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Changing Island Economies

A presentation to the Pingtan International Forum
on Island Conservation and Development

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United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair
in Island Studies and Sustainability,
University of Prince Edward Island
and University of Malta

Islands as Vulnerable

Research and popular media:

- Islands as vulnerable, fragile, remote (economy, ecology)
- Need outside help to solve their problems (e.g., Small Island Developing States & Rising Sea Levels)

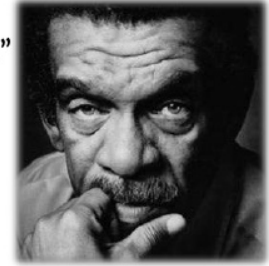


Islands as Resilient/Entrepreneurial

Poem by Derek Walcott

(the Schooner Flight, 1979)

“Open the map. More islands there, man,
Than peas on a tin plate, all different size,
One thousand in the Bahamas alone...
There are so many islands!
As many islands as the stars in the Night”



Counter narrative:

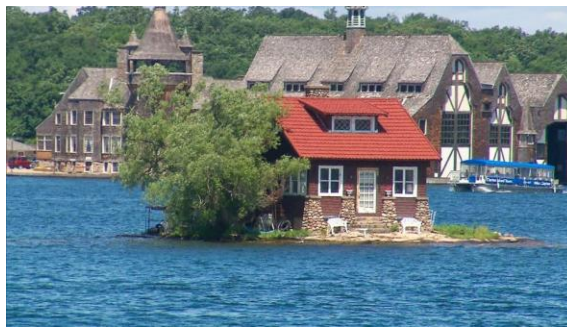
- Islands as resilient, high economic and political capacity
- Islanders as resourceful, mobile.
- A “World of Islands” perspective
- Ability to navigate and influence political and economic relationships (political entrepreneurship)



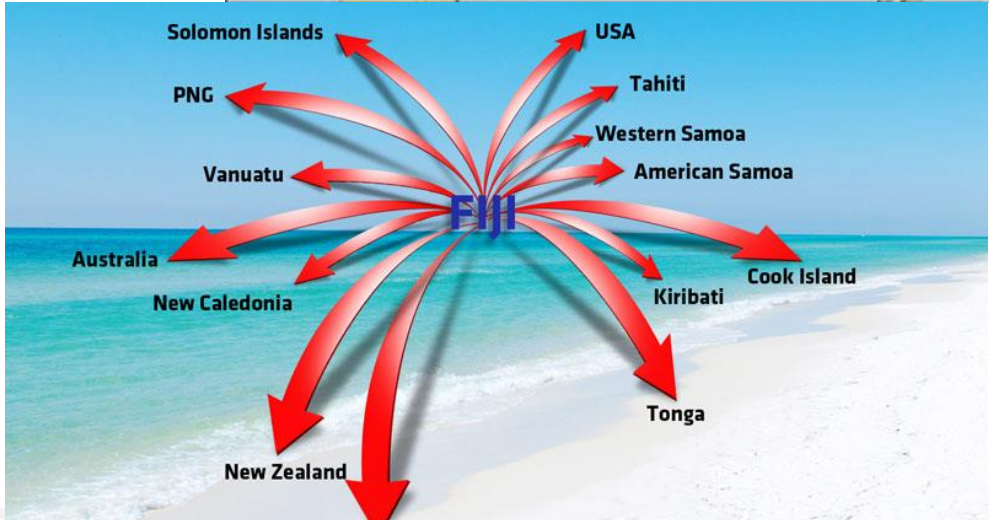
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Scale



- Is small size a weakness or a strength?
- Entrepreneurs - easier access to decision-makers
- No local market so exports are an early and natural step
- Interconnectedness is an imperative for survival



Islands of
Innovation
Interreg Europe



Islandness

- “*A construct of the mind*” (Platt)
- Living “*a life closer to nature*” (Conkling)
- “*A heightened sense of place*” (Vannini & Taggart)
- Islanders: the integration of economic, social and physical environments is more transparent (sustainability is real and observable)
- What is the impact of islandness on business and political decision-making – positive, negative, or mixed?



