalization changes places through the interactions between ‘place-assemblages’ and translocal assemblages (e.g. corporations, supply chains, migration flows, transport networks etc)

Globalization and Place

1) Place-assemblages and translocal assemblages can share components (e.g. factories, farms, airports, football teams etc)

These components have different relationships in different assemblages. Changes in relationships in the translocal assemblage can affect the role of the component in the place assemblage.

Translocal assemblages can introduce new components into places (e.g. investing in new developments, introducing new consumer goods) and take them away (e.g. closing factories or stores)

Manufacturing FDI in County Mayo, Ireland

Foreign Direct Investment by manufacturing and healthcare companies in County Mayo, Ireland in 1970s and 1980s

As new components in place-assemblages new factories transformed the local economy by providing non-agricultural jobs

Factories also part of transnational corporate assemblages, with different roles and coding

Decisions made in corporate HQs in USA or Japan had impacts back in County Mayo

Job losses or factory closures removed components from place-assemblages

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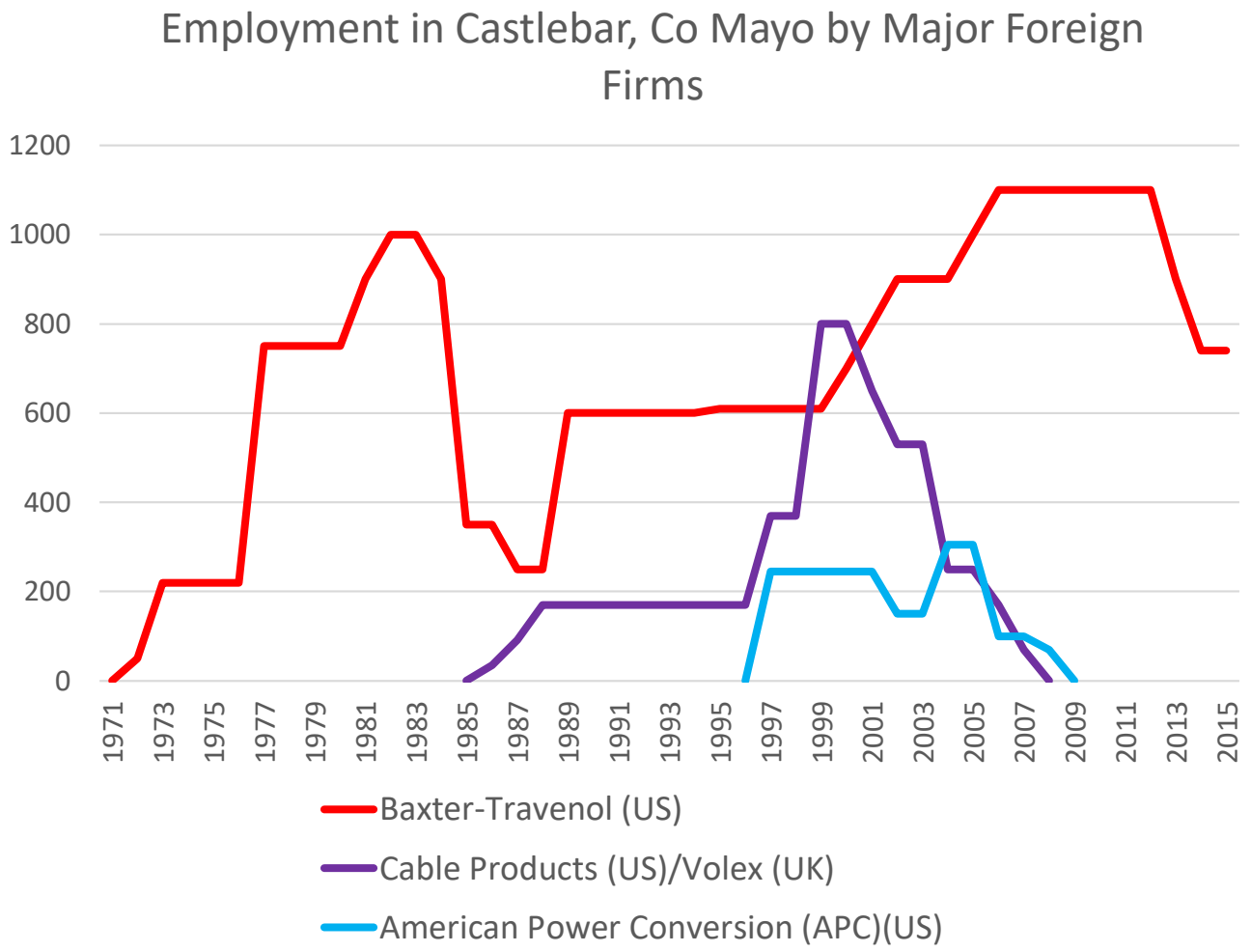


Globalization and Place

2) Transport and infrastructure assemblages connect places to other places and to wider global networks.

The characteristics of these infrastructural assemblages can constrain or enable the opportunities available to local communities and economies in responding to globalization.

Soy Cultivation and Transport in Brazil

The expansion of soy cultivation in Central Brazil has been facilitated by developments in transport infrastructure to speed up exports to Europe and Asia

Cargill port facilities at Santarem, bringing large cargo ships further into the interior and removing the need for transshipment at the coast

Improvements to internal waterways and highways permitting quicker, cheaper transit of soy from plantations to ports

E-Commerce in Rural China

New business and trading opportunities for rural communities in China have been opened up by communications networks allowed access to the internet

Growth of e-commerce using new online platforms to access domestic and international markets, especially Taobao and AliBaba

In communities such as Da'ou village in Shandong province, e-commerce is changing gender roles and reshaping local economic assemblages

Globalization and Place

3) Places may be over-coded by global or translocal assemblages that impose new meanings on places and landscapes, for commerce, conservation or tourism

The internal codes of a place (such as land use plans) may be changed in response to pressures from globalization.

Designations according to international conversation models restricting conventional local uses of natural resources

New local laws or land use planning regulations to respond to challenges of interactions with translocal assemblages

Globalization and Place

4) Globalization and interactions with translocal assemblages may make places less homogeneous and more diverse, e.g. through immigration or economic diversification.

Local communities and economies may respond by re-territorializing around new activities or identities.

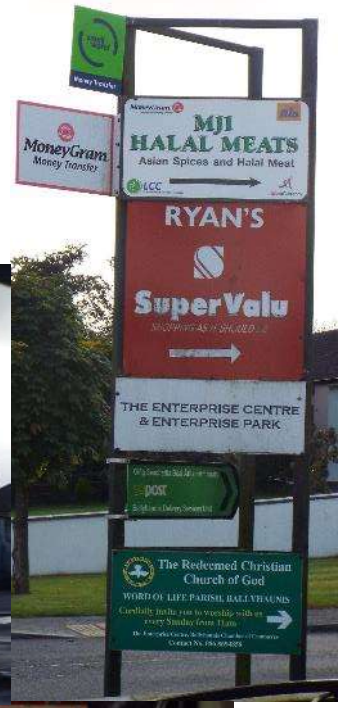
Ballyhaunis, Ireland

Immigration over three decades has produced a very diverse population

In 2011, 49% of the town's residents were born outside Ireland, with 42 different nationalities represented

Reterritorialization in the form of initiatives to bring the community together

Work by the local Gaelic sports club to reach out to immigrants and promote inclusion and integration



Globalization and Place

5) The outcomes of globalization are not pre-determined. Each new interaction between a place and a translocal assemblage produces multiple possible forms that the place could take.

Creates space for local people and institutions to influence the outcomes of globalization, but within constraints.

Globalization and Place

When the Moreton Sugar Mill in Nambour, Queensland closed in 2004 there were several possible futures:

- The mill could have been bought as a going concern
- Local sugarcane could have been transported to another mill for processing
- New uses could have been found for sugarcane keeping canegrowers going
- Cane-farming could end and land converted to other uses