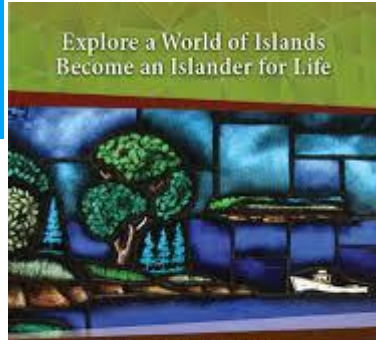
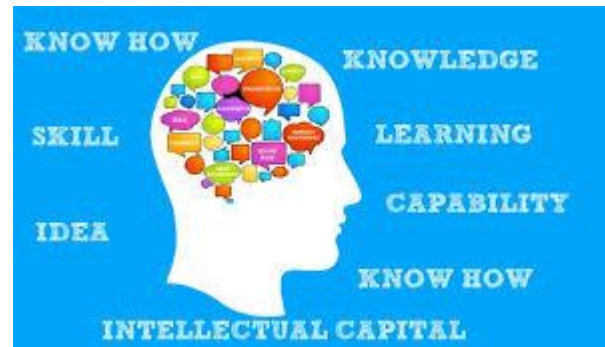
islandness



1) Building Intellectual Capital



- Very few Island Studies programs, especially compared to other regional/area studies fields
- No Bachelor's or PhDs
- All island studies scholars terminal degrees are in cognate fields (geography, biology, anthropology, sociology, history, environmental studies)
- Our world is becoming more insular; need to understand island environments to address bigger issues

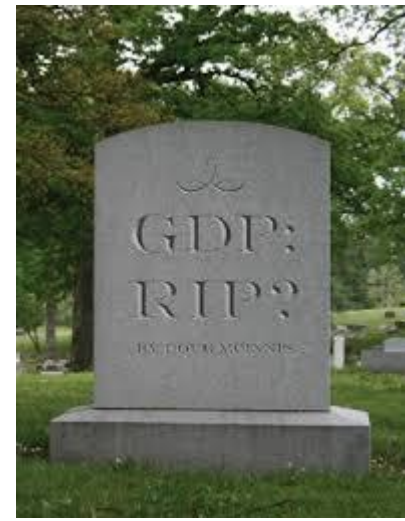


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2) Measuring Success

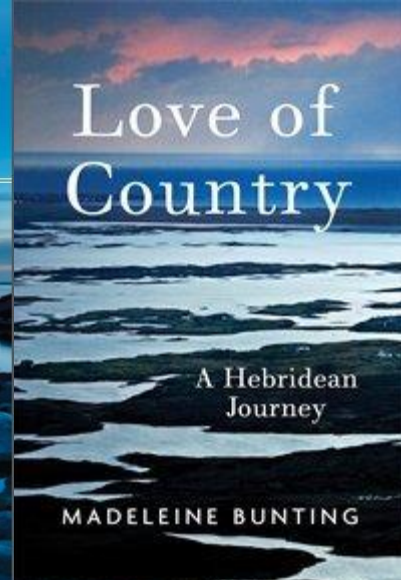
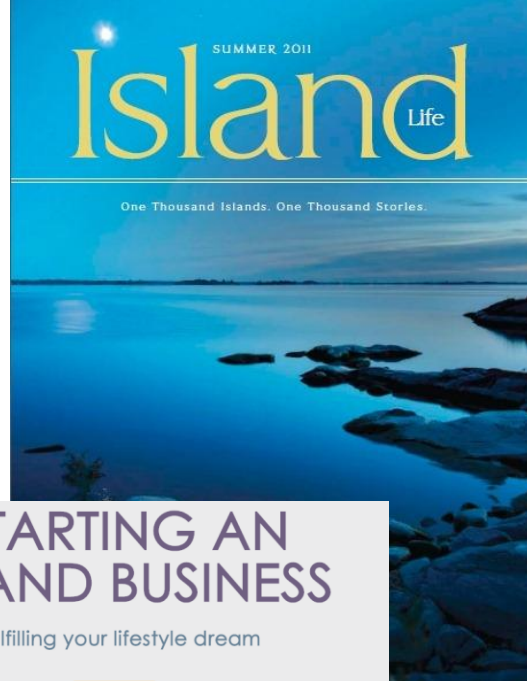
- Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Human Development Index (HDI) may not be best measures of well-being
- Many islands perform well according to these measures
- Nauru as an example of short-term high GDP resource exploitation
- The value of Vulnerability and Resilience Indices
- According to these measures, openness and integration = greater vulnerability and risk
- So how do we measure and monitor success?



3) Building on the Strengths of Islands and Islanders

Islander Characteristics:

- Strong sense of place and belonging
- Strong social relationships
- Occupational plurality (“Jack or Jill of all trades”)
- Authenticity (tourists and consumers value authentic experiences & stories)
- The importance of the island diaspora
- Returning Islanders who bring experience, ideas, global contacts, resources



STARTING AN ISLAND BUSINESS

fulfilling your lifestyle dream

product or service?
low weight, high value products or service businesses are best for island entrepreneurs

make a plan
take advice from islanders. Make sure your island can support your business

review the finances
doing business from an island can increase some costs. Do other financial benefits offset this?

find a home
are there restrictions on buying houses? Is there housing stock available?

find business premises
where will you work? Are there suitable premises available? Is there support to build new premises?