Picture: Nambour Museum

Globalization and Place

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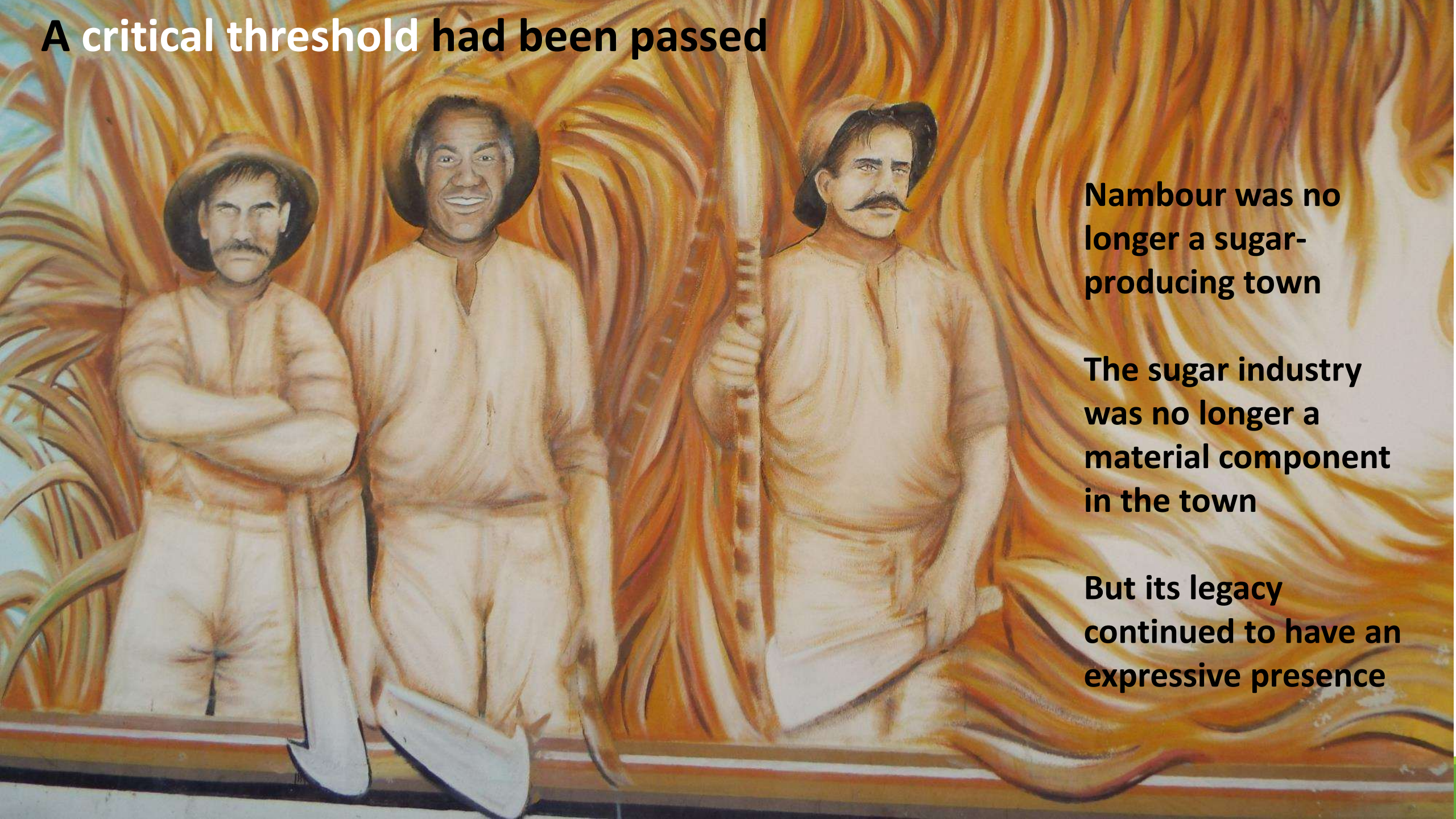
- ~~New uses could have been found for sugarcane keeping canegrowers going~~
- Cane-farming could end and land converted to other uses

A critical threshold had been passed

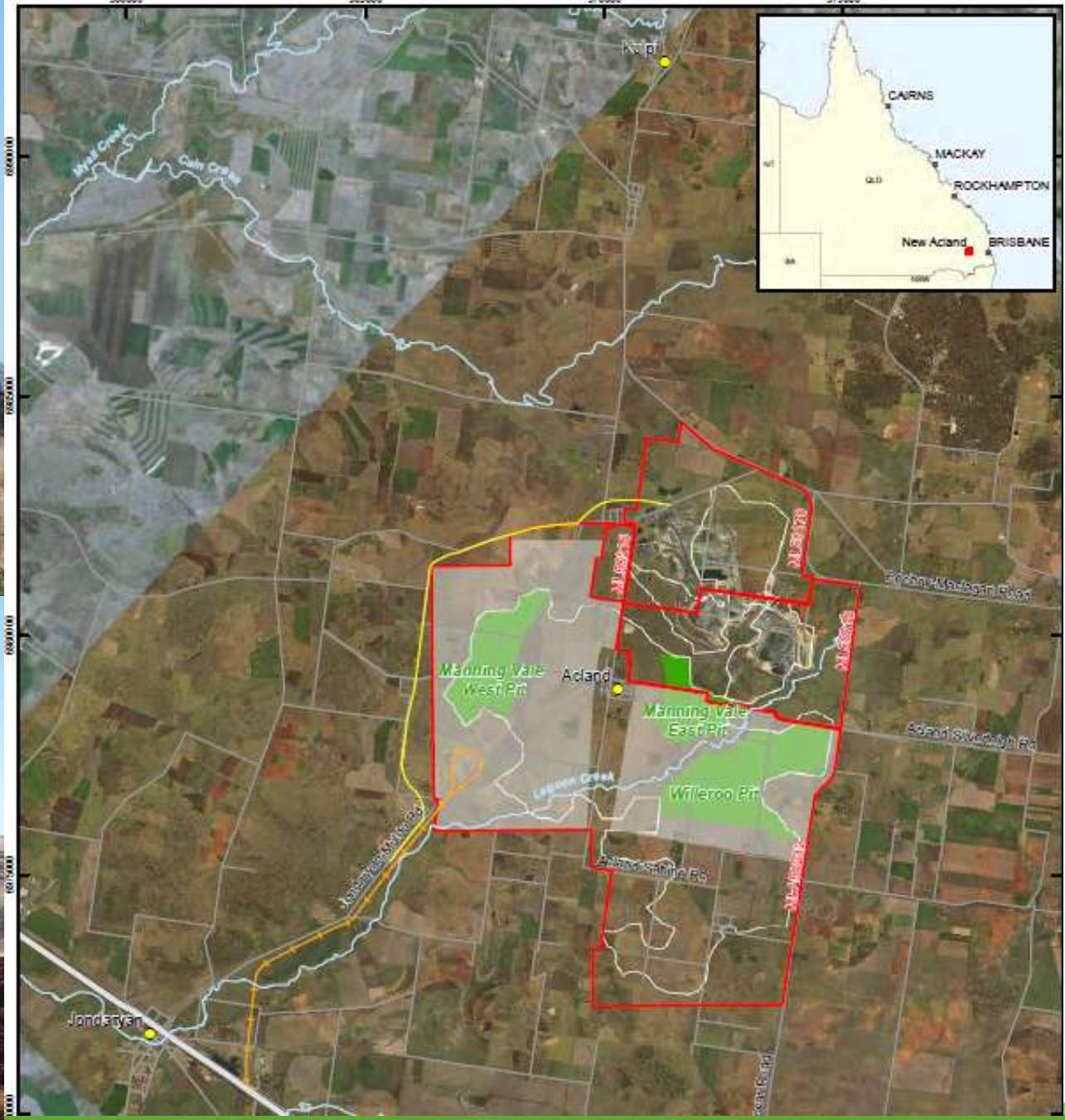


Nambour was no longer a sugar-producing town

The sugar industry was no longer a material component in the town

But its legacy continued to have an expressive presence

Acland, Queensland, Australia

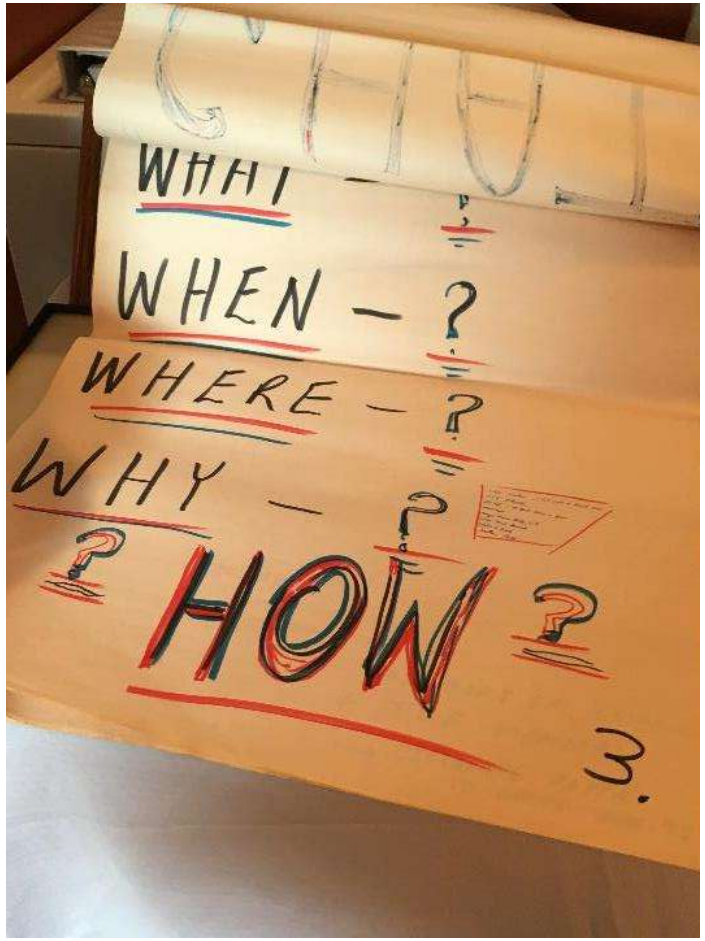


CENTRE PARKING

DEMOLITION

A Toolkit for Rural Communities?

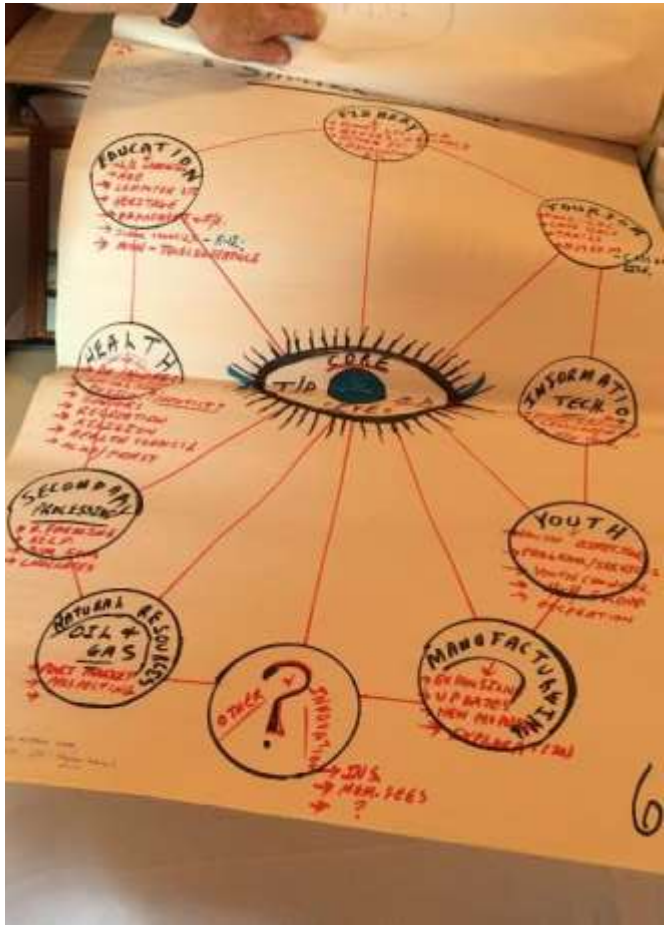
- The possible futures for places after major globalization impacts can usually be projected and planned for
- The assemblage analytical framework can be translated into a model for rural communities to assess their vulnerability to change and plan responses
- Identifying the material and expressive components of a place, what holds the place together, what gives it its identity?
- How the place is connected to wider global and translocal networks; what components it shares with translocal assemblages.