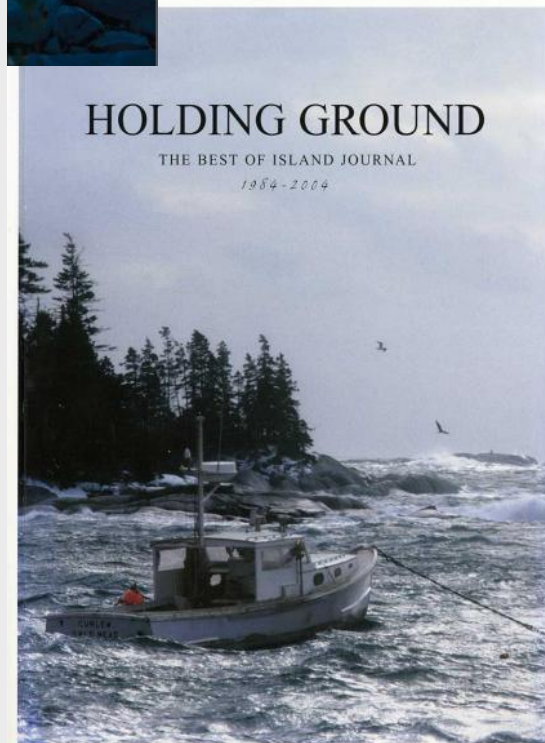
review the lifestyle
what will be the benefits of island life and entrepreneurship?

do the deal

make the move

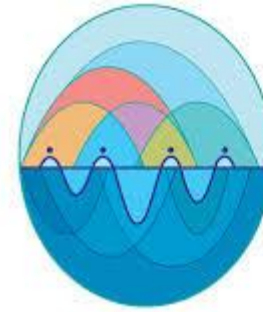
reap the rewards
business environment and less stress improves your lifestyle and financial position

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ISLANDS & LIFE

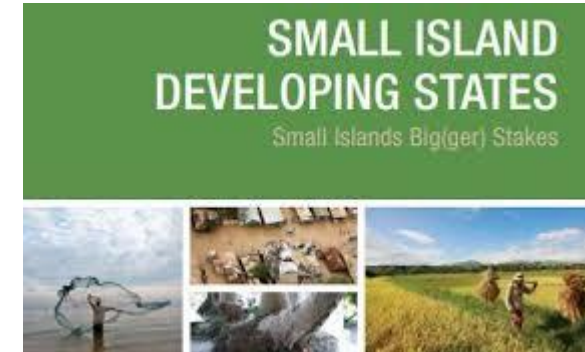


4) All Islands are Important: SIDS and SNIJs

- Small Island Developing States (SIDS) = 38+
- SubNational Island Jurisdictions: > 100
- Territories, Dependencies, Provinces, States
- Some autonomy but ambiguous political relationship with metropole/former colonial power
- Often perform very well economically versus SIDS
- Need more research comparing SIDS and SNIJs



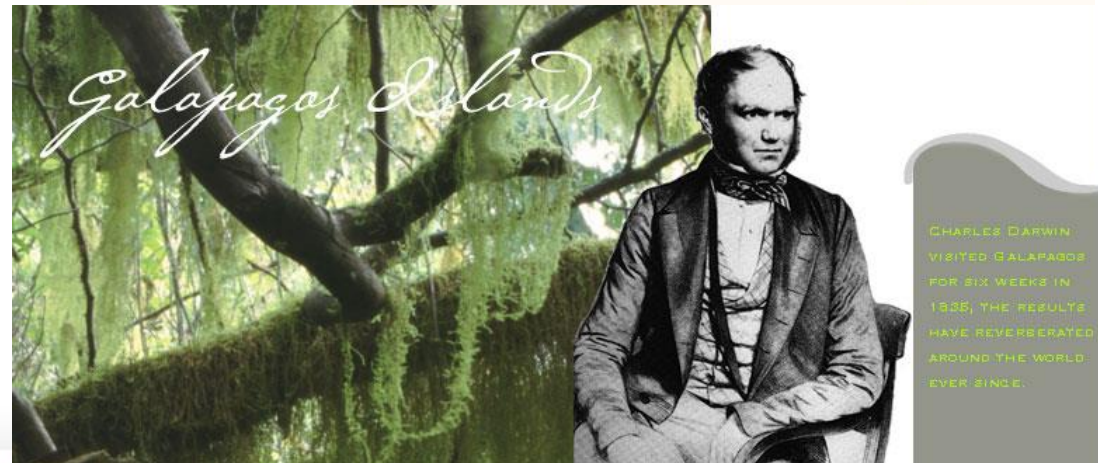
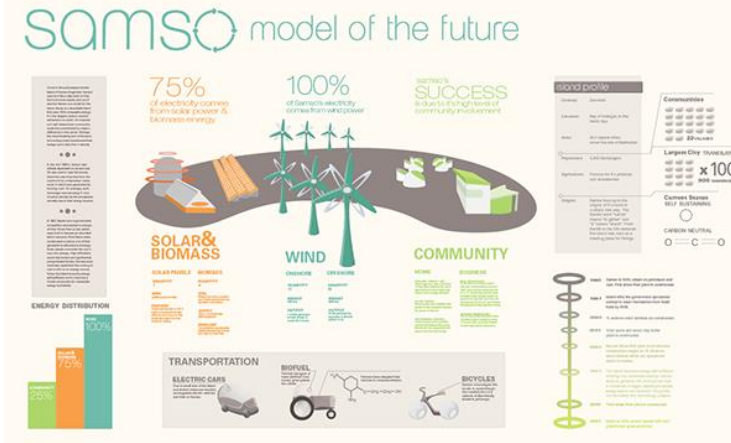
International Year of
Small Island
Developing States
2014