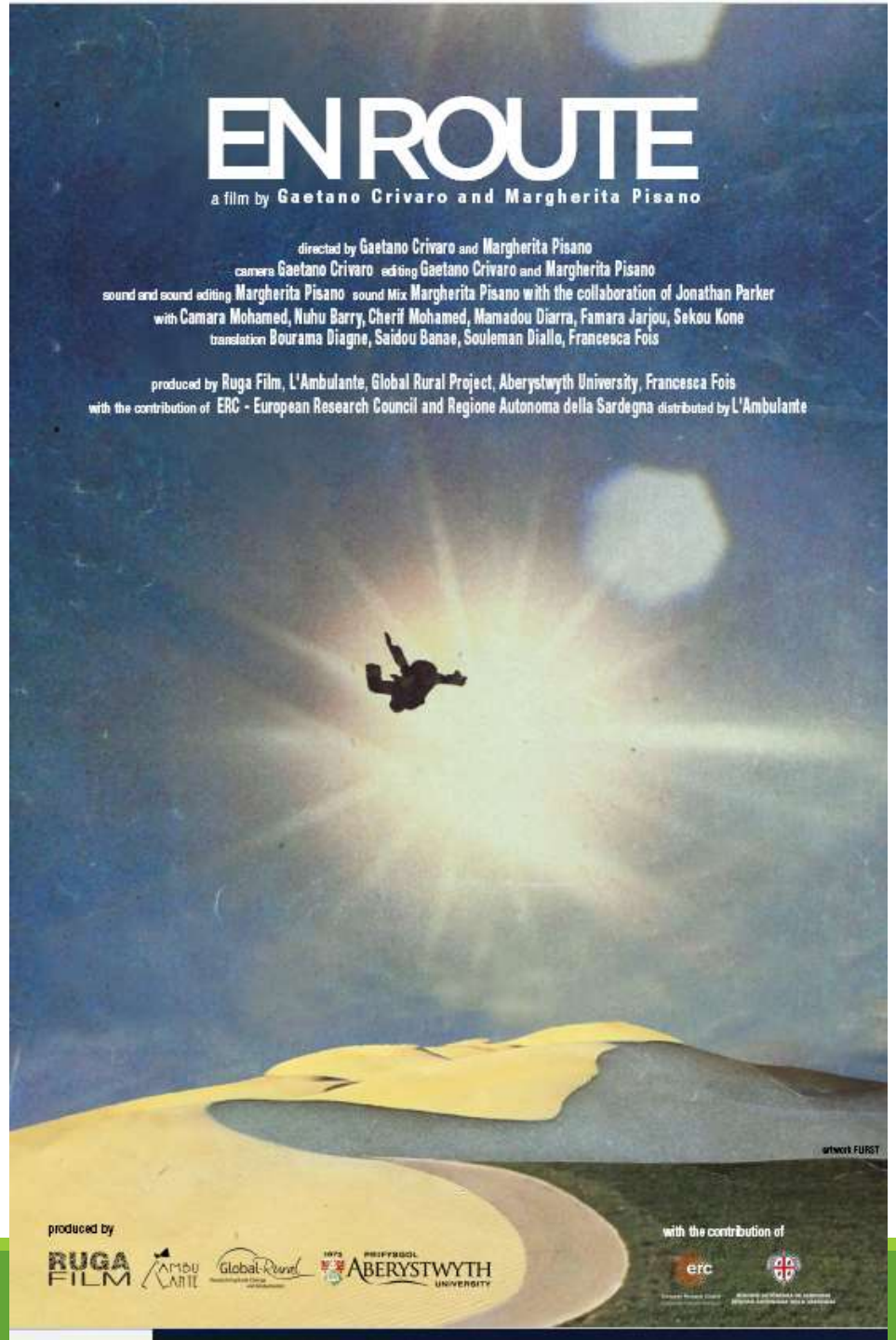


A Toolkit for Rural Communities?

- Where are the points of vulnerability in these connections, what external decisions or events could lead to significant change in the community?
- What possible futures could be projected from these changes? Which would be preferable for the community?
- What might constrain different options?
- What resources and codes may need to be mobilized to make preferred outcomes successful?

How GLOBAL-RURAL can have an impact and make a difference




EN ROUTE
a film by Gaetano Crivaro and Margherita Pisano
directed by Gaetano Crivaro and Margherita Pisano
camera Gaetano Crivaro editing Gaetano Crivaro and Margherita Pisano
sound and sound editing Margherita Pisano sound Mix Margherita Pisano with the collaboration of Jonathan Parker
with Camara Mohamed, Nuhu Barry, Cherif Mohamed, Mamadou Diarra, Famara Jarjou, Sekou Kone
translation Bourama Diagne, Saidou Banae, Souleman Diallo, Francesca Fois
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