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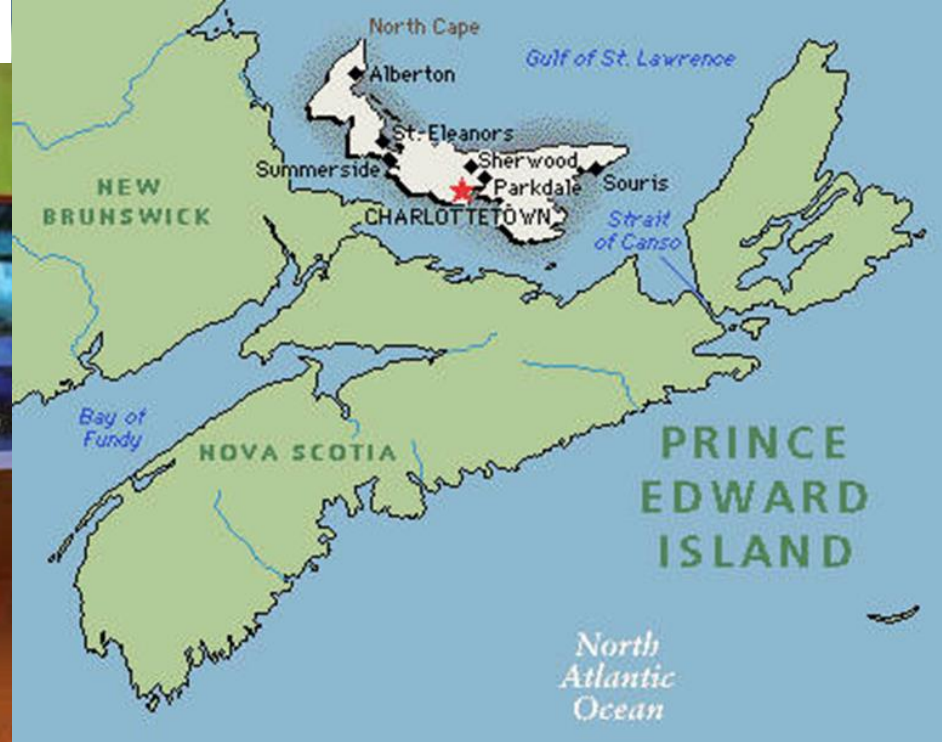
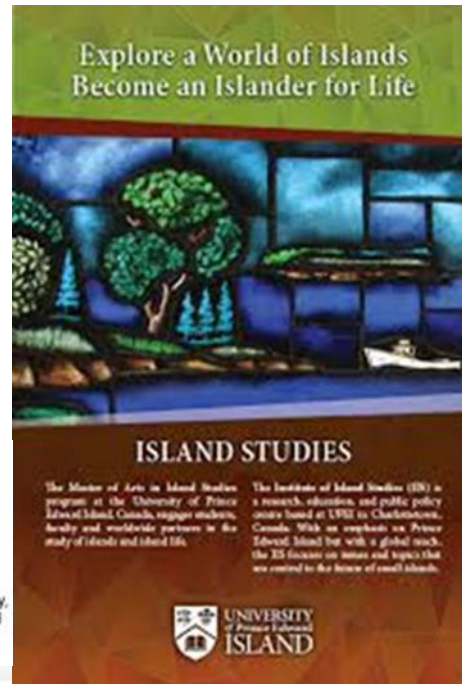
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5) Islands as Living Labs



James Randall

- Born in Toronto, Canada
- Economic geographer and university professor by profession
- Lived on Prince Edward Island for only 7 years
- An “Islander by Choice”



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